

vol. { 3 }

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد { 3 }



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

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AL HOŞN RESEARCH & STUDIES CENTRE

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info@alhosnuae.ae

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The Chapter of

Al-‘Imran

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

The chapter we will now examine – the chapter of *Al-‘Imran* – is contextually appropriate to follow the chapter of *al-Baqara*. This is because the chapter of *al-Baqara* provided us with information about the first human existence: it spoke about the creation of Adam, his vicegerency on earth, and his being taught the names of all things. It then spoke about some of the messengers who were sent to the creature who was made a vicegerent on earth, and presented some issues related to events connected with specific times which the Quran mentioned, and arranged in a precise sequence. It is appropriate, therefore, that after the chapter of *al-Baqara* would come the chapter of *Al-‘Imran* because this chapter speaks about another kind of creation distinct from the first although it has its origin in it. This is because the chapter informs us of the creation of Jesus who was created according to a different mode from that of Adam’s. Just as Adam was created without a father or mother, it stands to reason that another creation might come without a father.

God *the Most High* opened the chapter of *al-Baqara* with the names of three letters of the alphabet: ‘*Alif Lam Mim*’. We spent a lot of time examining this issue at the start of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, and focussed on the wisdom behind the occurrence of certain letters. We saw that every letter has both a ‘sound’ and a ‘name’ so that, for example, in reading the word *qara’a* (‘read’), when you pronounce the letter *qa*, you pronounce a letter which is connected with the other letters, this being the ‘sound’ of the letter, whereas the ‘name’ of the letter is *qaf*.

So every letter has both a name and a sound. When we speak, we use the sound of the letter; whether we are illiterate or educated, we can all pronounce the sounds ‘r-e-a-d’; but the names of the letters are not known except by those who are literate, as they have been taught ‘this is *qaf*’, etc. This is the name of the letter.

So from education, we learn the letters (names of the sounds), and in speech both the illiterate and literate use the sounds.

We know that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was illiterate, and he did not sit with a teacher and did not study; so who taught him the names of the letters that no one knows except the educated? These letters are read differently in different places in the Quran, sometimes pronounced as sounds in connection, and sometimes as names of letters pronounced separately. At the beginning of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, '*Alif Lam Mim*' (*al-Baqara*: 1) are names of letters. But as we have mentioned, when we see them at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Fil*, we read them as *Alam tara* 'did you not see...' as three sounds forming a question word 'did you not see...' (*al-Fil*: 1), and we do not read the names of the letters, but rather their sounds, and so we read '*alam*'. Who is it, then, who differentiates for us between '*Alif Lam Mim*' in one place and '*alam*' in another place – and they are written the same in both cases? Without doubt, it is instituted by God. Truly, God has ordained that in one place it is '*alam*', and in another '*Alif Lam Mim*'.

The True Lord leads us to the realisation that this Quran is not from the creation of a human being for there is no human fabrication before the revelation of the Quran that pronounces the names of the letters except certain letters called 'articles of attention' such as *ha-* used to call someone's attention. Why? It is because the speaker is free to speak, and to choose when to speak, but the one who hears, has no idea of what the speaker will say. The speaker can choose the time to speak what he likes, unlike the one who hears who does so only after the speaker speaks without having any choice. Because of this, they used to use some letters as a way of attracting the attention of the listener. So before speaking, they would use the letter *ha* to draw the listener's attention as though they were saying 'pay attention, I wish to speak to you and I want you not to miss anything that I say.' Some of these letters are called 'articles of opening' such as how *ala* was used in the well-known ancient Arabic verse to call a waiter before saying, 'give us a drink' in order to alert the listener so they are not distracted from what the speaker wants to say, and so miss the point.

So every expression that uses the names of letters or other words for alerting attention are used purely to prepare the mind of the listener. What

prevents us, then, from assuming that these letters, too, are intended to alert the listener to the importance of being mindful of what is to come? One of the proofs that these ordained letters make an impression on the human soul is that none of the people who opposed the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in his mission took exception to them, although they were people of eloquence and language skills.

Have we ever heard that any of them said, ‘Look at Muhammad! How can he come up with senseless words and expressions with no purpose or meaning, and then claim he is the most eloquent of the Arabs?!’ Did any of them say this? They did not; rather, they accepted them, and did not take exception to them, and never said, ‘What is this “*Alif Lam Mim*” that Muhammad has brought?’ This proves that the letters had impressed them when they heard them, as God intended, for they did not find fault in the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* because of them, and they did not use them as a criticism against him. We say that this is one of the secrets of these letters.

God stressed certain particular meanings by repeating them more than once; that was because the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came at a time when prophethood had been absent for a long time: there was no address from heaven. The meanings that God wanted to stress and clarify are repeated several times until they settle in the minds of those who receive them. For this reason, the first word of God *the Most High* in the chapter of *Al-'Imran* is:



Alif. Lam. Mim. [1] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 1)

This also appears in other chapters which are the chapters of *al-'Ankabut*, *ar-Rum*, *Luqman*, and *as-Sajda*. The letters appear with an additional *ra* in some chapters, and with *sad* in others, i.e. ‘*Alif Lam Mim Ra*’ and ‘*Alif Lam Mim Sad*’. They come as a confirmation of the meaning, or secret that God has placed within these letters although we may not understand that secret.

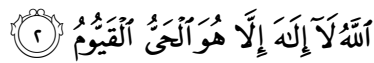
A person can benefit from secrets within things which were placed there by the Creator of those things whether he understands them or not.

For example, we take a villager who is uneducated in electronics: Does he benefit from electricity or not? He does, and he is able to use the light-switch to turn the light on and off, but does he know the secret behind it? He does not, but yet he can benefit from it. Similarly, when the believer recites '*Alif Lam Mim*', he takes the secret of the letters from the One Who said them whether he understands them or not. We do not need, then, to philosophise on this issue. It is true that the human intellect would delve into something in order to reconcile it with its understanding, but the provision of God and the wisdom of God's provision are above any intellectual reconciliation, or the absence thereof.

The Words of God *the Most High* at the end of the chapter of *al-Baqara*: '... so give us victory over the disbelieving people' (*al-Baqara*: 286) also suit the chapter of *Al- 'Imran* – Why? It is because Islam would come to face the forces of disbelief and the forces of the people of the Book. Islam did not come to divide and split the call to God which came from God by means of the prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, or to contradict any of it; but rather, it came to fortify the call to God so that all of the nations who followed these other religions would join the ranks of Islam (which means surrendering oneself to God). Because of this, when the Arabs rejected the Message of the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him*, God said to them that he who truly knows and understands the Divine Book and Revelation will testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God (*ar-Ra'd*: 43). So if the disbelievers said that Muhammad had not been sent by God, Muhammad was commanded by God to say to them that sufficient to hold witness between him and them is God's testimony and the testimony of him who truly has knowledge of the Divine Book and Revelation (*al-Ra'd*: 43). For this reason, the duty of the people of the Book was that when the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* came, they should have been the first to believe in him because he came to confirm the course of faith, and that by coming with a chapter called *Al- 'Imran* ('The Family of *'Imran*'), all would know that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come to undermine the religion of Jesus, but rather to preserve it and confirm it, as though it were said: You who believe in Jesus: if you truly believe in him, then

hasten at once to believe in Muhammad as God has named a major chapter of the Quran, that of *Al-'Imran* after the family from which Jesus came.

The Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came neither to support tribalism and bigotry nor to wipe out that which preceded it in the manner in which bigotry prevails with one people seeking to erase every trace of another people so as to inaugurate an entirely new history. No. Rather, this Quran wants to correct and narrate history accurately, and so it brings a chapter entitled *Al-'Imran* which is a great honour to that religion and its followers. God *the Glorious and Exalted* begins the chapter by saying:



**God – there is no god but Him, the Ever Living,
the Ever Watchful [2] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 2)**

This is the summit of all matters, and therefore the Quran repeats it to confirm it. ‘God – there is no deity except Him...’ As the scholars say, the word ‘God’ here is a subject, and ‘... there is no deity except Him...’ is a predicate. A subject must be clear in the mind, and the word ‘God’ is clear in the mind. However, God wants to give the word ‘God’ the description that is most appropriate for it which is ‘... there is no deity except Him...’ This is why the True Lord says that if you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient to His laws, they will surely answer that it is God. How perverted, then, their minds are! (*al-'Ankabut*: 61)

So we see that the concept of God was clearly understood in their minds, but the incumbent authorities wanted to cloud this clarity. The Quran then came to remove and efface this confusion, confirming that ‘...there is no deity except Him...’ which is a matter that God has testified to saying that God Himself gives evidence that there is no deity except Him... (*Al-'Imran*: 18).

God’s testimony should be sufficient, as it is a Personal testimony. The testimony of the angels is a testimony of witnessing, as they see no one but Him. In addition, the people of knowledge have testified taking evidence from creation, confirming the truth of the angels’ and the truth of God’s testimony.

If we look again, we will see that God has testified to Himself and said ‘...there is no deity except Him...’, and has made it the slogan of monotheism, and has made matters very easy and simple. God did not want to make the strongest evidence of faith complicated or philosophical, or one which no one could comprehend except the well educated and cultured; rather, religion is required from all people, from the shepherd to the philosopher; it is required from the street-sweeper as it is required from the university professor.

Therefore, it is necessary that faith should be at the intellectual level of all people; there is no philosophising in this matter. For this reason, God wanted to make the affair of utmost simplicity, and so clarified it thus: I testify that there is no god but Me. Either this is true and the issue is resolved, and there is no need for anyone to dispute it, or it is untrue and so tell us: Where is the other god who has heard the challenge, and from whom has God taken his creation, and said: I am alone in the Universe, and I am the One Who has created? Yet we have heard no response to Him, and nor of any opposition to Him. Does this not assume other gods know? If that is the case, then this other is not fit to be a god, and if the other does know and has not defended itself and its ownership of creation, then it is not worthy to be a god. The matter belongs to God unless a cause appears to contradict it, and so we see that ‘...there is no deity except Him...’ is a true statement, and intellectually and logically He is God, and we find no contradiction. We have already seen that if a claim is made and there is no contradictory claim made against it, the claim stands until the contradiction emerges. For example, if ten people gather in a room, and then after they leave, the owner of the house finds a wallet, and one of them returns in a state of anxiety and says ‘I lost a wallet,’ and the house owner says ‘we found one, but there were ten of you;’ all the ten persons gather and none of the others claims the wallet was his when asked, so the wallet must be his.

God has said, ‘... there is no deity except Him...’ If there is another god, it must show itself. Yet nothing shows itself to us except the Omnipotence of God – ‘... there is no deity except Him,...’and while there is no god but Him, and while this universe is in need of eternal sustenance to manage its affairs, then He must be alive in a manner that suits Him, as He bestows life upon

many species, humans, animals, plants, inanimate beings, and the One Who gives life must be alive, and must have a life that suits Him.

The name *Al-Qayyum* ('... the Sustainer of [all] existence') is in Arabic in a morphological form called 'the intensive form'. Sometimes an action happens in an ordinary way, and sometimes it happens in a more intense way. For example, if you call a person a 'glutton', it is different from calling him an 'eater' because we all eat, and so we are all 'eaters', but we are not all 'gluttons' because this word is in an exaggerated form to show the intensity of the action. If God is the One Who sustains and arranges the affairs of the entire universe, is He an 'arranger' (*Qa'im*) or 'Sustainer' (*Qayyum*)? He must be a 'Sustainer'. Another meaning of *Qayyum* is 'self-sufficient', but what is the nature of this self-sufficiency? It is completely eternal. So the word *Al-Qayyum* is an exaggerated form derived from 'arranging a matter', 'being self-sufficient', and 'sustaining innumerable others'. As these others are numerous and varied, they require a strong attribute in their Creator, so the Creator is the Sustainer of all existence. The Words of God 'God – there is no deity except Him,...' are the support of the believer in all aspects of his life.


Ubayy ibn Ka'b relates that the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him once, 'O Abu Al-Mundhir, tell me which verse of the Book of God you think is the mightiest.' He answered, 'God – there is no deity except Him....' The Messenger patted his chest and said, 'May knowledge benefit you, O Abu Al-Mundhir.'⁽¹⁾

Tell us, by God: if there is a son and a father, does the son want for anything in life? No, because the father takes care of things. The popular saying goes: 'He who has a father wants for nothing.' So, as for the one who has a Lord, he must be modest because his Lord is saying: I am alive, and I am the Sustainer of all Existence meaning: I am managing your affairs.

God *the Most High* emphasises this sustaining and management in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, when He says in *Ayat Al-Kursi* (the Verse of the Throne), 'Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep' (*al-Baqara*: 255). It is as though He is saying: You sleep, for I do not sleep. If not, then who watches

(1) Narrated by Muslim

over you when you sleep, and are unable to guard your own life? God favours us in His Power as the Sustainer of all existence, as ‘God – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence.’ As long as He is living and sustaining, then it is logical that He is arranging and managing the affairs of all creation, and has granted to all creation that by which they live; of material and moral sustenance. As long as He is sustaining, managing, and taking care of the affairs of His creation, it is essential that He grants them that which is necessary to sustain their material and moral needs. As for their material needs, He says it is He Who, after creating the earth, placed firm mountains on it, towering above its surface, and bestowed so many blessings on it, and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence to all who would seek it; and all this He created in four days (*Fussilat*: 10). So He fulfils our needs with regard to material sustenance. As for our moral needs, He says:


 نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

**Step by step, He has sent the Scripture down to you [Prophet]
with the Truth, confirming what went before: He sent down the
Torah and the Gospel [3] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 3)**

So He did not give us the means of material sustenance only; rather, he also gave us the means of moral sustenance. This is because material life without morality would lead to reckless, frivolous folly, and so God wanted to lift the material to the level of faith. The revelation of morality is therefore necessary. For this reason, God *the Most High* says, ‘He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth....’ The phrase ‘sent down’ indicates obligation because it means something is coming down from a higher position, and so God is saying: Do not look down upon moral values that come to you from Someone higher than you because they are not equal to you; rather, they come from the Creator of the universe and humanity; you may only look down upon something which comes to you from someone lower than you. But when legislation comes to you from someone higher than you, do not disdain it; for your submission to it does not debase you, but rather honours you.

God *the Most High* says, ‘He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth....’ In the course of the Quran, we find God saying that the

trustworthy Spirit has come down with it (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 193); and in another place, God asserts that He has sent down the Noble Quran in truth, and in truth it came down, and that He has sent the Messenger but as a herald of glad tidings and a warner (*al-Isra'*: 105). However, did the Quran descend by itself? Gabriel *peace be upon him* used to bring the Quran down to the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him*. This does not mean that the Quran did not 'come down' because Gabriel *peace be upon him* would come down with the Quran to the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* and God *the Glorious and Exalted* says that He has sent down the Noble Quran in truth, and in truth it came down, and that He has sent the Messenger but as a herald of glad tidings and a warner (*al-Isra'*: 105). This way the two phrases 'send down' and 'come down' are equal. When we consider an action in any given time, we must ponder: Is it confined to a particular time, or not? The Noble Quran came down to the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* over a period of twenty-three years, and was revealed in parts according to events so that every passage of the Quran's revelation was related to the course of a particular event. However, God *the Most High* says that He *anzala* ('sent down') the Quran on the Night of Power ('*Laylat Al-Qadr*') (*al-Qadr*: 1).

Here, God *the Most High* is specifying a time. We should realise therefore that the Quran that came down over a period of twenty-three years is the same Quran that God sent down on the Night of Power.

The Quran, therefore, has two modes of revelation: It was 'sent down all in one motion' (*inzal*), and then 'sent down in parts gradually' (*tanzil*). So the meaning of God's statement that He *anzala* ('sent down') the Quran on the Night of Power ('*Laylat Al-Qadr*') (*al-Qadr*: 1) is that the Quran in its entirety was sent down from the Preserved Tablet to the first heaven in order to fulfil its mission in the universe, and this is what God sent down on the Night of Power. The Noble Book that God sent down to the heaven on the Night of Power was then revealed gradually according to events, as legislation or necessary clarification occasioned.

The other revealed scriptures did not have this form of revelation; rather, they were revealed in a single motion not according to events, but rather, all at once, as the Quran was first sent down from the Preserved Tablet to the heavens.

The Quranic rendition of this is as follows: 'He has sent down (*nazzal*; step-by-step) upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was [revealed] before it. And He sent down (*anzal*; in one motion) the Torah and the Gospel.'

Here we need to pay attention to God's word *nazzal* ('sent down step by step') when describing the Quran and *anzal* 'sent down' when describing the Torah and Gospel. The Torah and the Gospel are described together as *anzal* ('...sent down...') which indicates to us that God revealed them in one occasion. As for the Quran, God revealed it over a period of twenty-three years in parts according to events that influenced the situation of the Muslims, and including a comprehensive message encompassing everything from the day of the first creation until the Day of Resurrection.

God revealed the Quran gradually in parts according to events in order to fortify the Prophet's heart because he was exposed to all kinds of events: every time something happened that required reassurance, a Quranic revelation would come down. The Quran reports that the disbelievers used to ask why the Quran has not been sent down on him in one single revelation. The answer was that it has been revealed in this manner so that God will strengthen the Prophet's heart with it (*al-Furqan*: 32).

A passage of the revelation would come, and the believers would memorise it and act according to its guidance, and then another passage would follow. God *the Most High* adds another reason for this step-by-step revelation: that whenever the disbelievers came to the Prophet with a statement, God would send him the truth with the best explanation (*al-Furqan*: 33).

So by His mercy, God gave the Muslims the opportunity to ask questions, and seek the clarification of ambiguous matters.

Throughout these twenty-three years, God *the Most High* gave the Muslims the opportunity to model their lives in the light of the Quranic Way and have any mistakes in their actions corrected by the Quran. This shows that the Quran condoned discussion and debate, and enjoined the bringing of things in the time when they are required because if something (an idea or a ruling) is produced when it is needed, it is accepted with joy.

An example of this in our daily lives is: A person keeps a medicine cabinet filled with all kinds of medicines, but when he has a slight headache and needs an aspirin, he cannot find it amongst all those medicines. If he were to buy it when he needed it, it would be easier and more trustworthy.

God *the Most High* both sent the Quran all in one motion, and then step by step; so He says, in continuation of the verse:

مِنْ قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَنزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ
 اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤﴾

Earlier as a guide for people and He has sent down the distinction [between right and wrong]. Those who deny God's revelations will suffer severe torment: God is almighty and capable of retribution [4] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 4)

So the final word is: '... And He sent down the *Furqan* (Quran, Criterion of judgement between right and wrong).' So here we have the combination of 'sent down' both all at once, and step by step.

God often says of the Quran that it is '... the Book in truth, confirming what was [revealed] before it...' (*Al-'Imran*: 3). This means that the Quran highlights the right direction: It is a confirmation of what came before and preceded it, a confirmation of the doctrines that are unchanged from one divinely revealed religion to the next because the differences in these religions are only in terms of rulings and legislation, as certain rulings will be appropriate to certain times and may not be appropriate for other times; as for tenets of faith, they do not change or alter, just as histories and the stories of the Prophets do not change.

'Confirmation' means that which agrees with the actual reality, and this is what we refer to as 'honesty or truthfulness'. If it does not conform to the actual reality, we call it a 'lie'. So reality is the benchmark. For this reason, we said before that the honest person is the one whose narration of events does not differ from those events because he is true to reality and so whenever he narrates a story, he does so accurately and in detail. As for the liar, he does

not narrate according to reality, but instead creates a new reality each time which is why people say: If you are taken to lying, make sure to have a good memory; meaning that if you are going to lie – God forbid – you should remember what you say, so as not to contradict it later. The honest person is the one who examines the reality, and as long as he speaks with honesty, he is describing a reality which is firm and unspoiled by vain whims; he does not speak now according to one whim, and then later according to another.

As long as a story of an event is conveyed with honesty, it becomes a truth because a truth is an unchanged fact. This is why God *the Most High* says, 'He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was [revealed] before it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel Before, as guidance for mankind. And He sent down the *Furqan* (Quran, Criterion of judgement between right and wrong). Indeed, those who disbelieve in the signs (verses) of God, will have a severe punishment, and God is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution' (*Al- 'Imran*: 3-4).

We have already discussed the Torah, and said that some scholars try to examine arabicised foreign words as though they are originally from the Arabic language, and find the Arabic form and description for it, and so some of them have said about the Torah that the name comes from the Arabic word *al-wary*, an old Arabic word used to describe the lighting of a fire by striking sticks together. Other scholars have said that '*Injil*' ('Gospel') comes from the word '*najl*', meaning 'increase'.

To these scholars I say: You have viewed these words as though they are Arabic, but Torah is Hebrew in origin, and *Injil* is Greek. These words were adopted as proper names for those books, and then entered our language.

Do not assume that just because the Quran was revealed in Arabic, every word in it is Arabic. No; it is true that the Quran is Arabic, but it is also true that the Arabic tongue had become accustomed to these words, and their meanings had become clearly understood.

For example, in modern times we have begun to use the word 'bank' in our language and it has become part of Arabic because Arabs have become accustomed to using it. The meaning of the Quran's being Arabic is that God addressed the Arabs with words that they understood, and that were prevalent

in their speech even if their origin was not Arabic. When God mentioned the Torah and Injil and said that the Quran came as a confirmation of them, He said, 'Before, as guidance for mankind. And He sent down the *Furqan* (Quran, Criterion of judgement between right and wrong). Indeed, those who disbelieve in the signs (verses) of God will have a severe punishment, and God is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution.'

Which people are those whom God refers to when He says '... as guidance for mankind...'? Without doubt, they are the people who lived at the time when those scriptures were called to. If the Quran came as a confirmation to what is in the Torah and Gospel, could those books not also be a source of guidance for us? Indeed they are, but that guidance only extends to that which the Quran confirms in them, so not everything that is contained within them or that is ascribed to them is a guide for us. That which the Quran confirms within them is a guide for us; so the meaning of '... as guidance for mankind...' refers to those who lived at the time of those religions and scriptures; and we believe in whatever the Quran confirms to us from within them.

Then God *the Most High* says, '... And He sent down the *Furqan* (Quran, Criterion of judgement between right and wrong)...'. This indicates that the Quran will come with a difficult mission because the word *Furqan* ('Criterion of judgement between right and wrong') is not appropriate except in the case of a conflict making clear the distinction between guidance and misguidance, truth and falsehood, happiness and misery, uprightness and deviance. The expression 'Criterion of judgement between right and wrong' indicates that the Quran came to witness a grave mission: the divide between good and evil. As long as it is dividing between good and evil, it makes mention of the forces of good, and the forces of evil. It involves within it, therefore, two factions. It comes to the faction defending the truth as a difficult struggle to differentiate truth and falsehood; and so God *the Most High* concludes this verse by saying, '... Indeed, those who disbelieve in the signs (verses) of God will have a severe punishment, and God is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution.'

Why does the verse end in this way? As long as the Quran is a Criterion for judgement, it must differentiate between truth and falsehood. The truth has its soldiers: they are the believers. Falsehood too has its soldiers: they are the

disbelievers. Evil has come from the disbelievers, so they must be addressed: '... Indeed, those who disbelieve in the signs (verses) of God will have a severe punishment, and God is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution.' Punishment here is torment, and torment differs in intensity according to the one who is dealing the punishment. The blow of a small child is not like that of a youth or a strong man; each of them gives a blow which is commensurate with their strength. If torment were to come from the strongest of all, God, it would inevitably be unbearable. They '... will have a severe punishment, and God is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution That is, He is invincible, no power can stand to Him, and His vengeance is inescapable.'

God *the Most High* calls Himself *Al-Qayyum* meaning that He creates and sustains the affairs of His creation, both in terms of matter and morality. The necessary implication of this is that He has knowledge of all of His creation, and its secrets, and therefore imposes upon each of His creations the appropriate legislation for all their affairs. Man-made legislation differs from divine legislation. Why is this case?

It is because, when God legislates – by means of a scripture which He reveals to His Messenger, in order that the ruling (*hukm*) of God can be delivered – He legislates according to His knowledge which may or may not be known to His creation. Events might turn out in a way that was not imagined by a human legislator at the time when they legislated, and because of this they are usually forced to make changes to laws because new circumstances occur which the human legislator was not aware of. Why was the human legislator not aware of them? It is because his knowledge is confined to the phenomena that occur during his lifetime, and does not encompass those things which occur after his time; and also because he legislates for talents and dispositions that are not fully known to him.

God *the Most High*, being the Creator and Sustainer of all existence and Revealer of the Criterion which differentiates truth from falsehood, has encompassing knowledge in which no fault can be found. And so those who say: Such-and-such a ruling is inappropriate to our times,' we say to them: Are you finding fault in God's rulings? It is as though you are saying: God is unaware of this matter; let us correct the ruling for Him!

No, indeed, you cannot find fault in God. Take God's ruling as it is, for it is the ruling that cannot be touched by falsehood from any direction. It is the ruling of One Whose knowledge is not renewed or changed. Above all else, He does not benefit from what He legislates, and so He says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَخْفَىٰ عَلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٥﴾

**Nothing on earth or in heaven is hidden from God [5]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 5)**

Look how this verse serves all the aims of the verses that came before it! As long as He is managing and sustaining all the affairs of creation, He must know everything about creation, so nothing in the earth or the heavens is hidden from Him. As long as He is differentiating between truth and falsehood, and sending severe punishment upon the unbelievers, nothing could be hidden from Him. So the verse is serving all of these purposes, and He knows these purposes, so when He legislates by virtue of being the Sustainer of all Existence, He legislates without being subject to emendation. If anyone deviates from His way, it is not hidden from Him. So the verse is the epitome of legislation, and of recompense: 'Indeed, from God nothing is hidden in the earth or in the heaven.'

After this, God speaks about the first manifestation of His attribute 'the Sustainer of all Existence' in relation to humanity, saying:

هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦﴾

It is He who shapes you all in the womb as He pleases. There is no God but Him, the Mighty, the Wise [6] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 6)

'Shaping in the womb' is the creation of the substance from which the human being is fashioned in a special form. This form differs according to its type: male or female. Males and females also differ in their forms: light-skinned, dark-skinned, golden-skinned, brown-skinned, short, tall and all the different features inherent in humanity including the diversity of tongues and colours (*al-Rum*: 22).

This difference in colour, language, and many other things shows that they are not the product of a machine which makes a mould and then shapes it; rather, every human is born crafted by an inherently capable hand.

If a manufacturer in this age wants to make a cup, he will first make a mould, and then keep repeating it. As for the human being, everyone is created in a different mould, each one with its own distinct form, each one with its own distinctive voice – which has been proved to have a print just like that of a fingerprint, each one with its colour. These are all signs, pointing to an Absolute Power. Above all this, it is a creation which requires no processing meaning that a single mould is made for it to be filled with its substance. No; rather, He *exalted be His Name* says that He is the ‘Originator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing, He only says to it, “Be,” and it is’ (*al-Baqara*: 117).

It is possible for a mother and father to be of the same colour, and their child to be of a different colour. God creates the majority of people in a sound and normal state, but He creates a few of them in an abnormal state: a child might be born blind, or physically disabled, or with extra fingers... and by these abnormal cases, God reminds the rest of mankind of the beauty of His creation. This is because when a physically normal person sees another person who is paralysed, he praises God for the perfection of his own creation. And when a person with five fingers on each hand sees another person with an additional finger which impeded the moving of his hand, he realises the wisdom of there being five fingers. Beauty is not confirmed except by the presence of ugliness, and things are distinguished by means of their opposites. The person who has seven fingers on his hand presents for medicine a challenge which it must strive to meet, until the doctor is able to remove the digits which are superfluous to human need. If God had created mankind with three fingers, one would not be able to keep control when using objects of precision.

Throughout his daily actions, the human being of ordinary health cannot comprehend the beauty of his normal form unless he sees one of these unusual cases. Those who have forgotten God’s blessed favour upon them due to its ordinariness and familiarity to them, God alerts them to it by showing them its absence in others. When someone who has good eyesight sees a blind person walking with a cane, he is alerted to the blessing of eyesight that God has given him, and so becomes aware of God’s favour. The exceptions in

creation are a means of creating awareness and causing people to notice the blessings by which God has favoured them.

These examples in creation cause people to notice how God has favoured them, and for this reason, you find them before you. Also, in order that you do not find fault in God's creation, or that someone asks ('what is this person's fault that they are created like this?' God gives them ample compensation in another area, for example by granting (a blind person) intellectual competency far above that of the person with good eyesight.

An example (and God has the best examples), is the leader Tamerlane (Timur the Lame), a military commander who astonished the world with his military prowess. God gave him great skill in strategy and combat, in compensation for his disability. We also often find that geniuses have some disability in a certain way. Why is this? It is because God gives to the disabled person the motivation and aspiration to compensate for what they lack, and so brilliance results. 'He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills ...' and every instance of shaping has its wisdom since every shaping has its wisdom and all of God's creation is beautiful.

Creation should not be viewed separately from the wisdom of its Creator; rather, every creation should be considered alongside the wisdom behind it. The reason why you might say 'this is ugly' is that you are separating creation from its wisdom. If a school pupil fails, his father could become saddened by this. But why does he consider the failure and not the wisdom behind it? He has failed so he can learn the importance of hard work and study. If he had succeeded despite playing around, what would result? All of his colleagues who saw him succeed despite his foolishness would begin to play around, and say: he played around and succeeded.... It is therefore necessary to consider every action alongside the wisdom behind its existence.

Similarly, punishment should not be considered separately from the crime. Every punishment should be commensurate with its crime. You might see a person who is condemned to death, and take pity on him; in this case we say, 'You have separated his execution from the murder that he committed; if you considered his crime, you would find that he is being killed justly and in fair recompense, for he has killed someone unjustly. So do not separate one aspect from the other.'

‘He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. There is no deity except Him...’ The meaning of ‘... There is no deity except Him...’ is that He will shape knowing that what he shapes will come out according to this image; because there is no other deity, for example, to say to Him: This does not please me, I will create it in a different image. No, because the One Who does this is Mighty and Invincible, and everything He wishes to do He does, all according to His wisdom. When He says, ‘He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills...,’ someone might say: there are unusual forms, and unnatural forms. God *the Most High* is saying to you: I am Wise and I create these things with wisdom, so do not separate an action from its wisdom; take the action with the wisdom behind it; if you consider the action with its wisdom, you will find it the essence of beauty. God *the Most High* is the One Who shapes in the womb as He wills. This is with respect to its substance and physical form.

God *exalted be His Name* then explains that He does not leave the substance and form alone; rather, He will create, alongside this matter, ethical values so that the forces of life will be in harmony; He says:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ
مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ
وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ ۚ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ
ءَامَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِندِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿٧﴾

It is He who has sent this Scripture down to you [Prophet]. Some of its verses are definite in meaning –these are the cornerstone of the Scripture –and others are ambiguous. The perverse at heart eagerly pursue the ambiguities in their attempt to make trouble and to pin down a specific meaning of their own: only God knows the true meaning. Those firmly grounded in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it: it is all from our Lord’ –only those with real perception will take heed [7] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 7)

So, after He shapes in the womb as He wills, according to His wisdom, God does not leave the created image without an ethical system; indeed, He created an ethical system by revealing the Quran which contains a system of moral values. It is essential that we consider things with the wisdom behind

them. If we do this, all affairs will seem upright, beautiful, and good. So God *the Most High* says, 'It is He who has sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book; in it are verses [that are] perspicuous and precise....'

What does God mean by verses that are '...perspicuous and precise...'? Something perspicuous and precise is something which cannot be penetrated by confusion or misunderstanding because it is precise. These *Ayat muhkamat* are the texts over which people do not differ. So when God ordains that the man or woman who steals should have their hands cut off (*al-Ma'ida*: 38), we see that the verse contains a clear ruling. Similarly when He rules that the adulteress and the adulterer should be flogged (*al-Nur*: 2), this is also a clear ruling. This kind of verse is the one which is clear in and by itself, the one in which understanding does not differ because the text is clear and direct, without ambiguity. The allegorical or unspecific verse, on the other hand, is the one which we struggle to understand. If we struggle to understand its meaning, then why did God reveal it?

God *the Most High* explains for us, as we said, that we should consider things with the wisdom behind them in order to understand why they were revealed. The verses that are perspicuous and precise came with clear rulings which were required from mankind, as in: 'Do this, do not do this.' As long as they are required from all mankind, the one who performs them is rewarded, and the one who does not perform them is punished; so reward and punishment will be derived from them. For this reason they come in a clear expression for if they had not, someone would say, 'I did not understand.' Rulings say to you: Do this; and do not do this. When they say 'Do this,' you have the ability not to do it. If you had been created in such a way that you had no option but to do it, God would not say to you: Do it. But since you have the ability to do something or not to do it, He says to you: Do it.

When He says to you: Do not do it, you have the ability to do it. It is not said 'do' and 'do not do' unless He has created in you the ability to act or not to act. We therefore notice that when He says to us: do this; and do not do that, He wants us to stand before the desires of our souls with regard to performing or leaving actions. For this reason, God *the Most High* describes prayer as indeed a hard thing for all but the humble in spirit (*al-Baqara*: 45).

So when He says to us: Do this; do not do that, the meaning is that certain things will be difficult for us to do, and others will be difficult for us to leave: for example, God has created in eyesight the ability to see everything within its range according to the laws of optics. For example, God instructs us to look at whatever there is in the heavens and on earth (*Yunus*: 101).

However, with regard to a woman at whom it is impermissible to look, God says: Lower your gaze; He commands the Prophet to tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: this will be most conducive to their purity – indeed, God is aware of all that they do. And to tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity (*al-Nur*: 30-31). To ‘lower their gaze’ means that God has put limitations on the movement of the eyes.

Another example is the hand that acts – but God *exalted be His Name* orders us not to move it except to do something permissible; so we do not harm someone with it or light a fire with it to burn and destroy; rather, we may light a fire with it to cook, for example.

So God issues commands of ‘do this ‘and ‘do not do that’ to restrict the desires of the soul to act or not to act. When the soul desires sleep, the command to worship says: get up, and pray. If the soul tends to become angry, the command of faith says: do not get angry.

The ruling, therefore, only came in the form of command and prohibition in order to control human action; a person might want to perform an action which is harmful, so it is said to him: Do not do it. A person might not want to perform an action which is beneficial, so it is said to him: Do it. Every human action is legislated by ‘Do; do not do’. The mind is one of the means of acquiring knowledge, just like the eye, the ear, and the tongue. The function of the mind is to understand, and this will mean that it will be directed to understand some things, but not others. God has made the messages clear to relieve the mind of the task of searching for the wisdom of clearly defined matters, as it might be beyond human comprehension. God instructs the servant to adhere to the manners of obedience even with regard to matters in which the wisdom behind the legislation is not understood; and also to provoke the mind to refer all allegorical verses to those that are clear, perspicuous, and precise. When we read God’s

words that no human vision can encompass Him whereas He encompasses all human vision; He is the Subtile, the All-Informed (*al-An'am*: 103).

We see that this is a general statement. And in another verse, God *exalted be His Name* says that on the Day of Judgement some faces will be bright with happiness looking up to their Lord (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23).

And, as for the disbelievers, He says that on the Day of Judgement, they will be shut out as if by a veil from their Lord (*al-Mutaffifin*: 15).

The mind can become preoccupied with His saying that no human vision can encompass Him. This is with regard to this world. As for the Hereafter, the human being will be equipped in a different way so that he can see God. We are now, in this worldly life, by the way in which God has equipped us to live in this world, unable to see God. The idea of equipping something to perform a specific task that it is currently incapable of performing is something that we are familiar with in our world: we know that a person who is blind or with impaired vision may undergo surgery, or may have glasses made for him, so he can see, and someone who is deaf or hard of hearing can have a hearing aid made for him so he can hear.

So, if human beings are capable of producing, with their limited physical resources, things which can restore the senses, what about the Supreme Creator, the Sustaining Lord; is He not capable of repeating our creation in the Hereafter in a form which allows us to see His Being and His Countenance? He is able to do all things.

So the matter here is allegorical. God can either be seen, or not. Which rulings do this change with respect to you? They change none at all. So, these allegorical messages did not come to bring rulings; rather, they came only in relation to faith. For this reason, the teachings of the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* puts an end to all difference of opinion between scholars regarding this issue by saying – and he is the Final Messenger, ‘The Quran was not revealed so parts of it would be give the lie to other parts; so act in accordance with that which you understand of it, and believe in that which is allegorical and unspecific of it.’⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Imam ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir (Exegesis)*, and by ibn Mardawaih

The allegorical verses came to be believed in, and the clear verses came to be acted in accordance with, and the believer must always refer the allegorical verses to the clear ones. For example, let us consider God's words to His Messenger that all who pledge their allegiance to him pledge their allegiance to God; the Hand of God is over their hands. Hence, he who breaks his oath, breaks it only to his own hurt, whereas he who remains true to what he has pledged to God, on him God will bestow a great reward (*al-Fath*: 10).

A person might ask: Does God have a hand? That person should refer the matter to the realm of 'There is nothing like Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11). And the believer may hear God's words that God the Most Merciful sits on the throne (*Ta Ha*: 5). He may wonder: Does God have a body with which he settles on a throne? We say: This is the kind of allegorical verse which the believer must believe in, which is that your existence, O human being, is not like God's existence and your hand is not like God's Hand, and your sitting is not like God's sitting. As long as His existence is not like your existence, and His life is not like your life, why do you suppose that His Hand is like your hand?

It is as He has said about Himself: 'There is nothing like Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11). Why has God even involved us in these affairs? It is because God wants to alert His creation to affairs that might not make sense to the mind, so whoever deems it necessary to interpret these things and refer them to the clear verse that states that there is nothing whatsoever like God, may do so; and whoever deems it necessary to say: 'I believe that God has a hand, but within the context of 'There is nothing like Him' may do so as well, and this is safer.

God says, '...in it are verses [that are] perspicuous and precise – they are the foundation of the Book....' The meaning of 'foundation' is the origin that the interpretation of the allegorical verses must refer back to if you interpret them, or return them back to the clear verses, saying: God has a Hand, but it is not like the hands of humans, but rather enters into the confines of 'There is nothing like Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

Why did God say, '...they are the foundation of the Book...' and not 'they are the foundations (in the plural) of the Book'? You must know, O believer that not each one of them is a foundation in itself, but rather, all of them aggregately are the foundation. To explain this, let us consider God's

words that He made the son of Mary and his mother a sign, and provided for them both an abode in a lofty place of lasting restfulness and unsullied springs (*al-Mu'minun*: 50).

God did not say that they were two signs. This is because Jesus *peace be upon him* did not exist as a sign except by being born to his mother without a father; that is, as a sign, he was supplemented by his mother. The mother of Jesus did not exist as a sign except by the birth of Jesus; as a sign, she was supplemented by Jesus. So together they constitute the sign. Similarly, the meaning of '...in it are verses [that are] perspicuous and precise – they are the foundation of the Book – and others allegorical and unspecific....' is not that every individual perspicuous verse is a foundation of the Book; rather, the clear verses as a whole are the foundation, and the origin to which the believer refers the allegorical. The purpose of the clear verse is that we act in accordance with it, and the purpose of the allegorical verse is that we believe in it, the proof of which is that no matter how you imagine them, it will not affect your behaviour. So God's statement that no human vision can encompass Him (*al-An'am*: 103) does not carry any ruling; it suffices only to believe in it.

What of those about whom God says, '...As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord by seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]...'? We should know that the word *zaigh* (rendered here as 'deviation') means to bend or incline, and that the word in Arabic derives from the curving of the teeth, where some of them grow outwards and others grow inwards. When teeth do not grow straight, nowadays, they have cosmetic surgery and straightening procedures to make them grow into a single straight line.

So those whose hearts are given to deviation, that is, inclining crookedly, go after the allegorical verses, seeking confusion and discord. It is as though crookedness is an extraneous condition in the hearts, and that the original state of hearts is purity: not to be crooked and given to deviation. Pure natural disposition has no crookedness, but lusts and base desires make hearts incline to deviation from the truth. A person might be aware of God's correct ruling on a particular matter but human caprice wins out, and so the

person deviates from God's ruling. This deviation is of the making of the heart; a person can submit logic and reasoning to serve the inclination of his heart, and for this reason, the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* says 'One of you would not be a believer until his desire is in accordance with what I have come with.'⁽¹⁾

Why? Because caprice is the bane of reason; even deviant people know the sound conduct, but they deviate toward what they desire. The proof that they know sound conduct is that, after they commit their iniquity, they repent and announce their repentance, as is frequent and well known. This is because capricious inclinations are affected by behaviour that requires justification, whilst sound behaviour is a matter of natural disposition which comes effortlessly and does not cause tension. For example, when a man looks at his wife, he does not find the stimulation of one aspect of his conscience vying with another; but when he looks at a woman other than his wife, his conscience is in turmoil, and he wonders: is it acceptable for him to look, or not? His character traits struggle. As for looking at his wife, his conscience is not overburdened. For this reason, faith brings solace to consciences, so all the traits of a person harmonise in unity without any of them stealing from another.

Another example: If a person goes to bring something from his house, he does not feel any conflict of conscience. Yet if a person goes to steal this thing, his conscience will be in conflict, and his limbs too because he is going against reason, uprightness, and truth.

'...As for those in whose hearts there is deviation, they will follow that of it which is unspecific seeking discord by seeking an interpretation [suitable to them]....' So their attempt to interpret the allegorical verses contradicts reality in order to serve the crooked inclinations of their hearts.

The inclination is present in their hearts first, and then reasoning submits to the inclination, and then the expression submits to the deviant reasoning. So we see that the original inclination comes from them. Let us consider the statement of the Quran in saying that when the perverted ones deviated from the right way, God let their hearts swerve from the truth (*as-Saff*: 5).

(1) Narrated in *Sharh As-Sunna* by Al-Baghawi, and in *Kanz Al-'Ommal*, and in Tabrizi's *Mishkat Al-MaSabih*

It is as though God is saying: As long as you want to deviate, I will let you deviate further and assist you in it. God *the Most High* does not set a person on a course that contradicts His moral charges; but a person may be driven by his desires to deviate, and so God abandons him, and let him fall into the abyss of deviation. In another verse, God says about the disbelievers that whenever a Quranic chapter is revealed, they look at one another to see if there is anyone who can see them and then they turn away. God has turned their hearts away from the truth as they are people who do not have any understanding (*at-Tawba*: 127).

They are the ones who began it; they moved away from God, so God moved their hearts far away from faith. They are those who go after the allegorical verses seeking confusion, discord, and mischief seeking to confuse the minds of those who have no understanding. Since they seek to confuse the minds of those who have no understanding, they are going against the right way. Since they are going against the right way, they are not believers. Since they are not believers, God will not guide them to goodness because faith demands from a person that they direct themselves towards belief in the Wise Lord and God; and then aid will come from God. But as long as they are not believers, how can they seek aid from God? God says (in a Qudsi (Sacred) Hadith), 'I am the Most Self-Sufficient of associates, and have no need of association with anyone.'⁽¹⁾

They seek confusion from the allegorical verses, and seek to have their own interpretation of them. *Ta'wil* (Interpretation) in Arabic means returning something to something else, so those whose minds are not deviant strive to refer the allegorical verses back to the clear verses, or to believe in them as they are.

God then says, '...And no one knows its [true] interpretation except God....' If God had wanted the allegorical verses to be clear, He would have revealed them as clear verses. So it is God's Will that there be allegorical verses, the purpose of which is to inspire the mind so that affairs do not come with a monotony that prevents the human intellect from thought and

(1) Narrated in Zubaidi's *Ithaf As-Sada Al-Muttaqin*, Ar-Rabi' ibn Habib's *Musnad*, Al-Mundhiri's *At-Tarhib wa At-Tarhib* and Bayhaqi's *Al-Asma' wa AS-Sifat*

creativity, whilst God wants the mind to be inspired, think, and deduce. When the mind is inspired to deduction, it becomes a way for a person to exercise creativity and research so that all of us experience the attempt to refer the allegorical verses back to the clear verses, and by this attain a grasp of creativity and research; it is necessity that creates solutions.

God wants to give the human being the skill not to view all matters with dull monotony accepting them sluggishly and as simple as possible. Rather, they should receive them attentively with thought and reflection. God encourages people to ponder over the Quran – otherwise there must be locks upon their hearts (*Muhammad: 24*).

All of this is to make the mind take sufficient action to receive the tenets of faith as God wants it, and receive rulings as God wants them. God wants from us that we believe in the tenets of faith, and that we act in accordance with the rulings. ‘...And no one knows its [true] interpretation except God...’ and those people whose hearts are given to perversion and deviation try to interpret it, whilst being controlled by their vain desires, so they do not arrive to the truth. The true interpretation is only known to God.

We have seen that someone criticised a person for something he has done. The one who was criticised said to him, ‘O brother, do you claim to know everything God knows?’ When he answered in the negative, he told him, ‘I am one of the things you do not know,’ telling him indirectly to leave him alone.

Let us have a closer look at the part of the verse saying, ‘...And no one knows its [true] interpretation except God. But those firm in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it: all [of it] is from our Lord....’ This rendering of the verse considers the pause in the Arabic text to be between the two sentences: ‘And no one knows its [true] interpretation except God,’ and ‘But those firm in knowledge say, “We believe in it: all [of it] is from our Lord.”’ In this reading, the meaning of the verse is that only God alone knows the interpretation of the allegorical unspecific verses; and those who are firm in knowledge, that is they are not beguiled by their base desires, proclaim their belief in all the verses as they come from God, their Lord. And this is what the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* said; thus they have belief in the unspecific verses and they act by the rulings of the perspicuous verses, and believe that both are from God.

However, according to scholars, you may place the pause at a different place in the text and the two sentences become: ‘...And no one knows its [true] interpretation except God and those firm in knowledge. They say, ‘We believe in it: all [of it] is from our Lord’” The meaning here becomes that those who are firm in knowledge know the interpretation of the allegorical verses, and consequently they say, ‘We believe in it’.

In fact, the two readings lead to the same meaning; whether we place the pause at ‘except God’ or not, the meaning returns to the same thing. The governing element of faith for those who are firm in knowledge is what God reports from their proclamation saying, ‘...We believe in it: all [of it] is from our Lord....’ So the perspicuous verses are from our Lord, and the unspecific verses are from our Lord, and He has His Wisdom in that. It happens sometimes that a command comes from a higher authority to a lower functionary, with an explanation of the reason for it; the lower functionary understands the reason and acts by the command; the higher authority then may give another command without explaining it; in this case, we have difference: one person may obey, while another may say, ‘No, you must explain the reason.’ Does the one who has faith have faith in the command, or in the reason behind it?

God *the Most High* wants us to believe in Him as He commands. If everything became understood, there would be no value in faith. The majesty of faith lies in obeying some commands, whilst their wisdom is unknown to you because if you did everything, whilst understanding the wisdom behind it, your faith would be in the reason behind the command, not in the One Who gave the command.

When we consider pork, for example, which God prohibited fourteen centuries ago, we see that in modern times, it has emerged that eating pork is harmful, and some people stopped eating it because it is harmful; is their refraining from eating it something for which they will be rewarded? Of course they will not. The reward is for those who refrain from eating pork because God has forbidden it. Because the order is from God eventhough He has not informed us of the wisdom behind it, the one who has faith in God says: God created me, and it is not possible that He, my Creator, would deceive me, and I am the servant subject to His Will.

The servant who refrains from eating pork and drinking wine in accordance with God's command is the one who earns reward; as for the one who does so out of fear of cirrhosis of the liver or disease, there is no reward for him. There is a difference between obeying a law because of its reason, and obeying a law out of obedience to the one who commands it.

So the allegorical verses came to be believed in, and those who are firm in knowledge are the opposite of those who are led by their desires. Desires lead to the lusts of the soul, and to seeking other than the truth. What is not the truth is falsehood, and all of the people of falsehood attempt to bring something which is in agreement with their desire. This is why God's legislation came to protect people from harmful desires because one person's desire could contradict another's, and the rest of humanity could have desires which contradict each other. God *the Most High* says that if the True Lord were to follow their whims, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin, and all that lives in them. Rather, in this Book (the Quran) God has conveyed to them all that they ought to bear in mind: but from their reminder they turn away (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

So we must follow in our actions one whose only desire is the truth. Religion only came to protect us from following desires and whims. It is desires that cause us to deviate. The proof that desires cause deviation from the truth is that a person who follows his desire could desire a ruling in a certain matter, and then other factors could arise to make him desire the opposite ruling, so he twists the issue according to his desire. If not, then what is it that has compelled people to leave the original Sacred Law that ruled the earth at the time of Adam *peace be upon him*?

They abandoned the Sacred Law when a group of people took it upon themselves to manage the affairs of the religion, and took from it for themselves temporal power, and began to entrust affairs to their desires. If we look at the history of world law, we find that the origin of affairs of law was reserved for men of religion, priests, and temple officials. Governance was for them alone because they were spokesmen for God's religion.

Why did this not continue, and instead came Roman, English, French, and other laws? It is because it was discovered that those in control of religious

affairs had abandoned the rule of the Sacred Law in favour of serving their desires. People noticed that those priests would rule in a case with a judgement which differed from another judgement in a similar case.

They were the same judges, with identical cases, but the judgement of desire differs from case to case; rather, it could completely contradict the first judgement, so people thought of these priests: They have left the pronouncements of religion, and followed their desires in order to gain temporal power, and so we no longer trust them.

Legislation and ruling thus came out of the hands of priests and holy men and went to other lawmakers. The matter of judgement had been the preserve of priests and holy men because people were certain that they took their rulings from God's religion. But because of human whims, people took legislation for themselves, with whatever justice they possessed even if it was slight.

With respect to the word *hawa* ('desire'), we find three related words:

1. *Hawa'* which means 'air': that which is between the sky and the earth. It also means 'wind', which moves things, and deviates and gathers them. It is a physical thing.
2. *Hawa* which means 'desire', the inclination of the soul, from the verb to incline to something.
3. *Hawiyy* or *Huwiyy*, which means 'falling'.

This indicates that he who follows his desire is bound to fall, and linguistic etymology gives this meaning. The meanings are related. So, those who are deeply firm in knowledge stay firm on God's way. As for those who follow their desires, they deviate like the deviations of the wind. If the wind changes, they go where it goes.

Those who are firm in knowledge say, as the conclusion of their knowledge, '...We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord....' So here, the issue comes together. We know that the clear verses were revealed to be acted in accordance with, and the allegorical messages came to be believed in for wisdom which God *the Most High* willed which is that we follow the command for the command's sake, not for the wisdom behind it. When we receive commands from God, we should not ask for reasons for them because we are

taking them from a Just, Wise, Loving Creator. If a person does not obey a command from God unless he knows the reason for it and the wisdom behind it, we say to this person: You do not believe in God; you believe in reasons behind His rulings; the real believer is the one who believes in the command even if he does not understand it. Those who are deeply rooted in faith say: We believe in it; as all is from God, both the clear and the allegorical messages.

God *the Most High* then says, ‘...And no one will bear this in mind except those of understanding.’ The expression ‘those of understanding’ means those whose intellects are free from whims because whim is the bane of reason and leads it to deviation. ‘...And no one will bear this in mind except those of understanding.’ ‘Understanding’ is the mind; God informs us that the mind considers the core of things, not just their outward appearance. There are rulings that concern outward matters, and rulings which require insight. God *the Most High* orders the amputation of the thief’s hand. Yet, people come playing the role of defenders of humanity and compassion saying: ‘this is cruel and brutal!’

This is superficial understanding. Insightful understanding sees that I want the hand of the thief amputated to prevent him from stealing in the first place! This is because everyone will fear for themselves, and this will prevent them from stealing. We have said before that a single car accident could result in mutilations equal to the number of people whose hands have been amputated for stealing in the entire history of Islam. So do not concoct justifications, and claim to be merciful, and do not consider punishments only as they are meted out to criminals; instead look at the crime when it occurs from them. God wants to protect people’s livelihoods so that if you work and toil and struggle and sweat, God will preserve for you the fruits of this labour so that no one else can come and get the better of you, and illegally take his own provision from your sweat and toil.

He protects everyone’s livelihood so people can live in security; this is the implication of ‘understanding’ in the verse.

In the same way we should read God’s words: ‘And in legal retribution there is life for you’ (*al-Baqara*: 179). Beware of saying: this retribution is aggression against an individual’s life. No, because ‘And in legal retribution

there is life for you' means that when a person realises that if he murders, he will be executed, this will prevent him from killing, so his life is saved, and people's lives are safeguarded from him. This is why there is life in legal retribution, and this is insightful understanding of matters. God is alerting us and warning us not to take matters according to their outer appearance, but rather to take them by looking at their core, and leave the shell that those who desire to abandon God's rulings judge by. So, when those who are deeply firm in knowledge render judgement with regard to the allegorical messages, they supplicate to God *the Most High* with the words He revealed, saying:

رَبَّنَا لَا تُزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ
رَحْمَةً إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ ﴿٨﴾

**Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You
have guided us. Grant us Your mercy: You are
the Ever Giving [8] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 8)**

So, the statement of those deeply firm in knowledge is: Every clear message and every allegorical message is from God; we act in accordance with the clear, and believe in the allegorical, and this is guidance. Then they supplicate for strength and firmness in guidance. The meaning is: Our Lord! Make us firm in worshipping You, and do not cause our hearts to deviate or swerve. This proves to us that hearts change and alter, so the last word is supplication for firm faith: 'Our Lord, let not our hearts swerve from the truth after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower.'

They seek mercy as a gift, not as a right. No created being has any right over God except to that which God bestows upon him. Those deeply rooted in knowledge ask God for grace not to fall into whims after God has guided them to this sound judgement: that all the clear and allegorical messages are from God. By this they teach us the way to reach guidance, and how to seek the bestowal of grace. As long as the person who is deeply rooted in knowledge knows something, he wants to spread it amongst the people, and so is saying to us:

Beware of thinking that the issue is just to understand the text, and that is all. From this issue, another derives. The latter does not exist only in this

world, for there is Afterlife. This world will perish because it is limited, and has an ending; but there is also the Hereafter, which will come after this one and will last until eternity. And so God states what those who are deeply firm in knowledge say:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ جَامِعُ النَّاسِ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ
إِنَّكَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ الْمِيعَادَ

**Our Lord, You will gather all people on the Day
of which there is no doubt: God never breaks
His promise [9] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 9)**

Their saying 'Our Lord' can be understood to mean that He is the One Who takes charge of their sustenance. The meaning of sustenance is to take the person being sustained to the desired level of perfection. So there is a Lord Who raises and sustains, and a servant who is sustained, and the Lord gives the human being that which will take it to the perfection desired for it.

The believers beg of God, saying: O Lord! Part of Your Sustaining us is that You protect us from the torment of the Hereafter, so when we have lived our worldly life and it is over, we know that You gather the people to a day about which there is no doubt. As long as You are Lord and God, You will not break your promises. The one who breaks promises cannot be God because at the moment of promising, God knows with His perfect Omnipotence and perfect Knowledge that He is Able to fulfil His promise. Only those who are incapable of fulfilling promises are unable to promise without any condition, and this is the case in our saying, 'If God wills' – why? That is because none of us have the absolute ability to fulfil their promise.

Let us have a close look at God's words in His command: Never say about anything that you will do it tomorrow without adding, 'if God so wills.' And if one should forget, then he should remember his Lord and pray that his Lord would guide him to get closer to a consciousness of what is right (*al-Kahf*: 23-24).

We say: Beware of saying 'I will do such-and-such' without including within it and connecting it with God's will because when you promise, you are not guaranteed of living, or fulfilling your promise. You do not do anything except

by God's will, so do not promise except by His will as you are promising that which you cannot guarantee because in reality you possess nothing. If you want to do something, or go somewhere, the action requires an agent, an object, a time, a place and a cause. It then requires the ability to perform the action. The human being possesses none of these things except that which God wills him to possess. A human being cannot guarantee that he will remain capable of fulfilling his will. If the supposed doer of the action still exists, the human being cannot ensure the existence of the object. The human being does not possess time, and nor does he possess space, and nor does he have the ability to sustain a cause in order to do what he wants to do; all of these things, the doer, the object, time, space, and the cause, are not possessed by anyone except by God.

For this reason, a person should protect himself from being a foolhardy liar, and should place himself within the confines of God's command: Never say about anything that you will do it tomorrow without adding, 'if God so wills.' And if one should forget, then he should remember his Lord and pray that his Lord would guide him to get closer to a consciousness of what is right (*al-Kahf*: 23-24).

The phrase 'if God so wills' protects the person from being a liar; when the thing that a person promises does not happen, this means that God did not will it because the person does not possess any of the elements of the action.

God says, 'Our Lord, surely You will gather the people for a Day about which there is no doubt. Indeed, God does not fail in His promise.' This is because the one who breaks promises is usually prevented by an overwhelming power that comes to them which could even be their changing their mind. As for God, there is no overwhelming power to change what He wills to do, and it is not possible for Him to change because change is not an attribute of the Infinite and the Eternal.

When God affirms that He will gather us by His will on a day about which there is no doubt, and that God does not break promises, it is an affirmation that we will meet. Why will we meet? Those deeply firm in knowledge have said: We have acted in accordance with the clear messages, and believed in the allegorical messages; and they have called on God to strengthen their hearts on guidance out of His mercy, and to keep their hearts from deviation because they

fear the day when God will gather all mankind, the day when we will meet to account for our deeds and our faith. After this, God *the Most High* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ
مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ ﴿١٠﴾

**Neither their possessions nor their children will be any use
to the disbelievers against God. The disbelievers will be fuel
for the Fire [10] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 10)**

When you as a believer hears, and the disbeliever and the hypocrite hear with you, 'Our Lord, surely You will gather the people for a Day about which there is no doubt. Indeed, God does not fail in His promise,' the disbeliever or the hypocrite might imagine that there is something that could save him from what will occur on that day such as the strength and support of offspring, or great wealth with which to ransom themselves, or friendship, or intercession. Here, God is saying to them: No, your offspring and your wealth will not avail you anything.

In ordinary speech, we say: this will not avail so-and-so, meaning that he will remain in need of other than it because sufficiency is not to be in need of anything from someone else. Wealth and children will not avail anyone on the Day of Resurrection; the matter has no relation with ancestry as there will be no kinship between them on that day. Paradise is not for sale with worldly possessions, and no one can buy his place in paradise with the wealth he possesses.

The disbelievers at the time of the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say this corrupt statement, 'As long as God has given us wealth and children in this life, He will doubtless give us better than this in the hereafter.' This is why God says to them, 'Indeed, those who have disbelieved – never will their wealth or their children avail them in the least against God....' So the matter returns to God in its entirety. It is true that in this life God creates means, which apply to the disbeliever as well as the believer. So when the disbeliever utilises the means, he achieves his goals. In the Hereafter, however, things are different. Nobody possesses any means, and this is why God describes the Last Day as the Day when they shall come forth, with nothing of themselves hidden from God.

With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With God, the One Who holds absolute sway over all that exists (*Ghafir*: 16).

In this life, human beings possess means, and live in different levels of comfort according to their differing means, and their differing labours in life, and the differing availability of means of attaining enjoyment. In the Hereafter, however, there is no labour, and there are no means because the believer lives with the Creator of causes and means in the Hereafter, God *the Most High*; and so whenever anything crosses the mind of the believer in Paradise, that thing comes to him. As for the disbelievers, their wealth will not avail them, nor will their offspring because in this life they were absorbed with wealth and offspring, and disbelieved in God.

In one of the battles in the early days of Islam, some of the Bedouin stayed behind and did not take part in the fighting, and God informed His Messenger that they will say to him that their possessions and their families kept them busy, and that they will ask him to pray to God to forgive them. God says that they utter with their tongues something that is not in their hearts (*al-Fath*: 11).

So, we see that what the disbelievers busied themselves with in this life, will not benefit them. God adds concerning the disbelievers at the end of the verse we are discussing: ‘...And it is they who are the fuel for the Fire.’ Being the fuel of the fire, they will be the tormenters, and soon they will be tormented in the fire. Consider the grave harm that will inflict them: those who torment are the ones who will be tormented because they will be the fuel of the fire. The one who is tormented will be the same one who torments.

So this is a struggle of the constituent parts: the atoms that make up the disbeliever are themselves believers and the atoms of the disobedient person are themselves obedient; the thing that has made these atoms perform actions that incur the wrath of God is the will of the person whom they comprise. In the past, we gave the example – and God has the highest of examples – of a squadron with a commander. The duty of the squadron is to hear and obey the orders of the commander. If they are brought before the high commander later, they will bring up the matter to him, saying: According to the regulations of the chain of command, we carried out the instructions that came to us from our direct commander, but we did not agree with his opinion. In religious life,

this kind of situation is described in the wise words of our Creator that on the Day of Judgement, their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them by recalling all that they did (*an-Nur*: 24).

So in this life the tongue speaks words of disbelief, while it curses its owner, and the hand commits sins and hates and curses its owner. God's Sublime Will has given the disbeliever authority over his hand and his tongue in this life, and God will remove the disbeliever's control over his limbs on the Day of Resurrection, so they will testify against him that he compelled them to commit sin, and so one part will torment the other. When God says, '...And it is they, who are the fuel for the Fire,' there is an issue which must be considered which we can take from historical facts. Those people who disbelieved in God's messages on earth encountered some torment in this life, because God does not reserve all torment for the Hereafter. If He did, people would be made miserable by the actions of the disbelievers and sinners, and because of this God hastens some torment for the disbelievers and sinners in this life. God gives an example of this:

كَذَّابٍ ءَالٍ فِرْعَوْنَ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا
فَأَخَذَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِذُنُوبِهِمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

Just as Pharaoh's people and their predecessors denied Our revelations, and God punished them for their sins: God is severe in punishing [11] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 11)

In the phrase 'like the custom of the people of Pharaoh...' the Arabic word *da'b* (rendered here as 'custom') means constant, repetitive action; so we say that the *da'b* of so-and-so is to do this or that thing, meaning that he habitually and consistently does it. Or we could say, 'So-and-so has no *da'b* except backbiting people.'

Does this mean that all of his actions are characterised by backbiting people, or that he does other things? He does other things of course; but his usual action is backbiting. This is the meaning of *da'b*/'custom': it is repeating an action successively until the action becomes a habit. So this is the meaning of the phrase 'like the custom of the people of Pharaoh.' The people of Pharaoh

came before the Islamic message, and before them were the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud and others.

God *the Most High* alerts us to consider these people and what happened to them: He did not delay their torment until the Hereafter perhaps because people might think that God *the Most High* will postpone all the disbeliever's torment until the Hereafter with His words: 'Indeed, those who have disbelieved – never will their wealth or their children avail them in the least against God. And it is they who are the fuel for the Fire' (*Al-'Imran*: 10).

Rather, torment is also in this life, and this is what we gather from God's words that for the disbelievers, there is suffering in the life of this world; but, truly, their suffering in the life to come will be harder still, and they will have none to shield them from God (*ar-Ra'd*: 34).

If the torment was postponed until the Hereafter, people would become miserable with the wicked. This is why God brings examples from this life and here He says, 'like the custom of the people of Pharaoh...', that is, like their custom, and nothing becomes a custom except by repetition of an action. The custom of the people of Pharaoh was denial, oppression, and Pharaoh's claim of divinity.

God *the Most High* says, '...and those before them. They denied Our signs, so God seized them for their sins. And God is severe in punishment.' So the custom became part of them, and part of what happened to them. When they became accustomed to disbelief and denial, God *the Most High* sent torment upon them. The custom of the people of Pharaoh was denial, and *the Exalted* Creator seized them for this by severe punishment. After urging us to consider the daybreak and the ten nights and to consider the even and the odd and to consider the night as it runs its course – after considering all this – could there be, to anyone endowed with reason, a more solemn evidence of the truth? Then God *the Most High* alerts us to be aware of how the Lord has dealt with the tribe of 'Ad, the people of Iram who had lofty pillars, the like of whom has never been created in all the lands, and with the tribe of Thamud, who carved out rocks in the valley, and with Pharaoh of the many stakes. They transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein; and therefore the Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering; for, surely, the Lord is ever on the watch (*al-Fajr*: 1-14).

So their custom was denial, and their punishment from God for this was torment and suffering. So God's words '...so God seized them for their sins. And God is severe in punishment' means that torment afflicted them in this life; and the end for the House of Pharaoh, and Thamud, and those disbelieving people before them, was what it was.

When we hear God's words: '...And God is severe in punishment,' the mind concludes that there must be a sin to merit this punishment. All metaphorical matters are always derived from physical tangible things, because the origin of the creation of any metaphorical image is the physical observable thing; physical matters are transferred to metaphorical concepts after this.

Why? It is because a physical thing is witnessed and can be grasped by everyone. As for metaphorical concepts, they are not comprehended except by reasoning beings; and the human being passes through many stages: in the stage of infancy, the human being does not understand or comprehend anything except the physical things before him. An example which I have already mentioned is the Arabic word *ghasb* (which means to take forcibly). Originally it means to skin a sheep and so it is as though when someone forcibly robs someone else it is like he is 'skinning' his possession from him as he holds on to it.

The word 'sin' (*dhanb*) and the word 'punishment' (*'uquba*) are interlinked. The word 'sin' in Arabic is derived from a physical word meaning the back end of an animal which follows the front end, so the physical meaning indicates something which follows. 'Punishment' in Arabic means something which comes after something else.

So, there is sin, and there is punishment. But what comes before the sin, and what comes after the punishment? There is no sin without a prior text: An action cannot be considered sinful or criminal except if there is a text to make it unlawful. No act is a sin; rather, there must be a text before the sin is committed that prohibits it. For this reason, conventional law views this issue thus: A person cannot be punished without criminalisation, and there is no criminalisation without a text, so nobody can come and suddenly say: This action is a punishable crime; rather, there must first be an announcement, and a text stating the criminalisation of the act.

There is no punishment without criminalisation, and there is no criminalisation without a text. The text explains the criminalisation of a given act, and that if a person commits this act, he is breaking the law. The sin is the same as this, as though it has come after a text of criminalisation. The punishment comes after the crime, and here we find that both sins and crimes are according to the original meaning of the word in Arabic, so the sin follows something, and this is why the Arabs call the pail they fill with water a *dhanub* (similar to the word *dhanb*, which means 'sin') because it comes after the rope, and *dhanub* is also the word for 'portion of punishment' in the verse in the Quran that warns that those who commit injustice shall have their portion of punishment like the share of their fellows of old: God warns them not to ask Him to hasten their doom (*adh-Dhariyat*: 59).

The naming comes because the punishment follows their crimes. So any Quranic text that mentions sin and punishment reaffirms for us the legally terminological matter that exists all over the world namely that there can be no punishment without a criminalising text. So punishment comes after the crime, that is, after the sin; and the sin is considered as such only by a legal text. We cannot come to anyone without a foregoing text and say: you have committed a sin; and this solves many problems. As an example, we can take God's judgement that He does not forgive the setting up of partners beside Him but He forgives any lesser sin to whomever He wills: for he who sets up partners with God has indeed committed a great wickedness (*an-Nisa'*: 48).

God forgives any act other than the association of partners with Him, for the association of partners with God is the peak of high treason in monotheism, and there is no forgiveness for this. Other than this, He forgives whom He wills. In another verse, however, God commands His Messenger to proclaim to God's servants who have transgressed against themselves not to despair of God's mercy; indeed, God forgives all sins – for, surely, He alone is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful (*az-Zumar*: 53).

So, there are some people, in trying to cast doubt and find conflict between verses of the Quran, who say that God says He does not forgive that partners are associated with Him, and forgives other than that for whom He wills. (They are trying to insinuate that this verse stands in contradiction with the verse that says that God forgives all sins.) It is said that Ibn 'Abbas *God be pleased with them*,

when this verse was revealed saying that God forgives all sins, said, 'Except polytheism,' so we see that this verse does not contradict the other verse.

In reality, if people of reason examine the issue in detail, they will not find any conflict. This is because the people who transgressed against themselves are from the servants of God who believe in Him and do not associate anything with Him, but who have strayed and fallen into misdeed, and so it is said of them that they are sinners because they believe in God and accept what He has revealed. As for the polytheist, he neither recognises God, and nor the rulings He has legislated, yet his actions are not described as sins, but rather as disbelief and polytheism. So there is no contradiction or conflict in the messages of the Most Merciful.

God says, '[Theirs is] like the custom of the people of Pharaoh and those before them. They denied Our signs, so God seized them for their sins. And God is severe in punishment.' This wise statement is balanced, and harmonised. The sin comes after the text, and the punishment comes after this. God then says, commanding His Messenger to deliver the message to the disbelievers:

قُلْ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَعْيُهُمْ وَتُحْشَرُونَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٢﴾

**[Prophet], say to the disbelievers, 'You will be defeated
and driven together into Hell, a foul resting place [12]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 12)**

This is a command from God to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to deliver God's message, and carry to the disbelievers a message containing a warning. Who are these disbelievers? Are they the disbelievers of Quraysh? They may probably be. Are they the Jews? They also may probably be. In fact, this warning includes every single disbeliever.

The Quranic text does not come according to the usual way people speak. I will give an example – and God has the highest of examples, and He is Purified of any resemblance or parallel. Suppose you tell your son to go to his uncle and say 'my father will visit you tomorrow.' What will the boy say to his uncle? He will go to his uncle and say 'my father will visit you tomorrow.' But the one giving the instruction, i.e. the father, said: 'Say to your uncle "my

father will visit you tomorrow.” So, if the boy is meticulously trustworthy, he will say, ‘My father said: “say to your uncle ‘my father will visit you tomorrow.”’ When we read in the Quran ‘Say to those who disbelieve, “You will be overcome and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place,”’ this is the peak of trustworthiness from the Messenger who delivers the Message of God, who carried to the disbelievers the text exactly as God commanded him to deliver it to them. If not, it would have been sufficient for The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to go to the disbelievers and say to them, ‘...You will be overcome and gathered together....’ But how would they know, in this case, that this word was not from Muhammad, a human being? It is because of this, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* tells them that God has instructed him to give them the message, with His words: ‘Say to those who disbelieve, ‘You will be overcome and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place.’”

The Messenger did not inform them merely of the content of the statement; rather, he delivered to them the exact text of the message God charged him to deliver. When God commands His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Quran to deliver a message to the disbelievers, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one addressing, and the disbelievers are the ones being addressed, so when he confronts them, he says to them, ‘You will be overcome....’ In another verse, God commands the Messenger to tell those who disbelieve that if they desist, all that is past shall be forgiven them; but if they revert to their wrongdoing, then what happened to the like of them in times gone by will be repeated (*al-Anfal*: 38).

Analogy would suggest that he should say, ‘if you desist, all that is past shall be forgiven you.’ It is as though the disbelievers were not present when God said it, but the Messenger of God was the one present being addressed, and that God was speaking concerning those who were absent.

However, God *the Most High*, in the verse that we are currently examining, charges His Messenger to deliver with exactitude. So, sometimes the transmission is from the First Commander exactly as it issued from Him, as in His words ‘if they desist,’ and at other times, the First Commander charges the Messenger to deliver the word as though he were directly addressing them, i.e. do not say

‘they will be overcome’, but rather say ‘...You will be overcome’ because you are the one who will address them. This compositional precision could not come from anyone but a Wise Power.

It is either a message directed at the disbelievers of Quraysh, or at all who disbelieve. The overcoming will be in this life, and the gathering will be in the Hereafter.

The Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered the Quranic text ‘...You will be overcome....’ But let us consider the time when he said it. He said it when the Muslims were few in number, unable to defend themselves, unable to do anything. The believers lived under each other’s protection or immigrated to far-off places. It is not possible for such an address to come except from someone who possesses the means of all things.

The Messenger of God said it, delivering God’s message, while the believers were in an obvious state of weakness. When he said it, it became a point that had to be proved because the One Who charged him with delivering it, God *the Most High*, was capable of doing it. ‘Say to those who disbelieve, “You will be overcome...”’ not only with punishment in this life, but in the Hereafter also: ‘...and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place.’ This gave glad tidings to the Messenger of God and his Companions, and a warning to those who disbelieved in him; and the realisation of it took place at the battle of Badr. When the verse was revealed stating that the host of the disbelievers will be vanquished and that they will turn their backs in flight (*al-Qamar*: 45), our master ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab wondered ‘which host is this?’ He knew that the Muslims were weak and incapable, and that the means for the Muslims’ victory did not exist, but the Messenger of God was not speaking to the believers of mere means, but rather of the Lord of all means. He challenged and warned them, though he and his companions were weak before them, and reality came to confirm the veracity of God’s statement: ‘...You will be overcome...’ and the victory of the Muslims was truly complete, and the disbelievers were overcome.

Is not the veracity of the message delivered by the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning what would happen in this life, evidence of the veracity of the message concerning what would happen in the Hereafter? The realisation of ‘...You will be overcome...’ confirms ‘...and gathered together

to hell....' The verse contains two matters: firstly, a message of the defeat of the disbelievers in this life which is something that all people have witnessed; and the other matter is the affair of the Hereafter which some people might deny. God informed His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that you, Muhammad, will overcome the disbelievers, though you do not possess the means to overcome them. Despite this, events came to confirm that the disbelievers were utterly defeated. Since the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was truthful with regard to the first message, despite his not possessing the means to do so, he is assuredly truthful with regard to the second matter, the report concerning the gathering in the fire of hell.

Some exegetes have said that this is directed at the Jews because when the Muslims triumphed at Badr, the Jews panicked. This is because they had not expected the Muslims and Islam to be victorious at Badr, and so when Islam triumphed, some of the Jews said, 'Muhammad is the Prophet God has promised us, and we should believe in him,' but others among them said, 'Wait until after another battle.' That is, do not accept it after the first battle. So they waited, and then the battle of Uhud came, which was a stalemate.

We say: what prevents the verse from being directed at the Jews, the polytheists, and everyone who disbelieved? The statement is general, although it is related that the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* gathered the Jews in the market of Banu Qaynuqa' and said to them, 'O you Jews! Beware of that which has afflicted Quraysh, and submit (embrace Islam), before what has afflicted them comes to you, for you know I am a Prophet and Messenger.' What did they say to him? They said 'Do not be deceived because you have met a group of inexperienced people, who have no knowledge of war, and have taken your opportunity with them. If you fight us, you will find that we are the real people.' So God revealed His words: 'Say to those who disbelieve, "You will be overcome and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place."'

The *mihad* (rendered here as 'resting place') in Arabic is what we usually prepare for a baby to sleep on in security. The expression 'wretched is the resting place' indicates that they will not be able to change the state they are in, just as a baby cannot fight the one who puts them down to sleep in any place. God then says:

فَدَكَانَ لَكُمْ ءَايَةٌ فِي فِتْنَتِي الثَّقَاتِ فَمَثَلٌ فِي سَكِيلِ
 اللَّهُ وَأُخْرَى كَافِرَةٌ يَرَوْنَهُمْ مِثْلَهُمْ رَأَى الْعَيْنِ وَاللَّهُ يُؤَيِّدُ
 بَصَرَهُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿١٣﴾

You have already seen a sign in the two armies that met in battle, one fighting for God's cause and the other made up of disbelievers. With their own eyes [the former] saw [the latter] to be twice their number, but God helps whoever He will. There truly is a lesson in this for all with eyes to see' [13]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 13)

When God says 'Already there has been for you a sign ...,' who is being addressed in this verse? There is no doubt that the ones being addressed are all those who lived after this event, whether they are believers or disbelievers. For the believer, it confirms for him that God's help will come, even without the presence of the means for it. As for the disbeliever, the verse comes to him with the admonition that God can cause him to fail even when he possesses many means. God has made this event a sign, and a sign is something wondrous, i.e. the event and its consequences are contrary to human expectations.

This is a general statement that applies to anyone who belongs to either of the two hosts it mentions, whether it is the host of faith or the host of disbelief. As for the host of faith, it is so they understand that material means are not everything in the battle between truth and falsehood because God has armies that they cannot see. This address also shows the error of the host of disbelief, so they cannot say, 'We have in our means numbers and strong preparations,' because the battle between truth and falsehood has raged before, and truth was victorious.

The word 'host' invokes a group of people, but it has further specification. A group could be found in which each person has their own interest in life. When we hear the word 'host', however, it indicates a group in the process of performing a single action. Outside of war, every person has actions which might differ from those of the next person. The word 'host', however, indicates a group of people with one enterprise, and one action, for one goal.

Doubtlessly war depicts this phenomenon most precisely; indeed, war is the one thing that unites every host in the way of one enterprise and one

action for one goal. This is because each individual in a host is not capable of defending himself alone; everyone relies on and returns to the host, and is not capable of separating himself from his group. An individual in his ordinary life, however, is capable of separating himself from his group. So, the word 'host' indicates a group of people in a single operation, and the word is always used in connotations of war to depict the forces facing each other. When God says, 'Already there has been for you a sign in the two hosts which met ...,' this means there was a struggle between two hosts. God clarifies for us the nature of these hosts, saying, '...one fighting in the Way of God and another of disbelievers....' When we examine the Quranic text precisely, we find that God did not give us any description of the host that were fighting in God's Way, nor did He specify that they were believers; yet He specified that the other host were disbelievers. This means that the host that fought in God's Way were necessarily believers. God also did not mention that the host who were disbelievers were fighting in Satan's cause, as it suffices to know that their disbelief inevitably led to their fighting in Satan's cause.

God left out of the description of the first host that which He indicated with His description of the second host. We know the description of the host who fought in God's Way by their opposite in the verse, which is the other host. The opposite of the disbelievers are believers. We also know that the disbelieving host fought in Satan's cause simply by our knowledge that the first, faithful host, were fighting in God's Way. In Arabic linguistics, this is called 'interweaving', meaning that we leave out from the first the counterpart of that which is affirmed in the second and we leave out of the second the counterpart of that which is affirmed in the first. This is to avoid repetition, and to highlight the link between fighting in God's Way and faith, and the link between fighting in Satan's cause and disbelief.

So, according to this meaning, the verse confirms to us the following: You have already had a sign, i.e. a wondrous matter, contrary to the logic of material means, in the two hosts; for when the believing host met the disbelieving host in battle, the limited believing host managed, by means of the goal for which they were fighting, which was to fight in God's Way, to triumph over the disbelieving host, who were fighting in Satan's cause.

After this, God says, ‘...They saw them [to be] twice their [own] number by [their] eyesight....’ So, we have before us two hosts. Which are they that saw? Which are they that were seen? Who were the seers, and who were the seen? If the seers were the believers, then those seen were the disbelievers. If the seers were the disbelievers, then those seen were the believers. Let us consider the matter according to both meanings.

If it was the disbelievers who saw the believers, they saw them as twice their own number. The disbelievers numbered at almost one thousand, so they saw the believers as twice their number, i.e. two thousand. Or, the meaning could be that the believers saw the disbelievers as though they were twice their actual number. The number of believers was around three hundred and fourteen, so twice that is six hundred and twenty eight fighters.

So, if we take ‘twice their own number’ to mean the number of the believers, this would mean that the disbelievers saw around six hundred and twenty-eight fighters, and if we take the meaning of ‘twice their own number’ to mean the number of the disbelievers, then the disbelievers saw the believers as around two thousand. What is the aim of this? God is speaking about the confrontation between disbelief and faith, where God gave victory to faith over disbelief.

Some people who try desperately to find faults in the Quran put the question: Why does the Quran say ‘twice their own number,’ when in another place God says to the Messenger that He showed them to him in a dream as few; for, had He shown them to him as many, the believers would surely have lost heart, and would surely have disagreed with one another about what to do. But God saved them from this; surely, He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts of men. And so, when they met in battle, He made the infidels appear as few in the believers’ eyes – just as He made the believers appear as of little account in the disbelievers’ eyes – so that God might accomplish a thing which He willed to be done; for all things go back to God (*al-Anfal*: 43-44).

These verses confirm a large number, whether it is a large number of believers or disbelievers, yet the verse we are currently examining confirms a small number. Those who have doubt in the Quran say: How could the Quran handle a single event in two different ways? We say to these doubters: You

are lacking in wisdom because there is a difference between courage when approaching a battle, and the practical and mental spirit that takes over the warrior in the midst of battle. God *the Most High* is speaking about two states: God decreased these people in the eyes of those, and decreased those people in the eyes of these so that the believers, when they saw the disbelievers as though they were few in number, they would increase in courage and strength of faith, in order to achieve victory.

As for the disbelievers; when they saw the believers as few in number, they would consider them lightly, and be scornful when confronting them. However, when the battle commenced, what occurred? Everyone entered the battle with hope in the paucity of the opposition, so what happened to their nerves? The believer entered the battle well prepared to meet the disbelievers. The disbelievers' nerve flagged when the number turned out to be more than they had expected, and so God says that when they met in battle, He made the infidels appear as few in the believers' eyes – just as He made the believers appear as of little account in the disbelievers' eyes – so that God might accomplish a thing which He willed to be done; for all things go back to God (*al-Anfal*: 44).

This depicts the state before the battle because God did not want one side to dread the other, and in this case the battle might not proceed. But when the battle began, God turned affairs around, and moved them from one opposite to the other. Changing something from one opposite to the other is a sign that a Higher Power is guiding emotions and feelings, and the Higher Power is able to create whatever emotions He desires.

God first decreased the perceived numbers so that they would not dread the battle, and then in the midst of the battle, God made each side of them seem many in the eyes of the other side so that each host saw the other as a great many, and faithful courage was inspired in the souls of the believers, and they fought with vigour, and the nerve of the disbelievers flagged when they encountered higher numbers than they had anticipated. And God says, 'Already there has been for you a sign in the two hosts which met - one fighting in the Way of God and another of disbelievers. They saw them [to be] twice their [own] number by [their] eyesight. But God supports with His victory whom He wills. Indeed in that is a lesson for those of vision.'

This verse is a message of glad tidings of victory to all those who believe, and at the same time a message of warning to every disbeliever that failure will befall him if he confronts the group of believers. Beware of judging matters according to the scale of material means. The means that are expected from you are only those within the ability of humans, and the rest should be left to Divine Predestination. The faithful host should not be dispirited in front of a great number, and the disbelievers should not be deluded by their strength of numbers because they have in front of them a precedent confirming that a small number of believers defeated a large number of disbelievers.

Another alternative meaning of the verse is that the disbelievers saw the believers as twice the number of the disbelievers. Another meaning (thirdly) is that the disbelievers saw the believers as twice their actual number. Another meaning (fourthly) of the verse is that the Muslims saw the disbelievers as twice their number, i.e. twice the number of the believers, i.e. just over six hundred. This would mean that the number of the disbelievers in the eyes of the believers was less than the actual number of disbelievers. So what is the meaning of 'twice their number' here? God promised His support to the believers when He commanded His Prophet to urge the believers to fight: if there are twenty of them who are patient in adversity, they will overcome two hundred; and if there are one hundred of them, they will overcome one thousand of those who are disbelievers because they are people who have no understanding (*al-Anfal*: 65).

The proportion here means that a single believer could defeat ten disbelievers in battle. This is the promise of God. When God wanted to make things easier and the noble verse was revealed stating that God has lightened the hardship for the believers, and He knows that in them is weakness. So if there are from them one hundred who are steadfast, they will overcome two hundred. And if there are among them a thousand, they will overcome two thousand by permission of God. And God is with the steadfast (*al-Anfal*: 66).

So God lightened the proportion where one believer could defeat two disbelievers. The believers are promised victory by God even if they face double their number. In the verse we are currently examining, in which God brings glad tidings to the believers as well as warning to the disbelievers, He

says, '...But God supports with His victory whom He wills. Indeed in that is a lesson for those of vision.'

We hear the word '*ibra* (rendered here as 'lesson'), and the origin of the word '*ibra* in Arabic conveys the meaning of 'crossing from one place to another,' which in Arabic is '*uboor* ('crossing'). In our ordinary life, we assign places in the streets for pedestrians to cross in order for them to cross safely from one side of the street to the other. The '*uboor* (crossing) of the ocean is ('*uboor*) crossing from one shore to another.

So, the meaning of the Arabic word '*uboor* is crossing from one place to another and '*abra* means a tear-drop because it falls from its place in the eye to the cheek. '*Ibara* means a sentence that we utter because it travels from the mouth to the ear, so it, too, involves crossing. '*Abir* means the scent that travels from a distant flower to arrive at the nose. So, the root of the Arabic word ('*uboor*) indicates the meaning of 'crossing/penetration/travelling.'

When God says, '...Indeed in that is a lesson...' ('*ibra*), i.e. in your being transported from a state which threw fear into your hearts, O believers, because you are few in number, and they are many, to God's help; and in transporting you, O disbelievers, to defeat, despite your numerous host and preparations.

The 'lesson' here is an event which takes you from one state to a different state, like a tyrant whose day we see come, and so we say 'there is a lesson in this for us', i.e. it has transported us from seeing him in power to oppress to seeing him in humiliation.

So, in this way, the 'lesson' is an eye-opening admonition which transfers one reality to another, something which the intellect might find astonishing. The ending of this noble verse with this meaning is a comprehensive clarification and elucidation; in its beginning, God says, 'Already there has been for you a sign in the two hosts which met ...,' and the verse concludes by saying, '...Indeed in that is a lesson for those of vision.'

So, a lesson is something which takes us from one matter to another that might be unusual according to material means, that is, if you are confined to your own views; but the believer is not confined to his own views. If God *the Most High* had willed to torment the disbelievers without their facing the believers and

fighting them, He would have tormented them without it, but He willed that the torment of the disbelievers would be by the hands of the believers as He commanded them to fight the disbelievers and God will chastise them by their hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will help the believers against them; and He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe (*at-Tawba*: 14).

If God had willed to torment the disbelievers by means other than the hands of the believers, He could have sent a natural phenomenon to torment them such as an earthquake to destroy them, but God wanted to torment the disbelievers by the hands of the believers. '...God supports with His victory whom He wills. Indeed in that is a lesson for those of vision.' 'Support' is power, so He desires from you only the starting point of action, and then God will complete the victory. 'Supports' means 'gives power to', so God strengthens with His help whom he wills, and the lesson is there for those who have eyes to see.

Someone might say: 'Is the lesson for those who have eyes to see, or for those who have insight?' We say that the lesson is for those who have eyes because the matter that the verse is concerned with is a physical matter to be witnessed, so whoever has two eyes must use them. If reflection and pondering are not granted to every person, eyesight is present in the majority of people, and all of these people can open their eyes, and witness this matter.

If we look at the battle itself, we find clear evidence of the truth of the statement. The believers were few, and their numbers are known and recorded, and their equipment was light; they had not gone out with the intention of war. They had only set out to take possession of caravans carrying provisions such as food and clothing to replace what the polytheists had usurped of their wealth in Mecca. If they had only taken possession of the caravan, their victory would not have been as great as it was because caravans did not usually carry a lot of military equipment; they were only protected by guards. God, however, desired for them a resounding, mighty victory against a powerful, heavily armed force. God promised them victory over one of the two hosts: God gave the believers the promise that one of the two enemy hosts would fall to them; and they would have liked to seize the less powerful one, whereas it was God's will to prove the truth to be true in accordance with His words, and to wipe out the last remnant of the disbelievers (*al-Anfal*: 7).

God's promise was to give the believers victory over one of the two parties, and human nature would hope to have victory against the less dangerous party, i.e. the unarmed party, the caravan. But this kind of victory would not have had the reverberation of the victory against the armed party; it would have been easy to say: Muhammad and those with him fought against a group of tradesmen without weapons or an army. God, however, wanted to make from this battle a separation line between truth and falsehood, and for truth to win out.

You, O believers, did not set out except to capture the caravan; your preparations were not sufficient for battle. As for the disbelievers, they came in full power, with all of their force, for Mecca had sent out all its sons for this battle. When victory comes to the believers in an occasion like this, it is true victory, and a wondrous sign from among God's signs. It becomes a lesson to others, and for this reason we find wondrous things about this battle, the battle of Badr.

Of these wonders, we find brothers each having their own opposing stance, fighting against each other; and we find fathers and sons each with their own stance and opposition fighting against each other despite the close kinship between them. For example, the son of Abu Bakr *God be pleased with him*, who had not yet embraced Islam, was on the side of the disbelievers, and his father, the Siddiq, the great believer, was with the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him*.

After Abu Bakr's son converted, he told his father something out of gratitude and duty, saying, 'You appeared to me on the day of Badr, so I turned my face away from you.' Abu Bakr *God be pleased with him*, the trustworthy one, said, 'By God, if you had appeared to me, I would have killed you.'

Both of the positions are logical. Why? Because when Abu Bakr's son met with his father, and saw his father's face, he was drawing comparison between Abu Bakr and what? He was drawing a comparison between his father and falsehood, and he knew with certainty that it was falsehood, and so Abu Bakr's son preferred his father, and for this reason, he spared him and did not touch him with harm. Abu Bakr as-Siddiq *God be pleased with him*, however, was comparing faith in God with his son, and of course faith was greater in Abu Bakr's view, so if he had seen his son on the day of Badr, he would have killed him.

God has wisdom behind every Qurayshi war criminal killed at the hands of the believers, and God has wisdom behind every disbeliever who survived

because they had been saved for a greater cause of faith, wherein they would serve well that cause. If Khalid ibn Al-Walid had been killed in any of the events in which he was on the side of disbelief, it would have been a great loss to us Muslims. This is because God saved him for religious battles in which he would be the drawn sword of God; and if 'Ikrima had been killed, the Islamic community would have lost a military genius as well.

The Muslims were saddened on the day of Badr because they did not kill those heroes; that was because they did not know God's wisdom in saving those warriors so that they could later join the ranks of Faith. God did not allow the Muslim warriors on the day of Badr to reach those warriors who at that time were still following the religion of their tribe because He was saving them for religious events that would come later, in which they would stand and fight in the ranks of the believers; and this was an unprecedented victory.

And we have Abu 'Aziz, the brother of Mus'ab ibn 'Umair, one of the companions of the Prophet whom the Messenger of God *peace and blessings be upon him* sent to call to the Islamic religion and teach the people of Medina; Mus'ab was one of the spoiled young men of Quraysh, surrounded by opulence, and whose mother was very wealthy; and when the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* saw him wearing a sheep-skin after a time when he had used to wear silk, He *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his companions, 'Look what faith has done to your companion.'

Mus'ab met his brother Abu 'Aziz in the battle, and Abu 'Aziz was a disbeliever and Mus'ab *God be pleased with him* was a Muslim standing with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

When Mus'ab *God be pleased with him* saw his brother Abu 'Aziz captured by a Muslim fighter named Abu Al-Yusr, he said, 'O Abu Al-Yusr, keep strong hold of your prisoner as his mother is rich and well-off, and she will pay a large ransom.'

His brother Abu 'Aziz said to him, 'Is this your way of commending your brother?' and Mus'ab *God be pleased with him* said, pointing to Abu Al-Yusr, 'This is my brother, not you.' This was the spirit of faith that caused a small host to defeat the people of disbelief; the great power of faith overcoming the sentiments of brotherhood and of paternity, and the sentiment of filiation. God

made the occasion of Badr a symbol so that no believer could be downhearted even if the numbers of believers were few, or their preparations were scant, and so that no disbeliever could be deluded even if his people were superior in number and materials.

God made it a symbol of true faith and this is why it is said: Covet death, and you will be granted life. The matter of faith is what fills the spirit of the believer; it is truly a profound and deep issue for the spirit. What do the disbelievers expect when they lie in wait for the believers? When they lie in wait to fight them, the believers will enter paradise if they are killed or they will gain victory over the disbelievers. In this regard, God commands the Prophet to put forth to the disbelievers the question: What are you expecting to befall us? It will be one of two good things (martyrdom and paradise or victory); and we hope that God will inflict you with suffering from Him or by our hands; so you wait and we wait, and we shall see (*at-Tawba*: 52).

So, success here will come in one of two ways: either victory over the disbelievers or martyrdom in God's Way, and attaining the status of the martyrs in paradise – and both of these are desirable things. The believers wait for the disbelievers, either for God to afflict the disbelievers with torment from Himself, or to afflict them by the hands of the believers. It is a clear and perfect equilibrium of faith.

زَيْنَ لِلنَّاسِ حُبُّ الشَّهَوَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ وَالْبَنِينَ وَالْقَنَاطِيرِ الْمُقَنْطَرَةِ
مِنَ الذَّهَبِ وَالْفِضَّةِ وَالْخَيْلِ الْمُسَوَّمَةِ وَالْأَنْعَامِ وَالْحَرْثِ
ذَٰلِكَ مَتَكُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الْمَتَابِ ﴿١٤﴾

The love of desirable things is made alluring for men – women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high, horses with fine markings, livestock, and farmland – these may be the joys of this life, but God has the best place to return to [14] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 14)

Let us contemplate the context in which this noble verse comes. The verse addresses the battle that Allah *Glorified is He* has caused to be continuous and eternal in order to clarify for us that spiritual battles require sincere devotion

to Him and drastic change of some habits to which a believer has become accustomed and from which he derives worldly delights and enjoyments. These spiritual battles require the sincere believer to sacrifice much of his wealth to equip himself and others and be prepared.

He who fails to rise up to such spiritual battles is a person overwhelmed by worldly desires. Pondering over the context of the verse in reference, notice that it comes after the verse depicting the path to the recurring unprecedented victories for believers so that we would not be dazzled by the glamorous worldly desires and distracted from relishing the delight of fighting in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He* for His word to prevail. Allah says: 'Beautified for people is the love of worldly desires...' (*Al-Imran*: 14). The Arabic verb used in the verse- *Zuyyina*, meaning "(to be) beautified", makes a clear distinction between the enjoyments and pleasures that Allah has deemed lawful for us and for the ones with which He is not pleased. This is because beautification usually denotes making additional improvements to the essence of the object or person. A woman is beautiful in essence and then further beautifies herself by means of make-up, clothes, ornaments, jewellery, etc. Such beautification is an additional improvement for the purpose of enhancing her original beauty.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is urging us to embrace the worldly life, not to reject it. He wants us, though, to be mindful of overindulgence in its alluring beautified pleasures and adornments. He wants us to embrace the worldly life but to consider the real nature of the worldly pleasures and enjoyments, which are associated with preserving life. He says: 'Beautified for man is the love of worldly desires through women....' (*Al-Imran*: 14). What is "desire"? A desire refers to the strong inner inclination towards a certain act or thing.

When one thinks more deeply on this verse, one can see that it clearly underlines the fact that such inner inclinations towards worldly needs that ensure the preservation of life are actually good and acceptable in Islam. However, when a person overindulges in the gratification of such acceptable needs, it is an undesirable and disliked attitude.

We have previously highlighted the example of the strongest human desire, namely the sexual desire, and we underlined that animals can be seen

as better than humans in this respect. Animals embrace the sexual desire as a means for the preservation of their species. This is evidenced by the fact that once a female animal mates with a male, she does not allow another male to mate with her. Animals do not usually indulge in sex more than what is strictly necessary for conception. Similarly, a male would not solicit a female to engage in sexual intercourse if he finds out that she is pregnant!⁽¹⁾ For animals, the sexual desire is a means of preserving their existence and life on earth, unlike human beings who have pleasure-driven motivation to engage in sexual activities as a source of recurring pleasure⁽²⁾.

However, human beings unjustly describe a person's strong sexual drive as having a "bestial sexual appetite." It would have been a good thing if such a person truly had a bestial sexual appetite because animals gratify their sexual desires and normally indulge in sex within what is necessary for conception. On the contrary, human beings have taken it so far beyond what is necessary for reproduction, adding a philosophical dimension to the equation. Hence, overindulgence in carrying out lawful acts beyond that which is permissible, is regarded as an indication of the lowliness of the evil-inclined soul.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to guarantee the preservation of the universe, which can be attained through two things: the preservation of one's life by means of providing one's needed nutrition (food and water), and preserving the existence and continuity of life on earth by means of reproduction.

Contemplating this issue, we realise that the Creator is All-Wise, and All Knowing. He knows that raising animal offspring is rather a simple task compared to raising human offspring. The pigeon, for instance, feeds its chicks until they are able to fly and then the mother will have no knowledge of their whereabouts as they fly away and start their own lives independently. However, raising human offspring requires significant toil and tremendous efforts until the child reaches adulthood. This is why there should be harmony between the

(1) From Translator: The Sheikh's statement was made in a speech preaching virtue and urging his listeners to stick to chastity and avoid promiscuity which is generally attributed to animals.

(2) From Translator: The Sheikh's statement was made in a speech preaching virtue and urging his listeners to stick to chastity and avoid promiscuity which is generally attributed to animals.

gratification of the human being's sexual desires and the hardship and toil they would have to endure in the process of preserving the product of such pleasure.

Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Beautified for man is the love of worldly desires through women...' (*Al-Imran*: 14). The question arises as who has beautified such pleasures and desires for Man? If the beautification is channelled into the gratification of lawful enjoyments beyond what is needed, then it is the work of Satan. If it is within the scope of ensuring the preservation of the human existence and channelled into the lawful outlets, then it is from Allah.

Allah *the Exalted* adds the Arabic word *Al-Banin*, meaning "offspring," in the verse to the category of worldly desires. In this context, it refers to male offspring, specifically.

Why did not Allah refer to 'female offspring' as well? This is because people tended to seek sons to be a source of honour and pride for the family; sons would not expected to bring about them shame as daughters might. Before Islam, Arabs used to bury their female infants alive out of fear of future shame. For many people, male offspring were often more desirable than female offspring. In fact, this phenomenon is still evident in some present-day communities even among those who speak about and advocate women's rights.

Allah *the Exalted* also adds to the category of the worldly desires, '...heaped-up treasures of gold and silver...' (*Al-Imran*: 14). The Arabic word *qanatir* is the plural form of *qintar*, denoting a specific weight. Besides being a unit for measuring weight, the qintar was also used as a unit for measuring volume until people noticed that it had a particular weight (about 100 pounds or 100 Kg). People started using it as a unit for measuring weight.

It was a sign of affluence and richness in ancient times to bring the hide of a bull and fill it with gold; this amount of a bull's hide of gold was called qintar. The verse reads, 'heaped-up treasures (*qanatir muqantara*) of gold and silver...' (*Al-Imran*: 14). Allah *Glorified is He* is confirming the literal meaning to denote the fact that they are complete *qanatir* in terms of weight, not less. We often find in the Arabic language words described with adjectives derived from the same root to confirm the intended meaning. The same applies to the word *Dinar* in the sentence "*dananir*

mudandarah” meaning a lot of *Dinars*. For example, we say “*zhil zhaleel*”, meaning “a shadowy shade” to describe a shadow as being very heavy and thick, and we say “*layl alyal*” to describe a night as being very dark and dim.

Darkness, for example, blocks sunrays. There may be one barrier between a person and the sun or more than one barrier. The shade in the second case is thicker. This is why the shade of a tree is so nice because the leaves block the sunrays and these leaves shade one another. Thus, they provide a thick shadow forming something of a natural air-conditioner.

This is why people in modern times make tents from several layers of fabric with several inches of space between them so that one fabric would shade the other. The difference between the natural thick shade of the trees and that of such tents is that each leaf which shades a person is shaded itself by another one and the leaves of the tree are in different positions so as to give room for the breeze to flow between them. Tents, however, block out the breeze. An Arab poet described an orchard, saying:

It blocks the sunrays from all directions, but allows the breeze to flow through.

So, when Allah *the Exalted* describes the *qanatir* (treasures) as *muqantarah* (stored-up and hoarded), it means that these treasures are accurately measured. What is the nature of these treasures? The verse goes on, ‘treasures of gold and silver, and fine horses branded (with their distinct mark)...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 14). Horses were considered signs of nobility, leadership, and prestige. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “Good is tied to the forelock of the horses until the Day of Judgment.”⁽¹⁾

Allah says: ‘fine horses branded (with their distinct mark)...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 14). It is common that the word “fine” would have many different meanings. The Arabic word used in the verse to describe horses is *mussawwamah*, which is derived from the Arabic verb *sama*, denoting being bred in open pastures where they can eat freely, as opposed to being tied-up and forced to eat only what is offered to them. It also means that they have distinctive marks; one horse may

(1) [*Al-Bukhari and Muslim*]

be with "*ghurrah*," i.e. white blaze on the horse's brow (*agharr*), another may be black (*adham*), and yet another one may be bright chestnut (*asqar*).

The word "fine" also denotes being well trained and tamed. Horses are originally wild and fierce; they must be tamed so that Man can benefit from them. Thus, we come to know that the Arabic word *mussawwamah* or "fine", has diverse meanings.

These aforementioned fine horses are freely-grazed and bred in open pastures where they can eat freely; they have distinct marks such as "*ghurrah*," i.e. white blaze on the horse's brow, white spots on their feet, or black or bright chestnut colours; they are also well-trained and tamed. We notice that this verse, which lists different kinds of worldly pleasures, comes right after the one that discusses Jihad, or struggling in the cause of Allah, and in this context, it refers to war with those oppressing Muslim people.

War requires staying away from one's family for long; accordingly, the fulfilment of one's desires, be it sexual desire or desire for offspring and wealth, must not come in the way, hindering the person's efforts in this regard. The believer gladly spends his wealth and efforts in *Jihad* and horses are items of wealth spent for that very purpose.

The previous verse reads: "You have already had a sign in the two hosts that met in battle, one host fighting in the cause of Allah and the other denying Him; with their own eyes [the former] saw the others as twice their own number: but Allah strengthens with His succour whom He wills. In this, behold, there is indeed a lesson for all who have eyes to see" (*Al- 'Imran*: 13)

This underlines the fact that a believer should not give up his true aspiration (at times of war) - namely attaining martyrdom in the cause of Allah, or victory - for the sake of fleeting worldly desires and pleasures: women, children, heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, fine horses branded (with their distinct mark), and cattle. Allah says, concerning cattle, in the chapter of (*al-An'am*: 6) 'And of cattle (He created) beasts of burden and those which are fit for slaughter only; eat of what Allah has given you and do not follow the footsteps of the Satan; surely he is your open enemy. [They are] eight mates - of the sheep, two and of the goats, two. Say, "Is it the two males He

has forbidden or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge, if you should be truthful.” And of the camels, two and of the cattle, two. Say, ‘Is it the two males He has forbidden or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Or were you witnesses when Allah charged you with this? Then who is more unjust than one who invents a lie about Allah to mislead the people by [something] other than knowledge? Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people)” (*al-An‘am*: 142 - 144).

The verse made mention of the following: two sheep, two goats, two camels, and two cows; the total is eight pairs. They cannot be counted as sixteen as some early scholars suggested. A pair is not counted as two. It is one unit which consists of two people or things of the same sort considered together. Another example is the word “twin”. A twin refers to two offspring; when we say two twins, this means four offspring. The Arabic word *taw‘am*, meaning twins, is also used to refer to offspring in a multiple birth, or more than two offspring (twins, triplets, quadruplets, quintuplets, sextuplets, etc.).

Allah says regarding the beautification of worldly pleasures: ‘Beautified for people is the love of worldly desires- of women; children; heaped-up treasures of gold and silver; fine, branded horses of high mark; cattle; and tilled lands.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 14). The Arabic word *harth* means “tilled lands” and is used in this verse to refer to plants and crops. Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to bear in mind that, while He causes some plants to grow without any effort exerted on our part, He also requires us to exert effort in growing others through tilling and the preparation of land for crop bearing.

The word tilling means “stirring up soil and breaking up soil crusts and clods to prepare it for cultivation”. Crops need water, air, and a suitable environment to grow; the farmer should provide suitable soil in which the tiny root hairs of the radicle (the embryonic root of the seedling) will have space to grow and become strong.

So, tilling involves stirring up the soil and preparing it so that the seed can grow. Allah *the Exalted* has placed within the two cotyledons (embryonic leaves) of the seed all the needed nutrients for the plant during the germination of the seed until it develops a stalk, by means of which the plant can derive the

needed nutrients from the soil. As the stalk becomes stronger, the two cotyledons of the embryo within the seed of the plant dwindle and become mere leaves. So what happens to the volume of the two cotyledons?

The cotyledons are important for the seedling as it begins to grow because they contain the food reserves needed for germination and seedling growth, providing the seedling its initial burst of energy. They provide nutrients required for plant growth until the seedling is able to derive its own nutrients from the soil, and this is not possible unless the soil is tilled. This is why it is said that clay soil is difficult to manage and infertile. It is also said that sandy soil is also infertile. Why is that?

This is because there are two characteristics of good soil: First, the soil should allow water to penetrate through it to provide plants with the needed water. Second, the soil should be able to hold water. So, we need soil that allows both water penetration and water retention. Clay soil holds too much water, thus causing root rot; Sandy soil does not hold water (having the lowest water retention). For this reason, ideal soil is a mixture of clay and sandy types of soil. When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about plants, He uses the word "*harth*," meaning "tilled land", in order to draw our attention to the fact that whoever wants to reap a harvest of crops has to work and exert effort in tilling the soil. He also says: 'And have you seen that [seed] which you sow? Is it you who makes it grow, or do We cause it to grow?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-64).

In these verses, Allah uses the word "seed" because it is the origin of the plant's existence. All the above-mentioned desires and pleasures- women; offspring, heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, horses of high mark, cattle, and tilled lands- have great value for the individual. This is clarified by the conclusion of the verse: 'That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return' (*Al-Imran*: 14).

This verse lists the pleasures and enjoyment of this worldly life. A person may feel worried that he may miss out on an enjoyment and he may not relish it, or that he might die before savouring it. One does not really treasure those enjoyments and pleasures that he fails to experience. When we ponder over the verse as a unit, we can easily recognise that it underlines the keys and triggers for all personalities by means of which people would be enticed to deviate

from the straight path. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Beautified for people is the love of worldly desires- of women; children; heaped-up treasures of gold and silver fine, branded horses of high mark, cattle; and tilled lands. All this may be enjoyed in the worldly life – but Allah has with Him the best return' (*Al-'Imran*: 14).

The verse made mention of the triggers by means of which a person may be enticed to deviate from the straight path. Allah *Glorified is He* requires His believing servant to follow a lifestyle that conforms to His will. So, what drives a believer to give up the will of Allah *the Exalted* in any given matter and opt for a contradictory action?

There is no doubt that it is sinful desires and urges that cause the heart to incline toward evil and lead a person astray. Every person has his own temptations. It could be the desire for women. Maybe it is love for his offspring, love for raising them and providing for them beyond what he can afford. Perhaps it is the pursuit of a career, enticing him to steal or cheat in order to please his boss. For others, it may be love of wealth, horses and steeds, or tools and arms. Every person has his own temptations.

Those who beautify deviation from the path of Allah and lure people into it, resort to these personality triggers. A person may not be tempted by women's alluring gazes or by gold and wealth, but could be lured by his love for his children. This would be his alluring desire.

So, everyone has his own temptations and those who wish to lead people astray know such triggers. When Allah *Glorified is He* says that these desires and pleasures are beautified for people, someone might say, "If Allah wants us to stay away from such things, why did He create them to begin with?"

The answer to this question would be as follows: Allah *the Exalted* says in the verse: 'Beautified for people...' in the passive form. The question arises, then: who has beautified them? Allah *Glorified is He* could have used the active form and would have clearly stated it in the verse. However, He wanted to draw our attention to the fact that it is possible that Satan would be the one who beautifies these things. It could also be the faith-oriented logic that beautifies these enjoyments for us. Allah *the Exalted* related the supplication of some of his pious servants in the verse that reads: 'And those who say, "Our

Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous.” (*al-Furqan*: 74)

So, what is the criterion in this regard? Allah *Glorified is He* designated a specific function for every worldly blessing. For instance, one's wife is made a source of tranquillity and peace of mind providing the man with much-needed affection, kindness, and tenderness. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought’ (*ar-Rum*: 21).

Allah *Glorified is He* is stressing the function of this great worldly blessing; namely wives providing their husbands with tranquility, satisfying their needs and guarding their chastity. What about a man's love for his children? Allah relates the supplication of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in the verse that reads: ‘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 from me and inherit from the family of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, pleasing [to You]”’ (*Maryam*: 4-6).

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* implored Allah for an heir to inherit from him, and the Prophets do not leave behind wealth as inheritance. Rather, their legacy is knowledge and wisdom. So, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was imploring his Lord for a son who would inherit wisdom from him and from the family of Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* and that Allah would cause him (the son) to earn the pleasure of his Lord. Had the Prophets of Allah left wealth as inheritance, some might infer that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* asked for a son so that he could inherit Zakaryya's wealth; but Allah willed that the Prophets should not leave wealth as inheritance, but rather that they pass on the knowledge of God's way. So, Prophet (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* asked Allah to bless him with a son to carry on his duty of consolidating the religion and divinely revealed way of life on earth.

Similarly, the one who desires wealth to spend it in the cause of Allah, horses and steeds to tame for war purposes (at times of war), or tilled lands to grow food for the benefit of the creation of Allah, will earn commendation, praise, and great reward from his Lord. Therefore, we need to bear in mind that a blessing bestowed upon you by Allah may be employed in what pleases Him or in what gratifies the evil inclinations of the “self.” When you, oh servant of Allah, examine your own desires, you will realise that they can possibly be directed towards good. Allah *the Exalted* says: “And those who say, ‘Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous’” (*al-Furqan*: 74).

Allah *the Exalted* willed that His Prophets and righteous people would be blessed with children who would inherit their good character traits and serve as good examples for other people. A believer should love having children who could be good role models for others. The one who loves horses can channel this love into doing good deeds.

Abu Hurayrah *may Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘The best of people is a man who is holding his horse's rein in the way of Allah (in *Jihad*) and is galloping towards the place wherever he hears a call for war or detects a note of danger; he goes on proceeding, seeking martyrdom or death wherever it is expected.’⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* encouraged Muslims to tame horses for war purposes. This proves that it is possible to channel our love for worldly pleasures and enjoyments toward what is good. It should be noted, though, that Allah *Glorified is He* is not urging us to abstain from relishing these blessings and enjoyments. On the contrary, He is urging us to abstain from employing what He has created for us in other than the way He has intended.

Let us ponder on the remark at the conclusion of the verse about the beautified enjoyments: The verse reads: ‘All this may be enjoyed in the worldly life – but Allah has with Him the best return’ (*Al-'Imran*: 14). This means that from a shallow and conventional view, these beautified enjoyments and

(1) (*Muslim*)

desires are perceived as mere sources of pleasure. How long will these desires and enjoyments last? They are temporary, just like this worldly life.

Let us also contemplate the situation of a person who attempts to refine the value of doing good in his life. This can be attained through several means: 1- carrying out more good deeds, 2- observing good deeds constantly making sure that good-doing is not forsaken, 3- devoting one's life to doing good and not allowing oneself to miss out on any chance to carry out good deeds, 4- not associating good deeds with other than Allah. For example, one may associate the blessings bestowed upon him with a strong person who may become weak, ill, go absent, or betray him.

Any other good attained by any other way is not genuine. These desires-women, wealth, offspring, horses, cattle, and lands-provide the individual with enjoyment in this worldly life. Hypothetically speaking, let us assume that nothing can take away these pleasures from you as long as you live, and you will continue to relish these enjoyments throughout your whole life. You have to ask yourself: what is the value of this short worldly life when a person only lives for a limited number of years according to the decree of Allah? A person's life in this world should be estimated by his own life- span rather than the length of the worldly life itself.

Let us assume that one continued to relish these desires and enjoyments: women, wealth, children, horses, gold, silver, lands, cattle, equipment, and arms. What would happen then? There is no doubt that this worldly life is limited and no one can live beyond his designated life span. Therefore, no one can retain these enjoyments forever because his life in this world is limited.

Allah *the Exalted* has not set a fixed life span for all human beings in this world. Rather, every person has a specific limited life span. When a child is born, there is no card sent down with him specifying the number of years he will spend in this world.

Allah *Glorified is He* has rendered the exact number of years each person will live on this earth, unknown to the person himself. This is why it is said that ambiguity is the utmost clarity. Allah *the Exalted* has concealed the time and cause of death of people. When will death approach? Where? Allah had

decreed that this information should be hidden from people so that a believer would be constantly anticipating death at all times.

This ambiguity of the time of death serves as the utmost clarity. No matter how long the worldly life is, it is still limited and a person cannot guarantee living in it for long. The pleasures and enjoyments a person relishes in his short life are commensurate with his abilities. Even if a person does not fail to savour the enjoyments of the worldly life, he will surely leave this world eventually. If we compared all these denotations to the linguistic connotation of the Arabic word *ad-Dunia*, meaning “worldly life,” we will come to realise that it denotes “the lowest” as opposed to “the highest,” which is the Hereafter.

Why is it described as “the highest”? It is because the Hereafter will elevate the good deeds performed by an individual in his worldly life.

After the end of this limited life in this world, a believer will go to paradise where he will lead an unlimited life. This is the first aspect of refinement and elevation. A believer is guaranteed that the foods and enjoyments therein are eternal and is also guaranteed that he shall abide therein eternally. A believer cannot realize the real value of paradise because his perception of goodness is commensurate with his knowledge. A person’s knowledge of goodness is partial and limited, whereas Allah’s knowledge of goodness is absolutely perfect.

A believer relishes in paradise all that is good in a manner that is commensurate with what Allah *the Exalted* knows of the goodness within a believer. Thus, our life in this world is the lowest, and the one to come is the highest. When we are commanded not to be deceived by this glamorous worldly life and not to be lured by these enjoyments and desires, is this a form of encouraging self-love or self-hatred?

It is a heavenly call towards self-love because it contributes to the refinement and elevation of goodness within every believer. The Islamic Message has made it clear that there are such-and-such pleasures and enjoyments in this worldly life and that this life is limited and none can live beyond his specified life-span. It has also made it clear that a person’s ability to relish worldly enjoyments is limited to his own capabilities, whereas the enjoyments of the next life are commensurate with the capability of the Creator. It is, therefore, very logical to say: ‘...All this may be enjoyed in the worldly life – but Allah has with

Him the best return' (*Al- 'Imran*: 14). This verse underlines that Allah *the Exalted* has with Him the best return and the best rewards.

When Allah *Glorified is He* demands of you, as a believer, to lower your gaze and refrain from looking at what is impermissible for you to look at, a superficial person might think that this is a restriction on the freedom of the eyes. However, Allah has commanded lowering one's gaze in this worldly life so that the eyes will savour the great enjoyments in the Hereafter upon which Allah has made permissible to gaze. Such a commandment, therefore, is generated from the love of Allah for His creation, and this is the elevation of goodness.

Let us assume that you have a small sum of money and you meet a poor person and give him the money, favouring him over yourself. You do so such a thing in order to earn doubled rewards in the Hereafter. So, the religious commandment can be perceived as a refined, lofty sort of selfishness, not a foolish one. Allah *the Exalted* then, clarifies this "best return" by saying:

قُلْ أُوْنِيْكُمْ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْ ذٰلِكُمْ ۖ لِّلَّذِيْنَ اَتَّقَوْا عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنٰتٌ
تَّجْرٰى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۖ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۖ وَاَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ
وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ بِصِيْرٍ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿١٥﴾

[Prophet], say, 'Would you like me to tell you of things that are better than all of these? Their Lord will give those who are mindful of God Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will stay with pure spouses and God's good pleasure – God is fully aware of His servants [15] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 15)

When we see the phrase 'Shall I inform you of [something]...' in a verse, we should bear in mind that the Arabic verb *ykhbir*, meaning "to tell", is different from *yunabbi* meaning "to inform", as the second is often followed with huge news; It is often used to present extraordinary news. This is why Allah *the Exalted* says: 'About what are they asking one another? About the great news [of resurrection]...' (*an-Naba*': 1-2) This verse used the Arabic word *naba*' which means "news" to refer to the event that will turn the entire world upside down. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Shall I inform you of [something]

better than that?' (*Al-'Imran*: 15). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* will inform us of something big that is better than these things. Thus, we know that Allah has rendered these things criteria for comparison. Why? It is because they are tangible. He has clarified for us the way to refine goodness within us by saying: 'For those who fear Allah will be gardens in the presence of their Lord' (*Al-'Imran*: 15). The Arabic word *Rabb*, meaning "Lord," denotes the One Who sustains and supports those under His care until they reach the desired state of perfection.

The verse clearly stated that these gardens will be "in the presence of their Lord." What has the Lord and Sustainer promised His pious servants? He has promised them 'gardens through which running waters flow' (*Al-'Imran*: 15). Let us compare these gardens to the tilled lands and plants mentioned, as well. We have previously underlined that when Allah speaks of plants, He uses the Arabic word *harth*, meaning "tilled land" so that we know that growing plants requires exerting effort and hard work.

On the contrary, the gardens in the Hereafter will be prepared and will not require any work or struggle on the part of a believer. Rather, he shall relish therein the pleasure of having the rivers flowing beneath them and will find therein the promised enjoyments. The verse reads: '...beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally...' (*Al-'Imran*: 15). A believer shall abide therein eternally; it shall be a never-ending eternity in permanent pleasures.

The verse makes mention of '... and purified wives' referring to the pure wives promised by Allah for the believers therein, compared to women in the worldly life. We all know that women go through phases that may cause repulsion among the spouses either pertaining to her physical appearance or her character. There are times when a husband would not be attracted to his wife and does not like to approach her. A woman may also have a bad quality that causes her spouse to hate her beauty. This is why a man may be deceived by the outward appearance of a woman in this worldly life that he may fall in love with her and then discover a bad characteristic that drives him to hate her. As for the Hereafter, things are totally different. The people of paradise shall be granted "pure wives" (*Al-'Imran*: 15). This means that the spouses will be void of any defect that could be regarded as a deficiency in this

worldly life. A believer will enjoy her beauty and spare himself the evils and defects in this worldly life because Allah has caused him or her to be purified and void of them.

Who has caused these spouses to be “purified”? Indeed, Allah is the One Who causes them to be pure physically and morally. A man in this worldly life may love a woman, who can retain her beauty and ability to attract him for fifteen years, and then she will start having wrinkles and put on extra weight; he then would start to develop an aversion to her! On the contrary, the women in the Hereafter will be purified from all defects and evils and retain their beauty and youth eternally. Is this not an elevation and refinement of good? We can notice that Allah has made mention of two things:

First: the gardens beneath which rivers flow compared to the tilled lands in this worldly life.

Second: pure wives which we can also compare to the women of this worldly life.

Allah does not mention any details about the other enjoyments in the verse. What about the heaped-up treasures of gold and silver? What about the horses? What about the cattle? What about the offspring? We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* has made mention of two of the beautified enjoyments and desires, one in the opening of the verse and one in the conclusion. Let us read the verse again. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Beautified for people is the love of worldly desires - of women; children; heaped-up treasures of gold and silver; fine, branded horses of high mark; cattle; and tilled lands. All this may be enjoyed in the worldly life - but Allah has with Him the best return’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 14).

The worldly love of women was mentioned in the opening of the verse and tilled lands were mentioned in its conclusion. Allah *the Exalted* has made mention only of the first and last beautified enjoyments and desires listed in the verse instead of detailing all the listed beautified enjoyments, and clarified for us that they constitute the elevation and refinement of good. This means that we should understand that provision entails whatever benefits a person. Everything that benefits a person is part of his worldly provision (*rizq*): good conduct, acquiring knowledge, refined manners, forbearance, and honesty are

all parts of the divinely bestowed provision. However, sometimes the provision is bestowed on a person directly and he can avail himself of it directly and at other times provision does not benefit a person directly. Rather, it serves as a means and an intermediary to what can benefit a person directly.

For example, bread is a direct provision. Money is also a provision, but it is indirect because a person could be hungry and have a mountain of gold. If someone were to say to him: "I can give you a slice of bread in return for this mountain of gold," the hungry person would gladly give up the mountain of gold in return for a single slice of bread because one cannot eat gold! The same is true of a cup of water for a thirsty person.

There are kinds of provisions which are not sought, in and of themselves, but a person seeks them as a means to gain other provisions and attainments. We will not need any means to obtain whatever we may want in the Hereafter because it will not be the realm of means. Rather, whatever is wanted will be realised by a single word of Allah: "'Be!' and it is' (*Ya Sin*: 82). A person will not need wealth in paradise, nor will he require heaped-up treasures of gold and silver because he will be granted whatever he may aspire to therein. We will not need fine horses in the Hereafter because we will not fight with them or enjoy riding them.

All the things that a person will not need in the Hereafter were granted to him in the worldly life in order to avail himself of the available means. Allah *Glorified is He* does not list them in the verse that reads: 'Say, "Shall I inform you of [something] better than that? For those who fear Allah will be gardens in the presence of their Lord beneath which rivers flow wherein they abide eternally, and purified spouses, with approval from Allah. And Allah is seeing of [His] servants"' (*Al-'Imran*: 15). Allah has not made mention of these things in the verse because Allah *the Exalted* bestows on people in the Hereafter direct provision. As for those things by which a person seeks direct provisions in this worldly life, He did not mention them in the verse because they shall not be needed in the Hereafter. Why do we love wealth? It is because it allows us to buy things. Why do we love horses of high mark? This is because they allow us to fight and struggle in the cause of Allah. Why do we love cattle? It is because they enable us to obtain our necessary supplies.

In paradise, a believer will be granted therein everything he aspires to and whatever might cross his mind. There will be no need for means in this realm. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* made mention of the direct provisions only. He mentioned the gardens beneath which rivers flow and the pure spouses.

Let us ponder on the verse that reads: ‘Say, “Shall I inform you of [something] better than that?”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 15). One may ask, “Would it not be more logical that Allah *the Exalted* would have simply informed us what He wanted to tell us, instead of asking us first, ‘Shall I inform you of this news, or not?’”

Well, this style helps attract the listener’s attention to the kindness of Allah towards His creation. He is saying to us: “Do you not wish for Me to tell you about things that are better than these worldly enjoyments you have in this worldly life?” Allah *Glorified is He* is alerting those who are heedless of this fact. He did not wait for us to respond, “Yes, tell us, Oh our Lord!”

Rather, He informs us without our asking. This style is known as a “rhetorical question”. When a person hears the phrase, ‘Shall I inform you of [something] better than that’, his attention is caught. If he does not hear the news, his mind will remain preoccupied with it. After drawing the listener’s attention, the answer comes to touch the soul of a believer.

The news and glad tidings come for those who fear Allah. When we contemplate the above-mentioned enjoyments and desires- women, children, heaped-up treasures of gold and silver, horses of high mark, cattle, and tilled lands- wouldn’t it be appropriate that a person should be conscious of his Lord with regards to them?

It is obligatory on a person to fear Allah with regards to these enjoyments. This is why we have said earlier that in response to those who wish to make their lives dull and void of movement: They confine life to worship in terms of performing the prayer and fasting and call for denouncing everything else. We say to them: “This is wrong. Your actions in this worldly life help you foster your fear of Allah.” We know that when a person has the fear of Allah, a person hides from hellfire and shields himself from the wrath of his Lord. If you employed the blessings of Allah in a way that conforms to His religion, this is the permissible employment of those blessings.

We have also underlined that the Arabic term *taqwa*, meaning “fear” or “being mindful of something or someone,” is mentioned in the Quran in association with Allah on some occasions and in association with hellfire on others. Some verses read “fear Allah” and others, “fear Hellfire”. Fearing hellfire implies guarding oneself against its flames so as not to be harmed by them; Fearing Allah implies guarding oneself against whatever incurs His wrath. This is because incurring the wrath of Allah eventually leads a person to subjecting himself to His punishment. So, regarding those who fear Allah, do not think that they have renounced excessive pleasure in the worldly life simply for the sake of asceticism. Rather, they did so hoping for what is greater, namely the everlasting delights of the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies afterwards that a believers will not relish such delights in the Hereafter because there will be no need for it. These delights in the Hereafter will not be confined to rejoicing at the blessings bestowed upon a person, but extend to seeing the One who confers the blessings on him since a believer who will be admitted to paradise shall be granted whatever he aspires to. In fact, he will be granted whatever he wishes and will relish therein the enjoyments according to the generosity and power of Allah.

If a person does not aspire to any of these enjoyments in paradise, he will be preoccupied with seeing his Lord. His place will be in a garden in paradise, called *'Illiyun* in which the blessings are nothing like whatever we may have heard about paradise; its dwellers only rejoice at their meeting with Allah. It should be noted that provisions and blessings in paradise will not be needed for sustaining the life therein. Rather, the inhabitant of paradise shall live therein for eternity, savouring everlasting bliss. The only thing a person really needs is earning the goodly pleasure of his Lord.

Indeed, the pleasure of Allah *the Exalted* is greater than any other attainment. Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us of the pleasures and enjoyments in paradise and told us of what is better than they are. He has informed us that earning His pleasure means that a believer is guaranteed to receive the privilege of seeing his Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord’ (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23).

Thus, we have come to know that there are levels in paradise. Allah *the Exalted* informs us after this with: ‘And Allah is seeing of [His] servants...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 15). This means that Allah is Well-Aware of His servants; He shall reward each person according to his actions and his adherence to the religion of his Lord. He who obeys Allah out of desire for the delights of Paradise will be granted paradise, and he who obeys Him because He deserves to be obeyed, Allah will grant him the delight and joy of looking at Him. Rabi’ah Al-‘Adawiyyah *may Allah rest her soul* said, in this regard: ‘They all worship You out of fear of hellfire and perceives salvation from it as a great attainment. I am not like them; I only seek Your Love.’

She also said: ‘Oh my Lord, if I worship you from fear of hell, burn me in hell. If I worship you from hope of paradise, bar me from its gates. But if I worship you for yourself alone, grant me then the beauty of your Face.’

So, Allah *Glorified is He* is aware of [the hearts of] His servants and will reward every person according to his actions and intentions. The one who loves the blessings and pleasures of his Lord will be rewarded with them in abundance. As for the one who loves Allah even if He withholds His blessings, Allah *the Exalted* will bestow on him the greatest blessing ever, namely having Allah boasting about him to the angels. One of the strongest proofs of faith and its perfection is favouring the love of Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* over anything else in the whole world.

Anas *may Allah be pleased with him* related that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “There are three qualities, and whoever has them will relish the sweetness of *iman* (faith): 1. The one to whom Allah and His Messenger become dearer than anything else. 2. The one who loves a person only for the pleasure of Allah. 3. The one who hates to revert to disbelief after Allah has brought (saved) him out from it, as he hates to be thrown into Hellfire.⁽¹⁾” This means that some servants love Allah *the Exalted* because He is worthy of love and worship, for He is the Bestower who organizes and manages this beautiful Universe.

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

So, Allah *Glorified is He* underlines that He sees all that is in the hearts of His servants and knows exactly what every worshipper deserves. Each shall be rewarded according to his acts and intentions in his worldly life. He who worshipped Allah for His blessings, will be granted the desired blessings in paradise, and he who has obeyed Allah *the Exalted* because He deserves to be obeyed, even if he is denied the blessings of Allah *Glorified is He* will be rewarded with a seat in *'Illyyun*.

This is why it is said that the people who are most severely tested are the Prophets of Allah, then the next best and the next best. Why? That is because this is an evidence of the sincerity of their love. People usually love those who are good and kind towards them and do not love those who harm them unless they enjoy a very special place in their heart. A believer is genuinely confident in His wisdom. Allah *Glorified is He* afflicts him with calamities, while knowing that he will adhere to endurance and will patiently face the trials in order to grant him a great reward and recompense. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Say, “I am only a man like you, to whom has been revealed that your god is one God. So, whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord-let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone”’ (*al-Kahf*: 110).

He says, “Whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord” and not “hoping for his Lord’s Paradise”. We should not be distracted with the blessing, e.g. paradise, from the One Who confers it on us, i.e. Allah *Glorified is He*. When Allah demands that we do not associate any partner with Him in worship, we should bear in mind that Paradise is no exception. One should not associate anything, including Paradise, with Allah in worship! Allah *the Exalted* says:

الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّنَا ءَامِنَا فَاغْفِرْ
لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٦﴾

**Those who say, “Our Lord, we believe, so forgive
us our sins and protect us from suffering in the
Fire” [16] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 16)**

The statement, ‘...Oh our Lord! Indeed, we have believed...’ is the first step towards treading the path of Allah. It indicates that faith in Allah requires

a person who is competent for religious responsibility to be mindful of his actions because it is required by his faith. It is as if a believer is saying: "As a human being, I am unable to fulfil the rights of faith in You; so, my lord, forgive my faults, inattentiveness, sins, arrogance, or sinful whims."

This supplication is a proof that such a person has become aware of the implications of faith that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified in his explanation of the meaning of *ihsan*, meaning "spiritual perfection and excellence in faith". He said: "*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you cannot achieve this state of devotion (if you did not feel that you were seeing Him), then you must consider that He sees you"⁽¹⁾.

It means that a person remembers his Lord's presence in all his actions because he knows his Lord sees him. Would any person have the audacity to violate the rights of his Lord Who sees him? A believer would recall the report on the authority of our Lord, reading, 'Oh my servants! If you think that I cannot see you, then your faith is flawed. If you know that I can see you, then why have you made Me the least important of your viewers?' (This has no basis in the *Sunnah*). It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is saying to His servant: 'Am I less important to you than My own servants? Do you dare offend someone, while he can see you? How could you commit sin and disobey your Creator?'

The verse reads: "Those who say, "Our Lord! Indeed, we have believed (in You); so, forgive us our sins..." (Al-*Imran*: 16). They said this because they believed, and therefore, they are asking for forgiveness of their sins. Why? Because as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has prescribed repentance, this means that He understands that His servants would wrong themselves and deviate from His path.

Allah *the Exalted* concludes the verse by relating the supplication of His servants: "... protect us from the punishment of the Hellfire" (Al-*Imran*: 16). When a person knows that Allah has guaranteed the concealment of his sins when he repents, he will be shy to commit sins or at least hasten in seeking His forgiveness. But why should the meaning of the verse not be "Oh our Lord! Guard us from sins that we would not commit them ever." If we do

(1) Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, and An-Nasa'i

[commit sins], it requires seeking forgiveness and repentance. If one commits a sin, but then seeks forgiveness of his Lord, he should know that his Lord has granted him forgiveness because He says: ‘And I said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver’” (*Nuh*: 10). Knowing this, a person’s fear fades away and he whole-heartedly observes his religious obligations out of love for his Lord and obliges himself to abide by the way of life prescribed by Him, comprehensively. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* prescribed repentance for people as another aspect of His Mercy. This divine mercy manifests itself best, while one is pondering on the opposite scenario.

For instance, let us imagine that Allah *the Exalted* had not prescribed repentance and when a person committed one sin, he was denied the mercy of Allah. What would happen to him? What would happen to the community where he lives? All the evils that this person would afflict on the community and society would be the product of his utter frustration and despair. He would lose hope in rectifying his affairs after falling into the abyss of sin. However, if Allah *the Exalted* opens the door of repentance for the sinners, whenever a person commits a sin out of heedlessness, he hastens to repentance.

In fact, this reflects the realistic approach of the Islamic sharia. Islam is a realistic religion that takes into consideration the reality of the human nature. Allah *the Exalted* knows that His servants will inevitably commit sins and, therefore, He guides them to the way of seeking forgiveness. If a person commits sins, Allah *the Exalted* enjoins him to repent and seek His forgiveness. If a repentant feels uncomfortable when he remembers his sin, this annoying feeling will be counted as a good deed every time he experiences it, as well.

There is a difference between having one’s sins forgiven and being safeguarded from hellfire. How is that? When a person knows that Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed for him the forgiveness of his sins if he repents, and if he knows that his Lord is the Sustaining Creator, he will hasten to repent of his sins, hoping for the forgiveness and mercy of his Lord. This is the supplication of the believers if they have forgotten to seek forgiveness for their sins. Why? That is because seeking the forgiveness of Allah for one’s sins is a religious obligation enjoined by Allah on His servants. As we have said earlier, one may forget some of these commandments and religious obligations, and accordingly forget to

seek forgiveness sometimes. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says relating the supplication of His servants: "...and keep us safe from suffering through the Hellfire" (*Al- 'Imran*: 16).

The meaning of the Arabic word *taqwa* (usually translated as "fear and consciousness of something") could also be "to build a barrier between yourself and the hellfire" or "a barrier between yourself and your Lord's wrath". If you employed the blessings of your Lord in accordance with His commands and the way of life prescribed by Him, then it will count as a good deed for you. We have previously underlined that the commands to adhere to *taqwa* in relation to Allah and hellfire are closely related and were used in the Quran because the concept of *taqwa* in relation to hellfire denotes fearing and being mindful of ending up in it and *taqwa* in relation to Allah denotes making a barrier between ourselves and (whatever may incur) the wrath of our Lord. Next, Allah *the Exalted* says:

الصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالْقَانِتِينَ
وَالْمُسْتَغْفِرِينَ بِالْأَسْحَارِ

**Those who are steadfast, truthful, truly devout, who give
[in God's cause] and pray before dawn for forgiveness' [17]
(The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 17)**

These are the attributes of those who attained *taqwa*, i.e. those who fear Allah and are duly conscious of Him. He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, pure spouses, and (rewarded them with) His pleasure and acceptance. These people who spend in the way of Allah and seek His forgiveness in the last hours of the night before dawn are described as patient, true, and obedient.

The question arises: With what are they patient? They are patient about carrying out the commands of their Lord. When we receive the religious obligations and commandments, we experience a sense of discomfort because living in accordance with them requires effort and hardship. Religious obligations come with some hardship because they restrict a person's freedom to some degrees.

Allah *the Exalted* has created us and inculcated within us the inclination and ability to do good or refrain from doing good. When He commands you to carry out any given act, He has restricted your freedom in terms of commanding you not to be heedless in doing said act. Similarly, when Allah orders you not to do something, He has denied you the option of doing it. Thus, restricting your actions and imposing some limitations on your choices naturally incurs some hardship. When Allah commands you to do something, such an action might be difficult in and of itself. If you succeeded in enduring the hardship of the action and patiently carried out the command as enjoined, you are among “the patient” referred to here because you have endured and obeyed your Lord. You may also patiently give up a sin; when you are enticed to do a prohibited act which would incur the wrath of Allah, and you refuse to commit it and adhere to endurance, you have patiently refrained from committing the sin.

So, we are required to adhere to patience in relation to both, commands and prohibitions; doing the enjoined acts and refraining from the prohibitions require patience to endure the accompanying hardship. Patient people abide by patience in two aspects, namely when carrying out the religious obligations and avoiding the prohibitions. In the case of prohibitions such as the prohibition of consuming alcohol, or stealing, a person should patiently refrain from doing such forbidden acts. So, the divine commands and prohibitions make up the two types of religious requirements. A third category included the actions that do not fall into the realms of commands or prohibitions: these are the matters that occur beyond your control and fall into the category of divine decrees.

When Allah *Glorified is He* commands you to do something, He has created you and inculcated within you the ability not to carry it out as previously underlined. The same is true when Allah *the Exalted* commands you not to do something. How should a believer react concerning the divinely decreed actions that happen to him beyond his control? He should patiently endure the pain and hardship because he believes in Allah as his Lord, and the Lord is the One who takes care of His servants and provides sustenance for His creation until they reach the desired level of perfection. If Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that you should be tested by going through hardships and situations

beyond your control such as an illness, or a calamity like having a rock falling on you or getting hit by a stray bullet, then, you should know that these matters do not fall into the realm of commands and prohibitions.

You should patiently endure such events by having faith in the wisdom of the One Who has caused them to occur. The One Who has decreed such matters is your Lord Who has created you, and no one would carelessly spoil his own creation. If a person is decreed to go through an experience or situation beyond his control, he should bear in mind that the One Who has decreed it has wisdom behind it. If he patiently endures the pains and hardships, he will become among “the patient” mentioned in these verses.

So, there are many kinds of patience: some patiently endure the hardship of carrying out acts of obedience, some patiently endure the temptations of sin, and some endure the decreed events that happen to them beyond their control or choice. When you see someone who patiently endures the hardship of carrying out acts of obedience, patiently refuses to give in to the desires of committing sin, and endures calamities that befall him, you should know that he loves his Lord, and is pleased with Him.

Let us move on and contemplate the other attributes mentioned in the verse. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘The patient, the truthful...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 17). The opposite of truthfulness is lying. Truthfulness denotes conformity with reality. A statement which is true is in agreement with the actual reality.

If you say, “such-and-such happened,” and the statement conforms to reality- that such a thing actually happened, the speaker is truthful and his statement is true. However, if the statement does not conform to reality, the statement is untrue and the speaker is lying. Why? This is because there are three standards for declaring a statement of a rational speaker truthful:

First: Before I utter a statement, I consult my intellect concerning the matter to see if it makes logical sense and then my intellect gives the signal to the tongue to speak. This is the first truth standard- the intellectual truth standard. I may refrain from uttering a statement after consulting my intellect; in this case, the intellectual truth standard is present, but the verbal one is missing.

I may also insist on pronouncing a statement anyway in which case the second truth standard is present that is the verbal truth standard. This deals

with whether the matter I have described really happened: if it happened, the statement is truthful. If it did not happen, and the statement does not conform to reality, we say that it is a lie. So, “truthfulness” means that the verbal truth standard conforms to reality, and “lying” is when the verbal truth standard does not conform to reality. People very often misunderstand reality, and so they find contradiction in certain matters.

For example, some of the orientalist criticized the verb in the verse that reads: ‘When the hypocrites come to you, [Oh Muhammad], they say, “We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah”’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). This is the verbal statement. Does it conform to reality, or not? Indeed, it conforms to reality, and Allah *the Exalted* confirms this as He says: ‘And Allah knows that you are His Messenger, and Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). What lie have the hypocrites spoken? Have they lied when they said, ‘You are the Messenger of Allah’? No. Allah *the Exalted* does not state that they had lied when they said, ‘You are the Messenger of Allah’ because He has confirmed this by saying, ‘And Allah knows that you are His Messenger.’ He declared them liars because of the statement of the hypocrites of which the critic and orientalist lost sight. They said: ‘We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah’. Allah *Glorified is He* declared them liars in their claims to testify that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a Messenger from Allah *the Exalted* and not the fact itself. There is no doubt that Allah *the Exalted* knows that Muhammad is His Messenger, whom Allah sent as a mercy to all the worlds; the lie is their own testimony.

The statement of the hypocrites is refuted by Allah. Why? Because a truthful testimony requires that the statement must be in agreement with the belief harboured in the heart of the speaker, and conform to it. Their statement was not in agreement with the belief harboured in their hearts and, therefore, they were lying. So, their testimony to the fact was what is declared a lie and not the fact itself. If they had said “You are the Messenger of Allah” without saying “we testify”, their statement would have been true. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* declared their testimony false. Hence, we come to understand the statement of Allah, ‘and Allah knows that you are His Messenger.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) Allah *Glorified is He* confirms the fact to which has been

testified, namely that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* underlines that the hypocrites are liars in their testimony when they say, 'We testify'. Truthfulness means that the statement conforms to reality. We have given the example of a person who is asked to tell a story he had witnessed and seen with his own eyes, and he is honest in relating it. If he honestly relates it, his account will be the same and will never change, no matter how many times he repeats it. If the story is a lie, the teller will be confused about the details; He will relate the tale in inconsistent ways. A liar may forget what he said the first time and change some details of his story each time he repeats it, and this is how his lie is exposed. However, the truthful narrator who relates a true story is the one whose account never changes each time he relates the story; he is consistent.

If we said, "Zayd is diligent", then Zayd is either diligent or he is not. Then, a person who has witnessed Zayd's diligence would speak about it. Zayd's diligence was either observed or it was not. After this, there is the intellectual truth standard.

The "constative utterance" is the opposite of the "performative" one; constatives are the statements of facts which could be right or wrong, whereas performatives are utterances such as a warning, a command, a request, or a piece of advice. For example, you may say to someone, "Be diligent, and work hard." Before uttering the statement, the concepts of diligence and working hard were present in the mind of the speaker, and when he spoke the statement, it became a statement with a verbal truth standard. Then, the event took place and both the intellectual and verbal truth standards were present. This is the constative. The constative in this case is a request. The "truthful" people are the ones whom Allah has chosen to praise. Why? They are the ones whose actions conform to the way of life prescribed by their Lord. When they said, "None is worthy of worship but Allah", and believed it, they adhered to all of its implications to the best of their abilities.

"None is truly worthy of worship but Allah" means there is no entity which is worthy of being worshipped except Allah, and this means that there is no one worthy of obedience except Allah. Obedience, as we know, denotes abiding by commands and prohibitions. Thus, we have come to know that the

implication of the testimony of faith, “none is truly worthy of worship but Allah,” is that there is no one worthy of being worshipped except Allah, and that no one must be obeyed but Him. No command or prohibition should be obeyed except those issued by Allah *the Exalted* (or those whom He commands us to obey in matters that are good and lawful). If a person follows the commands of his Lord after proclaiming, “none is worthy of worship but Allah,” then this person is truthful in his statement “Indeed, none is truly worthy of worship but Allah.” This is the peak of truthfulness: that all of the actions of a person who proclaims, “none is truly worthy of worship but Allah,” conform with his own statement.

The true believer is the one who ensures that all his actions are in accordance with the religious guidelines of his Lord. As for a person who says, “none is truly worthy of worship but Allah and none has the right to be worshipped except Him” merely by his tongue, and then goes against his Lord’s commands by disobeying Him, to him we say, “You are not truthful in your statement, ‘none is truly worthy of worship but Allah’. Why? That is because your actions do not conform to your words.” When a person who believes in any divine commandment, and then acts contrary to it, to him we can fairly say: “You are a hypocrite.” Why? Because at the beginning of *al-Baqara* chapter (verses 8-20), when we spoke about the hypocrites, we said that when a believer believes in Allah and says as much, he is truthful because he says ‘none is worthy of worship but Allah’, while believing in it. When a disbeliever denies the divinity of Allah, he, too, is truthful.

However, the hypocrite is not truthful with himself or with people; rather, he wavers between this and that, belonging neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers. The hypocrite is untruthful and this is why Allah *the Exalted* describes them in the verse that reads: ‘Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers. And whoever Allah leaves astray - never will you find for him a way’ (*an-Nisa*: 143).

A disbeliever is truthful with himself; he does not proclaim “none is worthy of worship but Allah” because he does not believe it. On the contrary, the hypocrite says: “none is truly worthy of worship but Allah”, but his conduct does not conform to its implications. Therefore, he is not truthful with himself and his

Lord. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘...The truthful...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 17) and the verse refers to those people whose actions conform to the way of life prescribed by their Lord. They do not believe in one thing and do the opposite. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Oh you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do? Great is hatred in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do...’ (*as-Saff*: 2-3).

The truthful are those whose words conform to their actions, acting in accordance with the proclamation of *tawhid*, or Islamic monotheism and its implications. “None is worthy of worship but Allah,” means that none is worthy of our obedience to his commands and prohibitions except Allah. Therefore, if you obey someone else in a matter contrary to the divine *Shari’a*, believers have the right to say to you, “You are a liar in your statement, ‘Indeed, none is truly worthy of worship but Allah’.”

Abu Hurayrah *may Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “The adulterer, at the time he is committing adultery, is not a believer; (the wine drinker) at the time he is drinking, is not a believer; the thief, at the time he is stealing, is not a believer.”⁽¹⁾ This is the loftiness of a believer’s faith: a believer cannot lie or go against the implications and prerequisites of his beliefs because a believer’s conduct and his all actions are governed by his belief that none is worthy of worship but Allah.

Then, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘...and the obedient...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 17). The “obedient” here is the pious servant who worships Allah *the Exalted* with humility, tranquillity, and consistency. The obedient person is true to himself. When Allah *Glorified is He* enjoins His servants to observe a religious obligation, it may be beyond their ability to understand and they may fail to grasp the wisdom behind it. The obedient worshippers observe a religious obligation because the One Who ordered them to do so is their Lord, the Omnipotent, and they trust His wisdom. Therefore, they abide by His commands out of submission to His infinite wisdom. They obey the command because it is issued by their Lord not because of the wisdom behind it. As they obediently

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa’i, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad*

submit to the will of their Lord, Allah *the Exalted* shows them the resplendence of the divine command by granting them a divinely revealed criterion by which to differentiate between the true and the false for themselves:

Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Oh you who have believed, if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion and will remove from you your misdeeds and forgive you. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty’ (*al-Anfal*: 29).

Considering this criterion, a believer will say to himself, “Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that I should relish the sweetness of the obedience to such a command.” This is why one of the pious men once said, ‘If you want to understand an obligation enjoined by your Lord without knowing the wisdom behind it, adhere to *taqwa* and observe it. Then, you will find your mind illuminated with the divinely-bestowed wisdom behind it.” This is why Allah *the Exalted* says: “...And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is Knowing of all things” (*al-Baqara*: 282).

Before attaining *taqwa*, Allah *the Exalted* does not impart this knowledge to you. However, after attaining it, He imparts it to you. You carry out a commandment and, consequently, find a sign in the spiritual illumination within your soul (and heart). This is the difference between an order from an equal peer and a divine order issued by Allah *Glorified is He*. When we examine the Arabic word *Al-'A'la*, meaning “*The Most High*”, we realise that it is only used to refer to Allah, *The Exalted* because He is *the Most High* in wisdom, position, status, and lordship.

So, a person does not demand to know the wisdom behind an order unless it is produced by an equal peer. If a person asks you to do something, you may ask him, “Why?” and if you are convinced of his reason, you will comply. You will carry out the request because your equal peer has convinced you of the wisdom behind it, not out of obedience to him.

However, when Allah *the Most High* issues an order, you obey the command immediately (as a believing servant), out of your love for obeying Him. The following example is meant to illustrate the matter and make the concept clear, not to liken anything or anyone to Allah *the Most High*. Indeed, there is nothing like Him at all; He is similar to nothing and nothing is comparable to

Him. If a father says to his son, "If you succeed at your exam, I will get you a new bicycle," does this mean that the rationale and wisdom behind going to school is to get a bicycle? No, it is not. The wisdom behind the father's statement is to encourage his son to study and learn at school. When the son grows up, he will realise the actual wisdom behind his father's request. He will say, "Now I know that my father was right."

If this happens in our daily lives among human beings, what about our obedience to the commands issued by Allah? When Allah *the Exalted* enjoins His servants to comply with a religious obligation, a servant might find difficulty in comprehending the wisdom behind it. The genuine believer knows that his compliance with the commands of his Lord is, in essence, submission to the authority of his Lord *The Most High*.

A believer knows that he believes in Allah *the Exalted* as the One God and Lord and that there is nothing like Him at all, as He has the ultimate and absolute wisdom, omnipotence, and Lordship of the whole creation.

A person might fall ill; Health is the most valuable possession. He may consider going to a doctor to whom he would complain of pain in his stomach, or heart, or bowels. He would specify the source of his pain. The intellect of a person guides him to consult the doctor who diagnoses his problem. Then, he takes the prescription from the doctor. A sick person takes the prescribed medication from the trusted doctor without asking how the medication works in details because it will mean engaging in a detailed discussion about specialized chemistry subjects, some may be beyond his ability to comprehend! If someone asks this sick person, "Why are you taking that medication in particular?" he will simply answer, "Because the specialized doctor prescribed it for me."

The doctor might be wrong, but the judgment of Allah *Glorified is He* is never mistaken. He is utterly infallible. When a believer carries out the commandments of his Lord, he will recognise the effects of The Divine Wisdom behind it. The word "obedient," as we have underlined above, is the attribute of those who lead a life of devotion, worship with humility, reverence, and constant submission to their Lord. Why are submission and humility needed in this regard? It is because Allah *the Exalted* did not prescribe the acts of worship merely for a person to perform them in order to save himself from

hellfire. We see many people who may have very obstinate bosses setting strict rules for their employees and requiring them to come to work early in the morning and leave at a fixed time. They may even stipulate that, while on the clock, their employees should not engage in any other activity aside from work, such as drinking tea, reading newspapers, or chatting with their friends at work. One of these employees may describe his boss as follows: "He is a very strict and difficult person. I have no choice but to come at 7: 55 and leave at 2: 05, and I cannot read newspapers, or do anything that he does not allow." This employee complies with the instructions of his boss because of his harshness and strictness without being able to criticize his boss or complain about it. This employee obeys but due to fear.

It is obedience void of love; Rather, it is out of fear. A servant might try and say, "What does Allah want from me? Doesn't He command me to perform the prayer, pay *zakat* (obligatory alms giving), and carry out acts of worship? Fine, I will do that." To a servant like this, we say, "No! Allah *the Exalted* wants you to carry out acts of worship out of love and reverence because religious obligations are a kind of charity offered by Allah to His servant." Allah *Glorified is He* enjoins His servant to observe religious obligations so that they will become morally upright and find real value in this life.

"The obedient" in this verse refers to a servant who worships his Lord with full submission and reverence, constantly. Why? Because when someone initially complies with his religious obligations and then refrains from adhering to them, it is as if he has tested his love for Allah, and by giving up the adherence to the religious obligations, he has shown that he finds Allah *the Exalted* unworthy of his love! As for the truly obedient servant of Allah, he never forsakes worship because he has relished the sweetness of constant worship of Allah, and as long as he knows the sweetness of worship, he will perform it with reverence, tranquillity, and constancy, and will be one of the obedient.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and (those) who spend in charity...' (*Al-'Imran*: 17). The Arabic word used in the verse is *anfaqa*, meaning "to spend," which is derived from the same root of the Arabic word for "die" or "run out (of something)". The word *nafaqah*, meaning "charity," is derived from this root to denote that when a person spends in charity, he wipes out

what he has spent from his mind; He does not recall that he had given such-and-such to a poor person and such-and-such to another. He knows with certainty that what he has spent in charity is the rightful provision of the recipient of charity, and he merely earns the reward for delivering their due provision to them. There is no room for reminding the recipient of his favour or humiliating him.

Allah *the Exalted* wants the charitable person, who gives of his wealth, time, or effort in charity, to forget all about the act of charity, and refrain from reminding the recipient of it. "Spending in charity" requires three components; 1) the giver, who spends in charity, 2) the recipient, 3) and the charity itself. The giver is a believer who has wealth, time, or effort; the recipient is a poor person or the one in need; and the charity is that which the giver spends in charity, be it time, money, effort, or even kindness.

What is the source of this wealth? It is acquired through working and earning a livelihood which requires both mental and physical ability. If a person is unable to work and earn a living, how could he live? Allah *Glorified is He* provides for such a person's sustenance from those who are capable of working and providing for themselves.

Allah *the Exalted* has rendered the ability to work and earn a living one of the contingencies in this life. A person who is able to work today might become unable to work tomorrow. As long as the ability to work and earn a living is a contingency, so the one who is able to work and earn a living hears the command of his Lord to spend on a poor person (who is unable to work and earn a living), must bear in mind that his ability is of a contingent nature. The one who is currently able to work and earn a living might become unable to do so tomorrow. Hence, a person, who is able to work and provide for himself, would say to himself, "If I become incapable of providing for myself one day, Allah would bring someone to provide for me." This is the insurance of a believer. A believer gives in charity according to his ability so that Allah *Glorified is He* will spare him the hardship of begging for money when his situation changes; someone will be there to provide for him, from the mercy of Allah.

We must perceive the whole picture of this religious obligation and not only our side; we must consider the duties and rights of others as well. The

one who is enjoined to spend on others should remember that he might become incapable of working and earning a living one day. We may ask him, "If you are incapable of providing for yourself, would you not like other people to help you without reminding you of their favour or harming you?"

This is true insurance, and the guarantor is Allah *the Exalted*. As long as a person realises that his situation may change in the blink of an eye, the one spending in charity today should forget his charitable act and the recipient of his charity and should refrain from informing anyone of the charity given.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that the man who spends in charity and hides his charity so that his left hand does not know what his right hand has spent, will be amongst the seven types of people whom Allah *the Exalted* will shelter in His shade on the Day of Judgment. The prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Seven people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His. They are: (1) a just ruler; (2) a young man who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, (i.e. worshipping Allah (Alone) sincerely from his childhood); (3) a man whose heart is attached to the mosque (who offers the five compulsory congregational prayers in the mosque); (4) two people who love each other only for Allah's pleasure, and they meet and part because of Allah only; (5) a person who remembers Allah when in seclusion and his eyes become flooded with tears; (6) a man who refuses the call of a charming woman of noble birth for illicit sexual intercourse with her and says: 'I fear Allah'; (7) a person who offered charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given (i.e. nobody knows how much he has given in charity).'⁽¹⁾

A believer who spends in charity must know that when he spends in charity, he is actually saving this wealth he is offering in charity to be received by him later, either when his situation changes or in the Hereafter in the form of multiplied rewards. So, the one who spends in charity provides for the one who is unable to work and earn a living, either as a form of insurance for himself in the future when he may become unable to provide for himself,

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i, and Ahmad*

or so as to earn multiple rewards in the Hereafter. Those who spend on the needy from their surplus wealth, act as a manifestation of the divine wisdom in creation. Since Allah *the Exalted* has created amongst us those who are able to provide for themselves and those who are not, He has decreed that we should know that ability is not necessarily guaranteed for all the creation. As long as our ability to provide for ourselves is of a contingent nature, a believer must hold onto his Lord, the Sustainer Who constantly grants him this ability. We should know that none of us can do good without his Lord and none of us was created capable of working and earning a living forever. Therefore, a believer must be constantly mindful of the provision bestowed upon him by Allah *the Most High* and Omnipotent.

We have underlined before that Allah *Glorified is He* has listed “spending in charity” as one of the attributes of those who have attained taqwa, for whom He has prepared gardens underneath which rivers flow. The wisdom behind this divine decree is that Allah *the Exalted* wants to protect any suffering people, as He has created them for a specific reason. Spending in charity should not be perceived as depriving the giver of his wealth; rather, it is a mere transfer of the wealth to a different realm. This is made clear by the fact that when a person has surplus wealth it is earned through his physical work in this worldly life.

This work requires both an intellect to plan, and body parts to carry out the plan. He must use his intellect to understand the subject matter to be processed, be it land for cultivation or a tool for production. A person does not have any of these things intrinsically. The intellect, by means of which he plans, is a gift from Allah, and the strength, by means of which he moves and works, is also a gift from Him. We see that some people may be deprived of sound mind and, therefore, cannot think and plan, while others are deprived of the physical strength to move and work. Allah *the Exalted* might also deny a person the actual means of which he may work.

So, none of these things are intrinsically owned by a person; they are all gifts from Allah. A believer must bear in mind that he is investing with Allah *Glorified is He* and must give the right of Allah, i.e. the charity, to those who are incapable of providing for themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* does not take

this charity for Himself; rather, He wants it for your incapable brother. Allah *the Exalted* will insure this right for you, too, if the situation changed and you were in his place one day.

This is why "... (those) who spend (in charity)..." are counted amongst those who have attained *taqwa*. Allah *the Exalted* has rendered patience a manifestation of firm and true faith in the human soul; truthfulness as a manifestation of the harmony with the implications of the testimony of faith 'none is worthy of worship save Allah'; and spending charity as a protection for those who are incapable of providing for themselves.

Then, the verse moves to the spiritual character of a believer again, '...and those who seek forgiveness before dawn' (*Al-'Imran*: 17). We must bear in mind that this attribute came among other attributes describing the human soul. The beginning of these verses showed their proclamation of faith and supplicating Allah to forgive their sins and safeguard them from Hellfire. They adhered to patience, truthfulness, obedience, and sincerity in worship, and spent in the cause of Allah. All of these attributes absolve them from falling short in observing the rights of their Lord over them. For this reason, they get up at night, before dawn, and seek forgiveness from Allah *the Exalted*.

A person seeks forgiveness because either he has committed sin or he has fallen short in performing extra acts of obedience. This verse refers to the late hours of the night before dawn when a person is in a state of laziness and relaxation. The one who wakes up during this time of the night should have enough rest and must not exhaust himself throughout the day. Some people waste the precious hours of the night in playing and having fun.

This is an utter failure we witness among people in the present time. People are lost between toil during the daytime and playing during the night. People engage in vain talk and activities and stay up all night, and then they sleep late. How could such a person wake up in the last third of the night before dawn? The one who wakes up before dawn is he who has rested at night. After he comes from work, he sleeps soundly and wakes up before dawn to devote himself to the remembrance of his Lord at a time when most others are sleeping. Why is he doing so? Allah *the Exalted* distributes His mercy during the stillness of the

night. When a person wakes up before dawn to implore his Lord and seek His forgiveness, he receives the mercy of his Lord as it descends.

When a person seeks the divine mercy descending during that time, it means that he will receive a great portion of the mercy of his Lord. It should be noted that one should beware of saying, “If we all wake up at this time, the mercy and provision of Allah will run out.” No, for Allah *the Exalted* has said:

‘Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting. And We will surely give those who were patient their reward according to the best of what they used to do...’ (*an-Nahl*: 96).

There is no doubt that the unlimited power of Allah is extensive enough for us all, without decreasing in the slightest. All of these things- firm faith, seeking forgiveness of sins, and protection from hellfire, patience, truthfulness, devotion, spending in charity, seeking forgiveness of Allah before dawn- are the fruits of the first quality, namely taqwa which is the very fruit of the proclamation of faith, “None is worthy of worship but Allah”. Therefore, every person must know that Allah has not called him to derive this fact from nothing (Allah’s exclusive right to worship); Rather, we know that Allah has testified that none is worthy of worship save Him, and His testimony is sufficient. Allah *the Exalted* says:

شَهِدَ اللَّهُ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَأُولُو الْعِلْمِ
قَائِمًا بِالْقِسْطِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَكِيمُ

God bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge. He upholds justice.

There is no god but Him, the Almighty, the All Wise [18]

(The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 18)

Let us ponder over the first part of the verse. Allah *Glorified is He* testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship but Him. A testimony means “a statement or declaration of a witness declaring what he has seen, known, or witnessed”. The Arabic verb *shahida*, meaning “to bear witness, or testify”, can also mean “to know”.

Allah *the Exalted* has created proofs and signs in the universe that indicate His eternal existence and that He is the One and Only God, the Ever-Living. Does this evidence not establish the fact that He is the One and Only God? Who has created these signs and proofs? It was Allah *the Exalted*.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* bears witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Him. We said that the testimony of Allah that there is no deity worthy of worship but Him is a personal testimony of a weighty statement. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Originator of the heavens and the earth. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is' (*al-Baqara*: 117).

By Allah, if it is not an absolute truth that there is no deity worthy of worship but Him and none could oppose His will, why would He proclaim it? He *the Most High*, is testifying that there is no one worthy of worship but Him, so when He says 'Be', He knows that there is no other "god" who will say "Be not". Allah *Glorified is He* reassures us that there is no deity worthy of worship but Him and this entails testifying to it. When He issues a decree or command, He knows that there is none who can oppose it.

Is it not one of the requirements of the Prophet of Allah to testify that he is the Messenger of Allah? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say in his prayers: 'I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. Even if he had not testified to that Himself, how could He state it in the Quran as a fact? For this reason, when the news reached Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* that his close friend Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a Prophet of Allah, he said, 'Has Muhammad said so? If he said it, he is definitely truthful!'

Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* trusted his friend, given his history of truthfulness and honesty before he was commissioned to communicate the divine message to people. We read in the history books that a woman converted to Islam because of a single moment of reflection on the biography of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This woman read that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a group of believers guarding him from the disbelievers. One day, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dismissed the guards and said to them, 'There is no need to guard me anymore; Allah has guaranteed me protection from people!'

We have all read this incident many times in the biography of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but Allah caused this woman to reflect further on this incident. She wondered, “Were these people not guarding him out of their fear for his life? Why would he say to them, ‘Do not guard me anymore because Allah guards me from now on’? If he had deceived the whole world, is it possible that he would imperil his own life?”

She realized it is not possible. He must have been completely positive that Allah *the Exalted* had informed him of it and guaranteed his protection, as evidenced by the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* dismissed the guards. If not, how could he be sure that no one would try to kill him? The woman said, ‘By Allah, he may have deceived the whole world, he could not have deceived himself and endangered his own life. I testify that none is worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Messenger.’

This woman’s conversion to Islam came as a result of contemplating a single incident in the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

So, ‘Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). This is a personal testimony, and His testimony is sufficient. But the angels also testified to it. The angels belong to the realm of the Unseen -something which is hidden from us- and they receive their orders directly from Allah. The angels never receive orders from other than Allah; they know that He is the One and Only God. In addition to the testimony of the angels is the testimony of “...those of knowledge...” They have pondered over the signs and derived from the pieces of evidence, that none is worthy of worship but Allah *the Exalted*.

This is the greatest testimony ever by He *the Most High* along with that of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, the angels, and those endowed with knowledge. The people of knowledge have reached a lofty status because Allah *the Exalted* has mentioned them alongside the angels.

He has informed us that He has inculcated in His creation many marvellous signs; whoever reflects on them will derive from the proofs that none is worthy of worship but Allah. We have said before that the simplest way to prove this fact is that if “none is worthy of worship but Allah” is true, then it

would be sufficient for us. If it is not true, then we should ask ourselves: where is the god of this universe? Why did this god not inform us that this universe is his? There are two possibilities: may be the other “god” does not know or he knows but is incapable of doing anything about it! Thus, we come to realise that there cannot be another god besides Allah, who has informed us that there is no god but Him.

The testimony of faith “none is worthy of worship but Allah” remains manifest in all the events of life; we find that an action can be a source of grandeur or arrogance. For this reason, we say that Allah, *The Most High Creator*, who is the One and Only God, informs us that ‘...[He is] maintaining [creation] in justice’. Despite the fact that none can challenge or retract the decree of Allah, He reassures us that He maintains His creation with justice.

A nice observation about the verse is that Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him *the Exalted* in Might, the Wise’ (*Al-'Imran*: 18). Why did He not say that the angels, as well as those endowed with knowledge, who bore witness that none is worthy of worship but Him, maintain justice in creation? Allah *the Exalted* testifies that there is no deity but Him, the Maintainer of creation with justice. The angels and those endowed with knowledge also testified to this fact. Why? It is because, had the verse read “They all are maintaining creation with justice”, it would have meant that Allah *the Exalted* the angels, and the people of knowledge are all maintaining creation with justice; However, the verse means that He alone is maintaining creation with justice.

Allah *the Exalted* has created the angels and maintained the creation in justice. Had the verse read “They maintained the creation in justice” instead, it would not have been correct. Those who are endowed with knowledge were also created by Allah *the Exalted* and maintained in justice by Him. He has caused people’s actions in the worldly life to be integrated; some employ their intellects, others employ their hearts, and others employ their limbs. This is an aspect of the divine justice otherwise, can anyone claim that a person may have all the skills required in this worldly life and can dispense with all other

people? No such a person can exist. In fact, this is a manifestation of the divine justice of Allah the Most Merciful.

The divine justice entails that the skills and abilities required to maintain this worldly life should be distributed among all people; each of them is endowed with some so that they all would be constantly in need of one another. One cannot rely on himself to make his own clothes, food, beverages, and meet all the diverse needs of life. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* has caused such skills and abilities to be divided among people. Some people master agriculture in order to produce enough food to provide their own needs and those of others. Thus, people exchange services with one another. A person cannot have the skills and abilities required to cultivate cotton, harvest it, spin, and weave it to make clothes. Similarly, a single person cannot possess the skills and abilities to plant wheat, harvest, and mill it to make bread.

Allah *the Exalted* has not created people so that each one of them would fulfill his own diverse needs independently from the others; He has decreed that the skills and talents should be distributed among all people so that their efforts would be complementary and for the broader human society to form an integrated unit. One person farms the land, the second spins the harvested cotton, the third weaves the fabric, and the fourth produces the required tools for these processes, and so on. This is the ultimate justice because a single person cannot possess the adequate energy or abilities to meet all of the required needs in the worldly life by himself. Allah *the Exalted* has created such a variety of talents and skills distributed among people in order to inevitably bond them together. He does not favour any person over the others in this regard. One person may have knowledge in a certain field and another person does not have any knowledge in it; they simply help one another to fulfill their mutual needs. In this way, people will necessarily need to exchange services and benefit one another.

This is why the whole universe is perfectly integrated. Let each of us ponder over his life and try to estimate the scope of the knowledge granted to him and the talents, skills, and abilities with which he is endowed to serve the maintenance of the movement of life?

These talents, skills, and abilities are distributed among all people so that they can help one another and collectively contribute to the movement of life.

This is the ultimate justice. In order to illustrate the real value of justice and the way it is maintained in the establishment of love and respect between and among people, let each of us think of another person and ask himself: "Is this person working for my benefit?" The answer is: "Yes."

So, when a person sees someone else skilled in a given craft, he should say: "His talents and skills in this craft will benefit me as well!" Thus, Allah *the Exalted* has justly redressed envy and jealousy among people, and made all people essentially interdependent, and in mutual solidarity, not favouring any of them over the others. Every person who strives to work and make a living in any given field is actually maintaining some of the collective needs of the broader human community. It is amazing that the field in which a person excels is usually that in which his own needs are less. This is why we find many proverbs to this effect. Some of these proverbs are the following: "The shoemaker's children always go barefoot," "The carpenter's house always needs work," and "The mechanic's car is leaking." This is important to make a person realise that the talents and skills that another person possesses, will benefit him as well, as evidenced by the fact that the skills that he possess, do not benefit him except within a narrow scope.

Thus, the conviction that the talents and skills of each individual will benefit them all is instilled within people generating love and respect to replace envy and jealousy. A witty person once asked: "Why should the cobbler's children be the worst-shod or the shoemaker's children go barefoot?" Another one answered him: "It is because that some professionals do not apply their skills in their own circles as efficiently as they do at work; they will not be paid for it." Great marvellous aspects can be realised in this common wisdom. For instance, some doctors specialized in certain fields may accomplish many achievements in their field, yet they may be afflicted with a disease within the very area of their expertise in which they excelled as if their excellence has not benefited them at all, but has only benefited others. Let us ponder over the verse as one unit. Allah *Glorified is He* says: "Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge. He upholds justice. There is no god but Him *the Almighty* the All Wise" (*Al-'Imran*: 18). The verse highlights that Allah *the Exalted* witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do]

the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice.” It is concluded with the emphasis that none is worthy of worship but Allah *Glorified is He the Exalted in Might, the All-Wise*. It is as though the verse means: As Allah *the Exalted* has testified that none is worthy of worship but Him, and so has the angels and scholars, through intellectual reflection and deduction, the matter is firmly established with no room for doubt. Therefore, we are urged to accept it as an established fact that “None is worthy of worship but Him.” As long as there is no deity save Him, one should rely on Him only and know that if he depends upon Him alone, he has depended on Allah *the Almighty* Who cannot be overpowered or challenged.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: “Be mindful of Allah and He 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.”⁽¹⁾

No one can argue with Allah or challenge His decrees. The created beings may engage in arguments with one another and debate with their equal peers; however, none can repel the divine decrees because Allah is *the Almighty* Lord Who cannot be challenged. If you believe in Him alone, you shall attain success (in this worldly life and the Hereafter). The phrase “Him alone” in the verse may apparently suggest belittling the reliance to Allah *the Exalted* alone according to human standards. One may say, “I rely on so-and-so only;” would i not be in a stronger position if I rely on twenty people instead of one? However, there is no comparison between relying on Allah alone and relying on the created being. You rely on the Creator in whose Hands lie the keys to all things and who is able to do all things. The phrase “Him alone” in the verse, actually, suffices you to stand in need of nothing or no one else. You should simply seek the sake of Allah *the Exalted* alone, and He will suffice you

(1) *At-Tirmidhi*

and you will not be in need of all others. You should know that there is nothing that can challenge or repel His decrees.

The greatness of Allah *Glorified is He* lies in the fact that He is the One and Only God, the Unique, the Eternal Refuge. He is *the Almighty* Lord, whose decrees cannot be challenged or repelled by anyone. He has the ultimate wisdom in the creation and arrangement of all things. When one knows the wisdom behind the divine decrees in governing and maintaining the creation, he will be amazed at the magnificence of the divine power of his Lord because wisdom means placing everything in its correct place. As long as something is in its right place, it is stable and as long as it is stable, it does not change and this entails calls for trust in it. The word “wisdom” in the Arabic language is derived from the word “*Hakamah*” which means the bridle that is placed in a horse’s mouth. It is made of a piece of leather which is placed on the tongue and has a piece of iron; it is used to steer and direct the horse veers towards the wrong direction.

The presence of wisdom, i.e. the “bridle,” requires the presence of something to be steered and directed towards the right direction. As long as Allah *the Exalted* testifies to the fact that none is worthy of worship save Him, and the angels and those endowed with knowledge has testified to the same fact and the fact is established that there is no deity save Him, the Almighty and All-Wise, this means that we should submissively abide by and follow His guidance. As long as Allah *the Exalted* has testified that none is worthy of worship but Him, that there is no partner associated with Him in worship to repel or challenge His decrees, He has caused the whole creation to exist with no partners and accordingly none can be associated with him in legislation.

Therefore, the source from which we derive the fundamentals of our way of life is one. It would have been possible that such one and only source of guidance may wrong the created beings because none of the creation of Allah has a right over Him. However, Allah is Just and He reassures us of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* All-Powerful, All-Knowledgeable, and All-Wise One and Only God does not wrong anyone in the slightest because He has underlined, “Despite being The One and Only God of this universe and none can repel or challenge my decrees, I maintain the creation is justice.”

We should ponder over the concept of maintaining the creation in justice and upholding justice in the universe to have a better and more profound understanding of it. Allah *the Exalted* states that He upholds justice. The verb “uphold” in this context means that Allah *the Exalted* has created the first beings and creatures and maintained His creation in justice and equity. It also means that the religious obligations as assigned by Allah *Glorified is He* to the creation, are based on justice and equity. Justice and equity necessitate an unbalanced scale held by the powerful Hand of Allah, the Omnipotent, with no higher power to repel the judgments and decrees. Allah *the Exalted* maintains the creation in justice as He provides us with all the requirements of life before He has created us and upholds justice in the universe. He has not caused life to be exclusively dependent on the worldly means. Rather, He caused some matters to be beyond our control. He did not limit our movement and our freedom of movement in the worldly life; He has created some worldly means for us to avail ourselves of them, if we choose to do so, and they yield the relevant results; we are given the option not to avail ourselves of these means and causes as well.

Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* has not caused us to control the first creation in the slightest compelling us to do anything. Rather, He has not caused our actions to have influence on many of the movements of life upon which our lives depend. For instance, He has not caused us to control the movement of the sun, moon, wind, or rain. He has willed that all these means should be under His control. Why? It is because these means will work for the human being before any power or ability is imparted to him. They work for the benefit of a person even before his life starts in order to prepare the life granted to him by Allah *the Exalted* in this world. Had these responsibilities been assigned to people instead, they would not have been fulfilled until the human being possesses the required willpower and knowledge first.

Allah *the Exalted* has caused the means for life to be under His sole control such as breathing, for instance. Breathing does not depend on a person's willpower. Rather, Allah, *The Exalted and Powerful*, controls the breathing of the human being until he develops the willpower to carry on the breathing. The possession of willpower entails the acquisition of knowledge that he needs to

fill his lungs with oxygen to be carried to all the cells of the mind and the whole body through the blood and in order to clean the blood and the body from harmful bodies. This requires knowledge. Had breathing required knowledge and learning first, what would have the infant, who has no knowledge, done? How would he have taken his first breaths? Therefore, the divine mercy entails that breathing, for example, should be under His control. However, He has not decreed that His creation should exist without any freedom or choice. Rather, Allah *the Exalted* has left great room for human freedom and choice.

So, Allah *the Exalted* does not completely control all the actions and choices of a person leaving him no freedom of choice and nor does He grant him the freedom of choice and action in all matters. This is the ultimate justice. Allah *the Exalted* has respected the human being's existence, life, willpower, and choice. He grants the human beings the indispensable means of life and renders them under His sole control because were a person to be given control over such matters, he would have abused them and delayed their fulfilments until he acquires the needed knowledge. Allah *the Exalted* wills that the human beings should be given these means of life and they are unable to do anything before acquiring such means. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* has caused them to be under His control because He is the Creator, Who best preserves and maintains His creation. However, He does not limit the freedom of the human being when he wishes to progress in life and better his conditions; he is given the chance to do so and if he does not want to do it, it is his choice. This is the ultimate justice.

Then, Allah *the Exalted* underlines that He upholds justice in the universe which includes maintaining justice, the legislations, and religious obligations. This means that His justice in legislations is absolute. Some people believe that there is no God and others worship many gods; Allah *the Exalted* maintains justice between the two positions. He is an Existing God, oh you who claim that there is no God! He is The One and Only God, oh you who associate others with Him in worship. This falls into the category of maintaining justice in terms of rulings. We find that Allah *Glorified is He* commands a person to do certain acts without giving him a choice in the matter. Other matters are left for the human being on which to decide. The person is not left completely free to do

whatever he wants in all matters with no restrictions; he is not compelled into all actions and is deprived of neither willpower nor choice in all matters.

Allah *the Exalted* willed that there should be a scope of compulsion and another for free will and choice for the human beings. He has imparted to the human being the ability to act; He has commanded the human being to work and has guaranteed the protection of the results of his work. He has decreed that He should have a right to part of the wealth with which He has entrusted him, to help one's fellow humans who are in need.

Allah *the Exalted* has given humankind the chance to work and toil and has preserved for them their possessions. However, He has not given free rein to their actions in all matters. Rather, He confined them in certain matters that fall within the scope of "the rights of Allah, The Exalted." Thus, we realise that Allah *Glorified is He* has maintained justice in this regard.

Thus, it becomes clear how Allah *the Exalted* upholds justice in the universe. We can see His justice evident in all affairs: in creation, imparting provisions, and legislation. As long as He is The One and Only God who maintains the creation in justice, what should prevent you, as a human being, from submitting to His will and abiding by His commands? Allah *the Exalted* says: "Behold, the only [true] religion in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender unto Him..."

And Allah *the Exalted* also says:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ
وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩﴾

True Religion, in God's eyes, is Islam: [devotion to Him alone]. Those who were given the Scripture disagreed out of rivalry, only after they had been given knowledge – if anyone denies God's revelations, God is swift to take account [19] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 19)

Allah *the Exalted* underlined that He is The One and Only God, the fact that He maintains the creation in justice is the logical result. The verse means that Islam, i.e. submission to Allah *the Exalted* is the only true religion in His

sight, is the logical result of the fact that Allah *the Exalted* testifies that there is no deity except Him, and so do the angels and those of knowledge, that He is maintaining the creation in justice. Why? Because there should be no submission to anyone except Allah *Glorified is He* since none is worthy of worship but Him. He has no partners in worship. He says: "Allah has never had a child. Nor is there any god beside Him – if there were, each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to over- come the others. May Allah be exalted above what they describe!" (*al-Mu'minun*: 91)

As long as it is established that He is the One God, what prevents the human being from submitting to His will and commands? The emphasis in the verse that the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam is, in fact, the logical conclusion to which the wise person's intellect arrives. Despite this fact, Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed His mercy on us, and sent His Messengers to inform us of the premise and conclusion, namely that Islam is the true religion in the sight of Allah. If we ask ourselves what religion is, the answer will be that religion is a word with many connotations. The Arabic word for religion is "*Din*" and it is derived from the root "*D-a-n*" meaning to draw closer, submit, and abide by someone's commands. It also means recompense. The Day of Judgment is also known as *Yawm Ad-Din*, i.e. the Day of Recompense. It is the day when a person is rewarded for obedience and punished with disobedience. If the human being submits to the will of Allah, then it is as described in the words of Allah *the Exalted* stating that the only true religion in the sight of Allah is Islam. Thus, we become aware that although there might be other religions which people follow, they are not true religions in the sight of Allah *the Exalted* Who says: "For you is your religion, and for me is mine." (*al-Kafirun*: 6) This means that there might be a religion, the adherents of which submit to someone other than Allah *the Exalted* comprising reverence, submission, and obedience to orders of another entity. However, it is not accepted by Allah *Glorified is He* and it is not considered a true religion in His sight. The only religion that is accepted by Allah *the Exalted* is Islam, i.e. genuine submission and devotion to Him. Religion can mean a way of life or a divine Law. If it is used to refer to the religious rulings and commandments, it is called *Shari'a*, or divine Law and if it is used to refer to obedience, reverence, and the consequent

recompense, it is called way of life. However, if he is referring to the umbrella that encompasses all that, it is called faith.

Allah *Glorified is He* underlines that the only true religion in His sight of God is Islam; this means that there is no religion accepted by Allah *Glorified is He* except Islam. The Arabic word “*Islam*” is derived from the root “*s-l-m*”. This root denotes many meanings. The root of the word denotes diverse meanings revolving around safety from evil and corruption. It could also mean the realization of inner peace between a person and his self, his Lord, the universe, and his fellow brothers. It denotes righteousness and the absence of corruption. All of the derivatives of the root denote these meanings. Since the word “*Islam*” denotes these commendable meanings, why do we not follow it?

We have previously underlined that a person does not submit to his equal peer unless he is convinced with what he is saying. A person says to an equal who gives him an order: “Why should I obey your order? You must convince me first of the wisdom behind that order.” However, when a person believes in Allah *Glorified is He* who maintains the creation in justice, he must obey His commands.

Hence, we came to know that Islam, in essence, means submission and surrender to Allah, *The Exalted* stemming from dignity, understanding, honour, reason, and wisdom. There is a rational servitude when a person abides by the superficial meaning of servitude. There is a profound dignity realised when a person ponders over the true meaning of servitude to Allah *the Exalted* which cannot be approached by falsehood from any direction. It is the dignity of the sound intellect that does not lead to anything except genuine submission to the consistent commands that is void of contradictions.

As long as Allah *the Exalted* is The One and Only God, who maintains the creation in justice, when a person believes in Him and abides by His commands, he should know that there lies genuine dignity in the understanding, reason, and servitude because he worships Allah *the Exalted* who has control over all the created beings and creatures. He does not worship an equal peer. The one who worships his equal has nothing but the false pride and zeal of a subservient servant. As long as Islam is submission and surrendering to Allah *the Exalted*, it is not submission to an equal. Embracing Islam means embracing submission,

peace, and consistency, security, and rest. It means freeing oneself from everything except Allah, *The Exalted*. He says:

“Allah puts forward this illustration: can a servant, who is owned by quarrelling partners at odds with each other, be considered equal to a man belonging exclusively and devoted wholly to one master? All praise be to Allah, though most of them do not know.” (*az-Zumar*: 29) Allah *the Exalted* wants to demonstrate the difference between submission to the commands of a single master and submission to several masters.

He gives us an example that is familiar to us. He gives us an example of a servant owned by ten masters at odds with one another, each of whom gives him an order; what should he do? The second example is of a servant owned by one master. There is no doubt that the second will be more at peace because he has one master only, whereas the one owned by ten masters will be lost between the conflicting orders of his masters.

A servant owned by many masters is miserable because his masters are not in agreement; they are disputing partners. If one master sees him following the instructions of another, he will give him orders to do the very opposite! Accordingly, a servant's efforts will be squandered and he will be exhausted trying to please and obey them all. On the contrary, a servant owned by one master only is at peace. The same goes for worshipping one Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* gives this example from the daily life to show us the sweetness of *Tawhid* (Islamic monotheism) and worshipping Him alone with no partners. A servant who believes in One God should express his gratitude to Him because he submits to One God only. Islam, in essence, is submission, surrendering, and embracing inner peace. The Arabic word for peace is “*Silm*.” Allah *the Exalted* says: “And if they incline towards peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is The All Hearing, The All Knowing.” (*al-An'am*: 61) This submission is not to an equal peer; rather, to a Higher Entity. The Higher Entity, to whom we submit, is the One Who has created all things; He is *The Most High* Who has sustained and granted us all things.

Thus, when a person embraces Islam, i.e. submits to Allah *the Exalted*, he earns the recompense of such submission from his Lord. Hence, submitting oneself to Allah and embracing Islam are in the best interest of a person. As long as

Islam is the only true religion in the sight of Allah *the Exalted* it is the religion, the adherence to which yields rewards. Islam is the religion of all the Prophets and all of them followed it. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the close friend of Allah *Glorified is He* said: “Our Lord, and make us submit ourselves to You and from our descendants a Muslim community submissive to You. And show us how to worship You, and accept our repentance. Indeed, You are The One who accepts the repentance and the Most Merciful.” (*al-Baqara*: 128)

Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* was telling the truth in his conversation with his sons related in the following verse. Allah *the Exalted* says: “Or were you there to witnesses when death approached Ya'qub (Jacob); when he said to his sons, “Whom shall you worship after me?” They replied, “We shall worship your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) - one God. And we submit ourselves to Him.” (*al-Baqara*: 133)

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: “Say, “Indeed, my Lord has guided me to the right path; (to) a most right religion, the faith of Ibrahim (Abraham), the upright one inclining toward truth. And he was not among the polytheists who associated others with Allah in worship.”[161] Say, “Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, The Lord of the worlds. [162] No partner or associate has He; and this I have been commanded, and I am the first of those who submit to Him. [163]” (*al-An'am*: 161-163).

Islam is a comprehensive term and the word “Muslims” is a common description for all the Divine Messages. Islam does not merely refer to the Divine Message revealed to Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. Rather, it means devotion and submission to Allah *the Exalted* according to the divine guidance sent with the Prophets of Allah who were assisted by miracles. The difference is that the term “Islam” is used as a description and not a name for these past Divine Messages. However, Muslims, i.e. the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* were distinguished with the enduring nature of this description in relation to their Divine Message. This is because the Divine Message revealed to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* has encompassed the ultimate and most perfect submission and devotion to Allah *the Exalted* and there will be no further refinement. The

followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* were distinct in being given a name derived from the word “*Islam*.” Islam became used as a name for the religion of the the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* who have become known as “Muslims.”

Islam, i.e. submission to Allah *the Exalted* is used as a description for the previous Divine Messages revealed to the past Messengers of Allah. However, in case of the final and concluding Divine Message, with which the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessing be upon him* was sent, Islam became its distinguishing name because it is the concluding Divine Message. Thus, Islam is the universal religion for all humankind. This is why we describe ourselves as “Muslims,” whereas those who followed the past divinely revealed messages are also described as Muslims, in the sense that they had submitted to Allah, *the Exalted*. Muslims, the adherents of the concluding Divine Message have been named as such by Allah *Glorified is He* in His Book. This is an aspect of the verbal miracles pertaining to nomenclature in which Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the close friend of Allah, was in agreement with the will of his Lord.

Allah *the Exalted* says: “And strive hard for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty or hardship. [It is] the religion of your forefather Ibrahim (Abraham). Allah has named you “Muslims” before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So, establish prayer and give *zakat* and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector and Guardian; and how excellent the Guardian and how excellent the Helper is!” (*al-Hajj*: 78)

Islam has become a name for the followers of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. This description is not used as a name except in the case of someone who has perfectly submitted to Allah *Glorified is He*.

How? We know that the name “Allah” is exclusively used in reference to Allah *the Exalted* and the attribute “Pre-eternally Living” is among His divine attributes. However, the attribute “Pre-eternally Living” has become one of the divine Names of Allah because He is Eternally Living. Thus, an attribute is not used as a name except if the description denotes an enduring and

absolute meaning. Hence, the past Prophets of Allah who were sent before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and the previous peoples were also all Muslims in the sense that they submitted themselves to Allah, *the Exalted*. However, the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* are distinguished with the fact that Islam is used in reference to them as both an attribute and a name. The religion of the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* became a universal name. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* foresaw it as related in the verse that reads: “[It is] the religion of your forefather Ibrahim (Abraham). Allah has named you “Muslims” before [in former scriptures]” (*al-Hajj*: 78) Allah *Glorified is He* relates on the authority of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that he clearly gave the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* the name “Muslims.” The verse did not read, “Allah has described you as Muslims.” Rather, it reads, “Allah has named you Muslims” because the previous peoples were described as Muslims, whereas the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* are named Muslims, derived from the word Islam. One of the miraculous aspects of the name “Muslims” is that the followers of other Divine Messages attribute themselves to other than Islam. The “Jew” (in Hebrew, “*Yehudi*”) is derived from the name Judah which was the name of one of the sons of Prophet Ya’qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him*. They also describe themselves as “Followers of the Mosaic faith” attributing themselves to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Similarly, the Christians name themselves after the Christ, the son of Mary *peace be upon him*. We, the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* do not call ourselves “Mohammedans;” rather, we call ourselves “Muslims.” No other name is used in reference to the followers of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. The name “Islam” has become a distinguishing honour for us.

Allah *the Exalted* underlines that the only true religion in His sight is Islam. This means that any other Prophet of Allah or his followers could be described as “Muslims, namely submissive to Allah *the Exalted*” one of the Messengers of Allah might have been sent with new laws and teachings that were not revealed to previous peoples, we, as Muslims, top this by being granted the honour of bearing the name Muslims. The submission to Allah

Glorified is He has been perfected by Muslims and this is why it has become a name for the followers of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that the people, who were given divine revelation, differed after knowledge was imparted to them.

Why did they diverge? He *the Most High* answers, “out of rivalry and jealous animosity between themselves.” The reference to the divergence indicates that they were once in agreement. Islam is the submission to Allah and abidance by His way of life and guidance because He is the One and Only God who upholds justice. What was the source of such divergence? What has caused it? Had another “god” come to the picture challenging His supremacy? No! As long as there is only One true God and the guidance that comes from Him is one, what has caused such animosity and divergence?

Allah *the Exalted* clarifies for us that the divergence arose among the people of the Book, i.e. those who had been given divine revelation, after they were granted knowledge. This is truly outraging and wicked. If they had diverged before they were given knowledge, we may have perceived their divergence excusable.

However, for the divergence to take place after being given knowledge by Allah, the One Who maintains the creation in justice, they should be asked, “What happened causing you to diverge?” A new element must have been added to the equation, namely their sinful desires. First, we should identify the meaning of divergence in this context. Divergence, in essence, denoted having different inclinations and views.

Why does divergence occur despite the fact that there is no deity other than Allah *the Exalted* Who maintains the creation in justice? We must draw the conclusion that a new element is added to the equation. What was it? It was the different inclinations. The verse underlined that “they have diverged” which means that a group held a certain view and the other held a different one. We may conclude that one group arrived at the truth and the other fell into the abyss of falsehood or that both groups fell into the abyss of falsehood. In fact, inclining to falsehood may be of different forms because there are many forms of falsehood. Did the verse mean that Allah *the Exalted* has revealed the divine messages and His mercy for the creation entailed that

some people may adhere to the truth even if some others would differ with them in this regard? A good example of this is the situation of the Jews when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessing be upon him* was sent. They held different views about the concluding Divine Message. Some of them embraced Islam and believed in the Divine Message of the final Prophet of Allah, while others did not. Those who accepted Islam attained the truth. It is as aspect of the divine mercy that He has caused those who knew of the fact that the tidings about the Divine Message of Islam were documented in their scriptures would proclaim them. They did not conceal this knowledge; rather, they proclaimed their faith, while others insisted on concealing the knowledge that had been imparted to them by their Lord and insisted on denying it. The following poetic verse applies to those who embraced Islam:

He who has rendered the truth taste as unbearably bitter as gall to some, has spared some generations of people who would adhere to the truth

If Allah *the Exalted* has protected the successive generations of Muslim community by preserving the Quran, some of the followers of the past divine religions had adhered to the truth. Allah *the Exalted* credited them when He says: “But they are not all alike. There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God’s revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, [113] who believe in Allah and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous [114]” (*Al- ‘Imran*: 113-114).

Allah *the Exalted* has done them justice. Those who have believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* from among the adherents of the past divinely revealed messages, have been guided to the truth and differed from others. The reference to the “People of the Book” in the verse, i.e. those who were given the divine scripture, requires a pause for reflection. The verse underlines that they were given these divine books and they were not their own production. So, the divine revelation is not the product of the human thought because if such a guidance and way of life were the human production, it would have been possible that people would disagree on them. The fact that the verse uses the passive form makes us wonder who gave them the book. It was Allah *Glorified is He* Who does not bring anything inconsistent.

As long as the Quran is revealed to us by Allah *the Exalted* it is inconceivable that it should include any contradiction. Allah *the Exalted* says: “Had it been from any other than Allah, they would have found in it much contradiction and discrepancy.” (*an-Nisa*’: 82)

Allah *Glorified is He* is underlining that any product of the human thought, will inevitably contain contradiction and discrepancy and people will differ about it. Only the divine product produced by Allah, the One and Only God, is free of contradiction and discrepancy. It is not possible that the divine products that are produced by the very source should contain contradictions or discrepancy unless they are altered and modified by human interference. These modifications are made due to the sinful desires and inclinations of the people who claimed to be attributed to Allah *Glorified is He*!

So, Allah *the Exalted* is clarifying for us that the divine books were not given to them by their human peers; rather, the divine books were granted to them by Allah, the One Omnipotent God. This is intended as an admonition for the followers of past Divine Messages. It means that when they follow the guidance of Allah *Glorified is He* and adhere to the way of life set by Him and revealed to their Messengers, they are not following the guidance of a human being because all the Messengers of Allah were sent to communicate the divine guidance of their Lord to their peoples. None of the Messengers of Allah claimed that the guidance was his own production. Rather, the Messengers of Allah themselves were the firsts to obey and submit to the divine guidance revealed to them. In fact, this should be perceived as a source of honour for them. All people must be mindful of the fact that the true guidance was revealed to the Messengers of Allah by their Lord.

When we see the term “The scripture or Book”, we must bear in mind that it was used in different occasions in the Quran. The Quran is referred to as “Quran,” literally meaning “recitation” because it is recited and sometimes as “the Scripture or Book” referring to the Quran in written form. The Arabic word *Quran* is derived from the root *q-r-a* meaning to recite. It means to recite something from memory. The information that is only preserved in the hearts and minds of people could become distorted and altered due to sinful

desires. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* preserved the Quran in written form and also in the hearts of Muslims.

When Allah *Glorified is He* refers to “the people of the Scripture or the Book,” it draws our attention to the fact that the divine scripture is the divine guidance preserved in a written form. This means it was not just preserved in the memories and hearts of people and would be eventually forgotten and lost. Rather, it is documented and preserved in written form as well. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* described the divine revelation prior to the revelation of the Quran as being preserved in written form. If the adherents of the past Divine Messages followed their sinful desires, as happened, this means that the divine revelation was altered and distorted. Now, let us ponder on the word “knowledge.” What is knowledge? Knowledge is the realization of an existing fact that can be proven with evidence. Some propositions do not amount to knowledge because they cannot be proven with evidence.

For example, we say that the earth is spherical. This fact about the earth has been ascertained and we are certain of it. In the past ages past, some people argued that the earth was flat, and attempted to prove this. However, those who proved the earth to be spherical were actually correct. In modern times, the spherical shape of the earth could be seen from spaceships and by other means. We know without any doubt that the spherical shape of the Earth is a fact, of which we are certain, and we can prove it with evidence.

This is an example of “knowledge”. The problem is that people bring forth propositions which have not amounted to knowledge and label as established facts and knowledge. For example, the proposition suggests that human beings evolved from apes. No one can ascertain such a contention beyond doubt and it does not amount to true knowledge. The word “knowledge” refers only to ascertained propositions that are certain and existent in the real world and can be proven with evidence. If a proposition is certain and exists in the real world, yet we are unable to prove it with evidence, what is it called? It is called “imitation,” like a little boy imitating his father in every action before his intellect is fully developed and says, “None is worthy of worship but Allah, The One and Only God.” Another example of imitation is the pupil who accepts the propositions of his teacher without understanding

their relevant proofs. We call this “imitation” or adherence to previous authoritative positions without verifying the supportive evidence himself. When the pupil’s intellect and analytical skills become fully developed, he is asked to do his own research on the matter, examine the proofs himself, and then arrive at his own conclusions.

So, imitation in this context denotes adherence to previous authoritative positions on existent and established propositions lacking the supportive evidence. Thus, we come to realise that knowledge is different from imitation in terms of the ability to prove the proposition with evidence. However, what do we call a proposition which is certain and held to be true, but non-existent in the reality? This is called “ignorance.” Ignorance does not mean lack of knowledge; rather, it means that a person’s knowledge of a certain issue is contrary to the reality. As for the one who has no knowledge, he is in need of instruction and edification on the truth and the correct notion. The ignorant person, on the other hand, is different; he needs first to remove the false and incorrect notion out of his mind first to be replaced with the correct notion. Thus, convincing an ignorant person to accept the truth comprises two actions: removing falsehood out of his mind and then replacing it with the truth.

Therefore, we find it difficult to edify the ignorant people on Islam and not those who lack knowledge because the ignorant person is convinced of a false propositions which are contrary to the truth, whereas the one lacking knowledge simply does not know the truth and needs to be informed of it. What if the contention is not certain and not held to be true and the degree of certainty and uncertainty are equal? This is known as doubt. If certainty outweighs uncertainty, we call it “conjecture.” If uncertainty outweighs certainty, we call it “illusion.”

Thus, the means by which propositions are perceived are: firstly: knowledge; secondly: imitation; thirdly: ignorance; fourthly: doubt; fifthly: conjecture; and sixthly: illusion. Knowledge is the highest level in the perception of propositions. This is why Allah *the Exalted* specifies the subject matter of the difference among the people of the Book; they diverged after being granted knowledge. The verse did not underline that they had diverged after being granted “imitation, conjecture, ignorance, or doubt.” Rather, He says that they had diverged after attaining the perfect perception, namely, knowledge. As long as there is a

divine command issued by Allah the One and Only God Who maintains the creation injustice, it must be true and amounts to the degree of knowledge. So, what has caused their divergence? There must have been a new factor. The new factor was their sinful desires. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* specifies that they diverged out of rivalry and jealous animosity among themselves. What is meant by rivalry in this context? It means seeking eminence without any right to it. Seeking eminence is not blameworthy in and of itself because it is the essence of the worldly ambition in the universe. The person naturally seeks to better himself and his life conditions by means of hard work, striving and exerting greater efforts in order to arrive at a certain academic or social level or the like. This is a natural right for all people. We know that the world has been developed and enhanced because of such human ambition. Had people of any given generation settled for their current conditions, the world would have been left in a state of dullness and inactivity. However, people have caused the developments in the world through the efforts exerted by some of them to support beneficial causes. They strove to enhance their situations and succeeded in bettering their life conditions by means of the knowledge earned through the real effort they have exerted and learning about the efforts of their predecessors.

So, seeking eminence is not blameworthy in and of itself; rather, it is praiseworthy as long as it is based on hard work and striving. However, if a person seeks eminence without any right to it and without exerting the needed efforts to attain it, this is what is meant with “rivalry and jealous animosity.” Allah *the Exalted* confirms in this verse that every conflict between the genuine scholars or between religions is a result of “rivalry and jealous animosity”. The origin of such rivalry and jealous animosity is that the scholars seek eminence without any right to it. The manifestations of seeking undeserved eminence can be seen in hastening to issue *Fatwas* (legal positions of juridical cases) that conform to the inclinations of the people and contradict the divine revelation. Such a person might claim to be civilized, yet issue *Fatwas* that contradict what Allah *the Exalted* has revealed, claiming that he is following the religion in the light of the spirit of the present time or claim that he does not give in to dull rigidity and may even go far and accuse those who hold on to their religion of being backward. In fact, the hidden objective harboured in the heart of such a

person is seeking undeserved eminence among his people. We must understand that the origin of every divergence among the followers of one religion or between different religions is as Allah *the Exalted* coined it, “out of rivalry and jealous animosity between themselves.” This means that some of them follow their own sinful desires instead of abiding by the revelation of their Lord. Why? It is because the religious rulings are either decisive, leaving no room for personal reasoning and intellectual efforts (by competent scholars) or indecisive, leaving the door open for personal reasoning and intellectual efforts by competent scholars.

Allah *the Exalted* wills that not all the rulings are decisive and nor are they indecisive and open for personal reasoning of the competent scholars. Rather, both kinds of rulings are produced so that the human being would respect the intellect that his Creator has granted him and in order to assign him with the task of contemplation, research, and examination, arriving at a conclusion and declaring one position preponderant. The person employs his intellect, which is an aspect of the divine mercy so that the human intellect would not be left in a state of dullness and rigidity.

When we find a divergence between scholars or adherents of different religions, we should know that the reason is as coined in the Quran as, “out of rivalry and jealous animosity between themselves.” Troubles arise as a result of such rivalry and jealous animosity. The one who aspires to attaining undeserved eminence is the one agitating the jealous animosity, claiming to be more intelligent than others are. He seeks undeserved eminence and superiority over those who have authority over him or when his opinion conforms to the ruler’s, trying to justify the ruler’s opinion.

The phrase “out of rivalry and jealous animosity between themselves” encompasses all kinds of waves of deviation from the divine guidance that we see around us. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* directed us to the preventative measures against spiritual ailments resulting from such rivalry and jealous animosity just like people are given serums to protect them from physical diseases. He *peace and blessing be upon him* has edified us on the preventative ways so that we would be safe from the spiritual diseases resulting from jealous animosity.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: “The essence of virtue and righteousness is (manifested in) good morals, whereas sinful conduct is that which turns in your heart (making you feel uncomfortable) and you dislike that it would be disclosed to other people.”⁽¹⁾ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is warning us as well in another Hadith. He *peace and blessing be upon him* also said: “Righteousness is that about which the soul feels at ease and the heart feels tranquil. And wrongdoing is that which wavers in the soul and causes uneasiness in the breast even though people have repeatedly given their legal opinion [in its favour].”⁽²⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is warning us in order to clarify that the people given to jealous animosity insist on proclaiming their opinions and issuing *Fatwas* (legal positions and opinions) on all matters. What is meant by the issuance of *Fatwa* from which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* has warned us? Is it an opinion expressed by a person known for his knowledge of the divine rulings? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* pointed out this in order to instruct taking the preventative measures against such spiritual ailments. The people of truth might be outnumbered and lack the means to communicate their opinions to people. Moreover, the ones who control the circulation of news and information might not be siding with the people of the truth and might be on the side of others, who follow falsehood or please the mob.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* has drawn out attention to the preventative measures so that those, who keenly hold on to the truth, would not despair. The adherence to the religion cannot always be smooth and easy. Rather, we will find some people interpret the religious rulings wrongly and distort the facts. Therefore, he *peace and blessing be upon him* has clarified that a believer has the ability to make his own judgments and warned us from those who hasten to issue *Fatwas* out of rivalry and jealous animosity. People need the *Fatwas* of those endowed with knowledge. This is why the words “they seek your *Fatwa*” are found in more than one verse in the Noble Quran because those who ask for *Fatwas* are in need of clarification

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

(2) *Ahmad*

about a certain religious matter as they are keen to foster their faith. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is warning us from those who try to issue *Fatwas* that are not based on genuine knowledge and alert a believer not to follow the *Fatwas* of unqualified people.

Allah *the Exalted* says: “And whoever disbelieves in the verses of Allah, then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account” (*Al-'Imran*: 19) Who disbelieves in the verses of Allah *the Exalted*? The disbelief in the signs of Allah *the Exalted* is specified in the reference to divergence and jealous animosity, i.e. seeking undeserved eminence without any right to it. Allah *the Exalted* describes it as disbelief so as to warn us against concealing the divine commandments of Allah *Glorified is He* by the divergence of views or jealous animosity. The verse was concluded with the warning. “...then indeed, Allah is swift in [taking] account” (*Al-'Imran*: 19) The person should beware of thinking that recompense will be delayed for long, saying, “I can enjoy the results of divergence and rivalry to serve those who benefit from the divergence” because he wants to hasten matters that he thinks to be beneficial for him. Allah *Glorified is He* is warning you from assuming that His reckoning to be slow because it is possible that the recompose would be in this worldly life. If a person is not afflicted with an adversity in this worldly life, he will have a severe reckoning in the Hereafter.

Someone might say: “Allah *the Exalted* may defer the reckoning and recompose to the Hereafter; we are experiencing the lesser signs of the Day of Resurrection now, and the greater signs have not appeared yet.” To such a person we say that there is a difference between the event itself and a person’s experience of the event. There is a difference between the Resurrection of all people and the end of a person’s life by an accident that he did not foresee. A person might issue a *Fatwa* today and then have a sudden accident, ending his life and bringing about the swift reckoning. Had a person thought that the reckoning would have been far away, he would not have known that his life could come to an end as fast as the abrupt events take place in this worldly life because no one is capable of extending his own life span. He could die at any given moment. Thus, the life of a person who might have thought that his recompose would be distant could end very swiftly. The word account or

reckoning used in the verse is intended to reassure a believer that Allah *the Exalted* maintains the creation in justice and does not leave the acts of those who disbelieved in Him and disobeyed Him to go unpunished; every person will receive his due recompense. Then, He says: “So if they argue with you, say, “I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam]. “

فَإِنْ حَاجُّوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ وَقُلْ لِلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
الْكِتَابَ وَالْأُمِّيِّينَ ءَأَسْلَمْتُمْ فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاءُ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِالْعِبَادِ

If they argue with you [Prophet], say, ‘I have devoted myself to God alone and so have my followers.’ Ask those who were given the Scripture, as well as those without one, ‘Do you too devote yourselves to Him alone?’ If they do, they will be guided, but if they turn away, your only duty is to convey the message. God is aware of His servants [20]
(The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 20)

“If they argue with you” indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* reveals His guidance to the last of Prophets, Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and informs him of the reality he would be facing. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was confronted by three camps: First, the pagans of Quraysh who were in utter disbelief. Second, the Jews and Christians, who are both coupled together in the verse because they are among the people of the Book. Third was the camp of the hypocrites. The argument was started by the second camp because the pagans of Quraysh did not claim that they followed a divinely-revealed religion. The people of the Book, on the other hand, claimed that they were following a divinely-revealed religion. Since polytheism and paganism oppose to the divine religion, the conflict between them is logical; however, when the followers of a past divinely-revealed Message opposes the divine Message revealed to the final Messenger, this is a matter which calls for a pause for reflection.

The meaning of “argument” in this context is that they were debating with Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*; “arguing” in the verse

simply means that each party presents his argument and contentions. This indicates a dialogue; as long as there was a debate between truth and falsehood, Allah *the Exalted* would not leave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* unequipped. Rather, He says to him: "If they argue with you", meaning if they debate with you about the religion of Islam with which you have been sent as the final and concluding Divine Message, which clashes with idolatry and paganism followed by Quraysh and the alterations done by the people of the Book to their divinely revealed Messages, changing the meaning that Allah *the Exalted* intended, say, Oh Muhammad: "I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam], and [so have] those who follow me." We have previously underlined that when Allah *Glorified is He* commands the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* to say something, it would have been possible that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* would simply relate the statement of Allah *the Exalted* directly without referring to the command of his Lord "Say such-and-such." When a father says to his son: "Go to your uncle and tell him such-and-such" and the son goes to the uncle and tells him as instructed, he does not say to his uncle, "Say to your uncle such-and-such..." However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* repeated the command of his Lord to us as clearly stated in the verse. The verse reads: "If they argue with you, say, 'I have submitted myself to Allah (in Islam), and (so have) those who follow me.'" (*Al-'Imran*: 20) Is this a rebuttal and refutation of an argument? Indeed it is because the people of the Book and the pagans of Quraysh have been described as related in the following verse.

Allah *the Exalted* says: "And if you should ask them, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?'" they would most certainly say: *The Almighty* and All Knowing, has created them." (*az-Zukhruf*: 9)

Moreover, Allah *the Exalted* says about them: "And if you should ask them who created them, they would surely say, 'Allah.'" So how are they deluded, and turned back (for the truth)?" (*az-Zukhruf*: 87)

The universe comprises two things: the place, namely the heavens and the earth, and the human being. The heavens and the earth as well as the human being are created by Allah *Glorified is He*. It is logical that we should submit ourselves to the Creator of all things and beings. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* says:

“Say, “I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam],” means, “Bear in mind that I have not gone out of the fold of the belief in The One and Only God whom you believe in.” He is the One Who has created all things and beings and has caused the universe to exist.

Islam, in essence, is submission to Allah *the Exalted* He has decreed that the noblest part of a person should be placed on the floor where this submission is manifested (prostrating oneself before Him). Prostration is the highest degree of obedience and servitude because a person places on the earth the loftiest part of his body, i.e. his forehead, and expresses humility and weakness in the presence of the Omnipotent Authority. The face is the body part that shows feelings: happiness or sadness. It reflects a person's inner character and feelings; when a person prostrates before someone against his will, it shows on his face. When he prostrates willingly, savouring proximity to Allah *Glorified is He* happiness and delight will be written all over his face. Allah *the Exalted* says: “(Say) I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam].” (*Al-‘Imran*: 20) It means that the face, the loftiest part of a person's body, should submit to Allah *Glorified is He*. No loftier body part is worthy of expressing submission to Allah *Glorified is He*. The word ‘face’ in the Arabic language can be sometimes used to refer to a person. When someone says, “I have surrendered my face,” he means, “I have submitted myself and my whole being.” Let us ponder on the words of Allah *the Exalted* as He says: “Everything is perishable but His Face; His is the judgment, and to Him you shall be brought back.” (*al-Qasas*: 88)

This means that everything shall eventually perish and cease to exist except Allah *the Exalted*. This is the meaning of the phrase “but His Face” in the verse. If we interpret the verse according to the literal meaning referring to His Face in particular and not to Allah *the Exalted* someone might say: “Does Allah *the Exalted* not have a Hand, for example?” We believe that He has a Hand that is not like anything in the creation. His hand or any of His attributes shall not cease to exist or perish. The word “Face” in the verse is a reference to Allah *the Exalted* and not merely to His Face, with the emphasis that there is nothing whatever like unto Him. The word ‘face’ is used to refer a person as a whole because the face is the feature which best distinguishes a person. Unlike any other body parts, the face is crucial for human identify; we recognise

people by their face. Allah *the Exalted* has instructed His Messenger to proclaim, "I have submitted myself to Allah (in Islam) and so have those who have followed me." This indicates that Prophet Muhammad, blessing and *peace be upon him*, submitted his face to Allah *the Exalted* as He has commanded him in the divine revelation since the revelation was given directly to him. However, when he says "and all who have followed me," this is proof for all those who followed him even though they are not directly addressed by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Therefore, there is no room for any person to say to Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*: "You have submitted to Allah *the Exalted* because he has commanded you directly." It is as though the speaker wants the divine command to be directly addressed to all believers instead. Allah *the Exalted* says "and all who have followed me." Everyone who follows Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* believes that he *peace and blessing be upon him* is a true Prophet of Allah, delivering the Divine Message and true guidance to mankind. There is no need to demand that the divine command should be addressed to every person individually because the Divine Message has reached them by virtue of their belief in what Allah *the Exalted* has revealed to His Noble Messenger, and Allah *the Exalted* has commanded His Messenger, *peace and blessing be upon him*: "Say to those who were given the Scripture and [to] those without one, "Have you submitted yourselves to Allah?"

When you find a question in the Quran, you should know that it is intended as a request for you to seek the truth. It is like the case when a person says to another, "Is Muhammad there?" or "Has so-and-so visited you?" The intention of a question is to know the truth. Sometimes, the question is used in order to give an order, such as the case when someone visits you, and your father may say to you, "Have you made coffee for your guest?" This is an instruction for you to make coffee for him if you have not and failed to fulfill the obligations of hospitality.

Thus, we understand the question in the verse, "Have you [too] submitted yourselves unto Him?" Let us ponder on the verse revealed in relation to alcohol: "Satan only wants to cause enmity and hatred to spring in your midst by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you off from the remembrance

of Allah and from prayer. Will you then desist?" (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) The exclamation of Allah *Glorified is He* "Will you then desist?" includes a question and the question in this context is meant as an order for them to desist. The verse in reference reads, "Have you [too] submitted yourselves unto Him?" It is a call for them to submit to Allah. It means, "Submit to Allah." Then, Allah *the Exalted* says: "And if they should submit [in Islam], they are rightly guided" (*Al-'Imran*: 20) It means that they have been guided to the right way to accomplish the objective for which Man was created. We should emphasize that the word "Islam" in this context indicates submission and surrender to Allah *Glorified is He*. Submission is not recognised except by the humble. Submission is manifested in action not only in belief. This is why Imam 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* who was blessed with a share of the prophetic eloquence, said to his brothers: "I am defining Islam as no one has defined before me: Islam is submission; submission is conviction; conviction is affirmation; affirmation is acknowledgment; acknowledgment of the Divine Power means recognizing and accepting His Majesty; acceptance of His Majesty means fulfilling the obligations laid down by Him and fulfilment of obligations means actions (Therefore, Islam does not mean mere faith, but faith plus deeds)." In our daily life, we may ask: "Who is so-and-so? To whom so-and-so is attributed?"

In other words, we ask who his father is. The meaning of the word 'genealogist' is a person who knows the chains of lineage of people. As Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was defining Islam as none has defined it before, he, *Allah be pleased with him*, underlined that Islam does not mean mere faith, but faith plus deeds. He remarked that a believer's faith is verified by means of his actions. The best proof of a person's faith is his actions. Imam 'Ali *may Allah exalt his mention* then added: "A disbeliever's disbelief is known by his denial of truth. A believer has taken his religion from his Lord and is not following his own personal opinion." It is better to be a Muslim and commit a sin than being a non-Muslim and carry out a good deed. This is because when a Muslim commits a sin, he can simply repent of it and seek forgiveness of his Lord. Moreover, the good deeds carried out by non-Muslims are not rewardable because the doer disbelieves in Allah *the Exalted*. How great the affiliation to

Islam is! The verse reads: “And if they submit to Allah [in Islam], they are rightly guided...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 20) The opposite of submission is mentioned in the following statement in the verse: “but if they turn away, your only duty is to convey the message.” The opposite of submission is “turning away;” this means that they refrained from submitting themselves to Allah *the Exalted*. He commands His Messenger *peace and blessing be upon him* not to be saddened by their attitude if they turned away from guidance. This is similar to the verse that reads: “Then perhaps you would kill yourself with grief over them, [Oh Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.” (*al-Kahf*: 6)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was only required to deliver the Divine Message to people. As stated in the opening of the verse, “(Say, Oh Muhammad,) I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam], and [so have] those who follow me.” The duty of communicating the Divine Message includes the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* and his followers. This is why another verse is revealed to explain this doctrinal issue so that the duty of communicating the Divine Message would be maintained by his followers. It also informs us why there is no longer need for other Prophets after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* because Allah *the Exalted* has caused some of the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* to shoulder the duty of rectifying the corruption in the universe. There is no longer a need for sending another Prophet of Allah. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: “The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets.” We understand that the duty of communicating the Divine Message to people was not exclusively the duty of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. Rather, it is the duty of all those endowed with knowledge of the Divine Message revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*, and believe in it. He *peace and blessing be upon him* served as the optimal role model in this regard. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: “[Believers], you are the best community produced (as an example) for mankind; you enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in Allah. If the people of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them. For although some of them do believe, most of them are defiantly disobedient.” (*Al-‘Imran*: 110) Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: “And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him.” (*al-Hajj*: 78) This means

that you shall witness against the people to whom you had delivered the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Those who failed to deliver the Divine Message to people as enjoined, have not taken on the inheritance of prophethood. Shouldering the duty of communicating the Divine Message to people and celebrating the prophetic inheritance are a great privilege and honour. It also requires patience and endurance. The Prophetic inheritance is sometimes savouring the honour of delivering the divine message to people as enjoined and at others the adherence to forbearance of arduous labour in delivering it. This enjoined arduousness is what the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* should display because Muslims inherit the honour of prophethood. They also inherit the duty of communicating the Divine Message to mankind arduously. This is the meaning of the verse that reads: “that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people.” (*al-Hajj*: 78)

What does a “role model” mean in this context? The fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is our role model entails that he should arduously shoulder the duty of communicating the Divine Message to humankind. This means that we should follow his example in this regard. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* strove in communicating the Divine Message to people and his followers should also carry on the struggle for the sake of promoting the religion of Islam, following his example. If you see the religious people lax, lethargic, and unable to struggle in the course of delivering the Divine Message to people, know that they are not the heirs of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. Therefore, when you see an Islamic scholar who has no enemies, know that his share of the Prophetic inheritance is small.

Why? That is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* had enemies. When we see a scholar who has enemies, we should know that he has received his full share of the Prophetic inheritance. Let us now contemplate the concluding statement of the verse clarifying for us what Islam (submission) is: “And Allah is All Seeing and Aware of [His] servants.” (*Al-‘Imran*: 20) Allah *Glorified is He* knows His servants because He is Seeing of all matters; the reference to Him as the All Seeing is always in the context of addressing faith-related matters. He is All Seeing of [His] servants. Sight is

not used except in reference to witnessing action and behaviour. What does Allah *Glorified is He* see of His servants? He sees their actions in the universe and whether these actions conform to the teachings of Islam. Monitoring action requires sight and not knowledge; it is as though Allah *the Exalted* is saying: "If you think that I cannot see you, your faith is defective. If you believe that I can see you, why have you made Me the least important of those who can see you?"

Allah *the Exalted* underlines that He is Seeing of [His] servants. We understand from this verse that Islam must be translated in a person's conduct and actions; it is not a mere conviction because unlike conviction, actions can be "seen." As long as Allah *the Exalted* is All Seeing of every movement and stillness of a person, he should feel ashamed that his Lord should see him doing something He does not approve. Let us ponder over the following example to clarify the meaning further, with no intention to draw comparison. Indeed, there is nothing like Allah *the Exalted*. We see that a young man who smokes feels ashamed to smoke before the elders of his family; he would refrain from smoking in their presence. What about a servant who believes that Allah *the Exalted* sees him? Then, Allah *the Exalted* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيَّاتِ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَيَقْتُلُونَ
الَّذِينَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْقِسْطِ مِنَ النَّاسِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢١﴾

Give news of agonizing torment to those who ignore God's revelations, who unjustifiably kill prophets, who kill those who command that justice is done [21] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 21)

We have previously underlined that when Allah *Glorified is He* refers to those who disbelieve in His signs, it means those who disbelieve in the divine signs of Allah *the Exalted* in their totality. There is a difference between disbelieving in the signs of Allah *the Exalted* and disbelieving in Him. This is because the belief in Allah *the Exalted* necessitates proofs that of His existence and there are many proofs of the existence of Allah *the Exalted* in the universe.

The proofs of His existence are clear; however, whoever disbelieves in Allah *the Exalted* essentially denies the evidences which prove the existence of the Creator.

The verse did not refer to “Those who disbelieve in Allah,” in order to clarify for us that the knowledge of Allah *the Exalted* falls into the category of the Unseen, whereas the knowledge of His signs are apparent in the universe. This is why the verse referred to those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah in particular. We notice that the word “kill” is always used with the word “Prophets of Allah” and not the Messengers of Allah. It is inconceivable and not logical that Allah *the Exalted* would send a messenger to preach His guidance and make it possible for His servants to kill him! Allah *the Exalted* sends His Prophets, however, to be role models for believers and none of them is given new legislations. On the contrary, the Messengers of Allah are sent to communicate the divinely revealed guidance and way of life to their peoples. It is inconceivable that Allah *the Exalted* should choose a servant to communicate His Divine Message, and then would allow some people to kill His Messenger!

No created being can kill a Messenger of Allah; however, they may kill the Prophets of Allah. Every Prophet of Allah is sent as a role model for his people. This is why we find some Prophets of Allah adhering to the very divine religion of the previous Messenger of Allah. The question arises as why people would kill the Prophet of Allah since he is merely a role model for them and was not sent with a new Divine Message. If a Prophet of Allah is sent with a new Divine Message, we would say that the reason for killing him was the zeal for the previous divine message. Why would they kill a Prophet of Allah who is merely sent as a role model for his people? The Prophet of Allah performs acts of worship as enjoined and thus people come to realise that the conduct of the Prophet of Allah does not conform to their sinful desires.

Those people who kill the Prophets of Allah are those who do not want to follow the Islamic way of life, namely submitting and surrendering oneself, one's body, and actions to be in accordance with the religion. This is because, while the Prophet of Allah follows the Divine Message of the Messenger who was sent before him, when he abides by the teachings of the religion among a group of people who do not practice the religion, they will feel offended by his actions.

The presence of a Prophet of Allah, who holds fast to the divine laws of his Lord, submits his body and actions to the divine guidance among his

people, who claim to follow the religion of Allah *the Exalted* but those who do not hold fast to His guidance, would say: “Why should the Prophet of Allah display this upright conduct? Why should not he submit his body to the divine decrees and embrace faith, while we are not practicing our religion like him?” These questions caused rage and envy towards the Prophet of Allah to grow in the hearts of these people, who do not practice the religion of their Lord, although claiming otherwise. They envy the Prophet of Allah because he is elevating his status and bettering himself by means of devotion to his Lord and they are not able to do the same.

The Prophet of Allah submits to the divine guidance as a clear and evident role model for people, demonstrating the difference between the mere claim of believing in the divine guidance and practical adherence to it. Therefore, when we see a person following the divine guidance and way of life as enjoined, we find that the non-practicing person takes the practicing person as a target of scorn and ridicule because the non-practicing person is filled with rage and envy towards the practicing one for being capable of submitting himself to the divine guidance. The non-practicing person asks himself:

“Why should this person follow the divine guidance and abide by the divine way of life and I do not?” He tries to get rid of such a person who complies with the divine guidance. This is because the non-practicing person sees himself small and is perceived as such by others as well when he compares himself to the one who adheres to the divine guidance. When people compare the conduct of the one who adheres to the divine guidance, and that of the non-practicing person who does not adhere to the divine guidance, they do not respect the non-practicing person. Accordingly, the non-practicing person feels belittled before the practicing person and others. The non-practicing person tries to banish the practicing one and get him out of the picture. He mocks and scorns him as Allah *Glorified is He* says in the verse that reads: “Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. [29] And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. [30] And when they returned to their followers, they would return jesting and exulting.[31] And when they saw them, they said: “Most surely these are in error.” [32] But they had not been sent as keepers over them. [33]” (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-33)

Do these clear verses not underline what non-practicing people in our societies would say to those who adhere to the divine guidance? Do we not hear non-practicing people mockingly say to the practicing ones, “Intercede with Allah for us”? These non-practicing people are referred to in the verse that reads: “And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. [30] And when they returned to their followers, they would return jesting and exulting.[31] And when they saw them, they said: “Most surely these are in error.” [32]” (*al-Mutaffifin*: 30-32)

A non-practicing person might rejoice at being able to mock the devout believer who adheres to the guidance of Allah *the Exalted*. Some non-practicing people might accuse a devout person of being misled and deviant. Allah *the Exalted* refutes this false accusation saying: “But they had not been sent as keepers over them.” (*al-Mutaffifin*: 33)

Allah *the Exalted* defends the believers who adhere to His guidance. The believers on the Day of Resurrection will laugh at disbelievers, and Allah *the Exalted* shall ask them: “Today those who believed are laughing at disbelievers, [34] On adorned couches, observing. [35] Have a disbelievers [not] been rewarded [this Day] for what they used to do? [36]” (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-36)

Thus, the non-practicing person is duly punished. What about those who wrongfully kill the Prophets of Allah? We are entitled to ask for the reason why Allah *the Exalted* describes their killing of the Prophets of Allah as “without right.” Could the Prophets of Allah be rightfully killed? It is not possible that a Prophet of Allah could be ever killed rightfully? When Allah *Glorified is He* says “...and kill the Prophets of Allah without right....” (*Al-‘Imran*: 21), this statement is intended to clarify a fact. He then continues listing the evil actions of those people who slay the Prophets of Allah without any right. He says: “...and kill those who command justice from among the people...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 21) They were not satisfied with killing the Prophets of Allah; rather, they also killed believers who defended their Prophet. When a Prophet of Allah is slain, those who believed in him will surely become angry and agitated at his murder.

The followers of the Prophet of Allah would be angry at his murder and if they are unable to prevent it, they will at least enjoin good and forbid evil.

However, the transgression of the murderers did not stop at that point; they even killed anyone who forbade their evil deeds and sins. If anyone should ask them why they killed the Prophets of Allah, they would have killed him as well. With regard to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* we know that his enemies attempted to assassinate him several times and this indicates the stupidity of those who planned these assassination attempts because they did not consider his status. He *peace and blessing be upon him* was not only a Prophet of Allah; rather, he was also a Messenger as well.

He was a Messenger of Allah, a role model for his people, and the one responsible for communicating the divine guidance and way of life to humankind at the same time. If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was only a Prophet of Allah, they would have been able to kill him as people had killed other Prophets of Allah in the past. Rather, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was a Messenger sent by Allah, The Exalted. They have witnessed him communicating the divine guidance and new way of life that shattered their dreams, exposed their lies, and underlined how they altered the divine scriptures that were revealed to them.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was a Messenger, of Allah sent with a Divine Message, guidance, and way of life. When they tried to kill him, as the previous peoples did with their Prophets of Allah, they forgot that he *peace and blessing be upon him* was also a Messenger of Allah. This is why Allah *the Exalted* says, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* in order to reassure us: “Oh Messenger, deliver what has been revealed to you from your Lord; and if you do it not, then you have not delivered His message, and Allah will protect you from the people; surely Allah will not guide a disbelievers.” (*al-Ma'ida*: 67)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* has been sent with a Divine Message and protected by Allah *the Exalted* from his enemies. Allah *the Exalted* is telling us of the previous peoples who killed their Prophets in order to reassure believers, and reassure Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and in order to underline for the enemies of the Messenger of Allah that they cannot kill him. Allah *the Exalted* says: “Say, “Then why did you kill the prophets of Allah before, if you are [indeed] believers?” (*al-Baqara*: 91). The

verse refers to the past situation to clarify for us, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and his enemies that killing the Prophets of Allah was possible in the past only. However, things changed and none can kill Prophet Muhammad, the final Messenger of Allah, *peace and blessing be upon him*. Allah *the Exalted* is reassuring a believers and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* that none could harm him. This is why the following verse was revealed: “And Allah will protect you from the people.” (*al-Ma‘ida*: 67).

Allah *the Exalted* denied those who wished to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* any chance by saying, “Say, “Then why did you kill the prophets of Allah before, if you are [indeed] believers?” (*al-Baqara*: 91).

Had the matter been confined to the Prophethood, and had they not given any credence to the fact that Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was a Messenger of Allah and had they merely denied his Message out of stubbornness, they would have said: “The killing of the Prophets of Allah did not stop at that point; we will make sure it does not.” They would have gathered all their forces and tried to kill Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*. However, Allah *the Exalted* caused them to despair of it and denied them this out of His absolute omnipotence.

When Allah *Glorified is He* tells us of those who killed the Prophets and those who enjoined equity was that in the same context as this statement of Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessing be upon him*? To whom was it addressed? It was addressed to some of the people of the Book who believed in following the example of those who killed the Prophets of Allah in the past and killed those who enjoined equity. They believed in the same thing as those who came before them, who killed the Prophets of Allah, and those who enjoined justice.

This is a reproach for those who followed the example of the killers of the Prophets of Allah and killed those who enjoined justice. It is a reproach and a rhetorical question. How could you believe in that which those who killed the Prophets of Allah believed? How can you follow people who did hideous acts? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* had related to them the story of the Israelites who killed forty-three Prophets of Allah in one occasion! One hundred and seventy followers of these Prophets stood up to them and

forbade their hideous act; they killed them as well. This is the very meaning of the verse that reads: "Those who disbelieve in the signs of Allah and kill the prophets without right and kill those who order justice from among the people - give them tidings of a painful punishment" (*Al-'Imran*: 21).

Why does Allah give them tidings of a painful punishment? Is the meaning of "give tidings" not to relate good and pleasant news? Why is it used in the verse as such? Glad tidings are always used to refer to good news that will bring happiness to the listener such as giving the glad tidings of Paradise to believers. It means that Allah *the Exalted* informs a believer of a pleasant thing and gives him the opportunity to follow the guidance in the worldly life in order to attain such a reward and glad tidings. Why are these tidings directed at the descendants of such people? We know that those who killed the Prophets of Allah and those who enjoined equity were not contemporary to the revelation of this verse. The people of the Book who were contemporary to the revelation of this verse were the descendants of those who had killed the Prophets of Allah and those who enjoined equity. Allah *Glorified is He* gave them tidings of a painful punishment because they might have been under the impression that what their ancestors did was right. If they thought that what their ancestors did was right, they were also meant with the tidings of a painful punishment.

The scope of such painful punishment extends to encompass them too. The question arises as to why they should be given the glad tidings of a painful punishment despite the fact that the glad tidings are generally used with good news. When a person is told of "glad tidings," his heart is ready to receive the pleasant news. As their hearts are ready to receive pleasant news and savour happiness and joy, they are informed of the painful punishment. What would happen to them? They experience a sudden painful dejection. They were prepared to receive good news, but instead were informed of their "painful punishment". Accordingly, their pain becomes more intense. This is because if Allah *the Exalted* forewarns them right from the start, without saying: "give them tidings," the delivery of the news would have been less painful.

Allah *Glorified is He* however, wanted the news to be of a startling on them similar to the verse that reads: "And if they cry for water, they shall be given

water like molten brass which will scald their faces; evil the drink and ill the resting-place.” (*al-Kahf*: 29).

They will beg for water in the Hereafter and their calls will be answered. However, Allah *the Exalted* will give water like melted brass that will scald their faces! When we hear that “they will be answered,” we might think that they would be provided with fresh water to extinguish their thirst. However, the verse underlines that they will be given water like melted brass that will scald their faces! Thus will be the glad tidings for those who killed the Prophets of Allah or their followers who followed their belief of these murderers. The verse reads, “...give them tidings of a painful punishment” (*Al-‘Imran*: 21). The word “punishment” in the verse means torment afflicted on a living being who can feel the pain. The punishment is afflicted on the living being not the dead. Killing, on the other hand, ends the life of the conscious being; so, it is not a punishment. The punished person must remain alive so that he can feel the pain and torment. The reference to the “painful punishment” in the verse reminds us of the other verse that reads: “Indeed, for 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)

It means that Allah *the Exalted* will cause them to live therein eternally so that their torment would be eternal. Next, Allah *the Exalted* refers to,

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ حِطَّتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ

**The deeds of such people will come to nothing in this
world and in the next and no one will help them [22]
(The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 22)**

Those who disbelieved in the signs of Allah *the Exalted* killed His Prophets and those who enjoined equity and justice among them will be subjected to torment and their actions will be made worthless in the worldly life and the Hereafter. The same applies to whoever follows their example. The meaning of causing their actions to be worthless is that they would not yield any

rewards or fruits. The sane person has a purpose or objective for all his actions; an action done without a purpose is like the aimless blow of an insane person. A sane person must know the purpose for his actions before he does them and must know the benefits such act yields and whether such benefits are the best and most lasting ones possible or not.

In the light of this criterion, the sane person judges his actions. Allah *the Exalted* says, "They are the ones whose deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there will be no helpers." (*Al-'Imran*: 22) He is informing us that a person might perform an action that outwardly seem to be good, but a believer should beware of being deceived into thinking such an action to be good. Why? This is because a good action is only credited to a person according to the level of his intention and faith in the One Who rewards action. If a person performs an action by means of which his worldly life is rectified, it is a good action. Why will the deeds of these people be worthless in this worldly life and the Hereafter? They will be worthless because their actions were not performed by a believer. The person had performed the good action for the sake of its outcome not in abidance by the command of Allah *the Most High*.

When a believer performs an action, he does it out of his trust in the command of Allah *the Most High*. Some people in the present-day may criticize Islam for not rewarding the non-Muslims for their good actions, which are beneficial to humanity. One of them might say: "Could anyone conceive that Louis Pasteur who discovered microorganisms, and the other scientist who discovered radiation, and many others are going to hellfire?" In response, we say: "Yes, they will. The divine justice of Allah *the Exalted* entailed it." Let us judge the matter according to the human norms. From whom a person seeks the reward for his action? He seeks it from the one for whom he performed the action. Had these scientists devoted such good actions to Allah *Glorified is He*? No, they had not. Rather, they did their actions for the sake of humanity and people rewarded them with immortalizing their memory and crediting them for their great discoveries; they have received other worldly rewards as well. The following Hadith applies to them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: "The first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a

man who had died as a martyr. He will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them. Then He will ask him: "What did you do to express gratitude for it?" The man will reply: "I fought for Your Cause till I was martyred." Allah will say: "You have lied. You fought so that people might call you courageous; and they have done so." Command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hell. Next a man who had acquired and imparted knowledge and read the Quran will be brought forward, Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him, and the man will acknowledge them. Then He will ask him: "What did you do to express gratitude for it?" The man will reply: "I acquired knowledge and taught it, and read the Quran for Your sake." Allah will say to him: "You have lied. You acquired knowledge so that people might call you a learned (man), and you read the Quran so that they might call you a reciter, and they have done so." Command will then be issued about him, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hellfire. Next a man whom Allah had made affluent and to whom Allah had given plenty of wealth, will be brought forward; Allah will remind him of the favours He had bestowed upon him and the man will acknowledge them. He will ask him: "What did you do to express gratitude for it?" The man will reply: "I did not neglect any of the ways You liked wealth to be spent liberally for Your sake." Allah will say to him: "You have lied; you did it so that people might call you generous, and they have done so." Command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into hellfire."⁽¹⁾

As we receive the rewards from Allah *the Exalted* we must ask ourselves, "Did these scientists achieve such great discoveries and accomplishments for the sake of Allah?" No they did not. The one seeks the reward for his action from the one for whose sake he does it. Allah *Glorified is He* did not allow their good deeds and the fruits of their labour to go lost; rather, their work yielded them fame, prestige, and admiration. Allah *Glorified is He* does not allow the reward of the doer's good deeds to go lost. "Whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter - We increase for him in his harvest. And whoever desires the

(1) [Muslim]

harvest of this world - We give him thereof, but there is not for him in the Hereafter any share.” (*ash-Shura*: 20)

As we have previously underlined, we should try imagining the surprise of a person who performs a deed which is outwardly good, but he does not believe in the existence of Allah. The following verse applies to this case. Allah *the Exalted* says: “But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.” (*an-Nur*: 39) This person shall be surprised when he discovers the existence of Allah *Glorified is He* and he has not thought of Him, while performing the good deed i.e. he was not in his mind when he performed the action which was superficially good. It is as though Allah *the Exalted* is saying to the one who performs the like of this action: “You did not do such act for My sake; receive your reward from the one for whose sake you did it.” Allah *the Exalted* says: “They are the ones whose deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and for them there will be no helpers” (*Al-'Imran*: 22). Their deeds will be worthless in this worldly life because they might perform actions which are intended to be against Islam. Allah *Glorified is He* would cause their deeds to be futile. He causes His religion to triumph despite the fewer and less modest equipment, and these people will have no one to help them. This means that they will have no one to help them as they would be defeated by their adversary. They will not find helpers if Allah *the Exalted* decrees their defeat; there is no one equal to Him. Then, Allah says,

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُدْعَوْنَ إِلَى كِتَابِ اللَّهِ
لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Have you considered those who were given a share of the Scripture? When they are asked to accept judgement from God's Scripture, some of them turn their backs and walk away, all because they declare [23] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 23)

The verse opens with the question “Have you considered?” The expression in Arabic literally means “Have you not seen.” When Allah *the Exalted* says to

His Messenger: "Have you considered [Oh Muhammad] those who were given a share of the Scripture? When they are asked to accept judgment from the Divine Scripture, some of them turn their backs and walk away" (*Al-Imran*: 23) It is a call to a clear matter. However, sometimes the phrase "Have you not seen" is used as a reference to a past event that occurred before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* commissioned to communicate the divine message to mankind, and which he did not witness. For example, Allah *the Exalted* says: "Have not you [Oh Prophet Muhammad] seen how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?" (*al-Fil*: 1)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* did not see the army of the elephant and nor did he witness this past event. When we find the Arabic expression "*alam tara*," literally meaning "Have you not seen" in reference to a present event, it may be used to denote the literal meaning and refer to actual sighting and witnessing of a current event leading to certainty. However, if the expression is used in reference to a past event, it means "have you not known or considered," because the evidence of an eyewitness is the best evidence. The verse reads, "Have you not seen"; it actually means, "Have you not known?"

A person may say, "Why does He not simply say '*ta'lam*' (to know), instead of '*tara*' (to see)?" This is because the most irrefutable evidence is the visible one. This indicates that Allah wishes to inform us by using "*alam tara*?" (do you not see?) That is, we should deal with the piece of information which Allah tells us as though it were visible. We should regard our Lord as more trustworthy than our own eyes. The matter of which Allah informs us may not be visible to us. However, as the speaker is Allah and there is no force that can change that which Allah says, Allah speaks of future matters which have not yet occurred using the past tense. For example, Allah says, 'The command of Allah is coming, so be not impatient for it. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him'. (*an-Nahl*: 1)

Does His saying, '*ata amru* Allah' (Literally, 'the command of Allah came') go together with His saying '*aala tast'jiluh*' (so be not impatient for it)? The Arabic words indicate that Allah's command came, so how can the people be impatient for it? The literary meaning of the Arabic word "*ata*" is "came" which indicates that this command came before Allah said His Words. It should

be noted that the One Who says "*ata*" (came) can bring it about, so it is a matter of fact and an incontestable issue because there is no force capable of changing that which Allah has willed to happen. This indicates that Allah's saying '*'alam tara?*' (Literally: "Do you not see?") refers to an event in the past and is intended to give information, as it is Allah's saying. If it refers to a contemporary matter, it also gives information based on seeing and witnessing.

As for Allah's saying, 'Do you not consider, [Oh Muhammad], those who were given a portion of the Book?..' (*Al-'Imran*: 23), the phrase "were given" refers to a people who received Revelation of guidance from an Exalted Entity. Therefore, when the Quran refers to a Book of Allah, it uses the words "*nazal*" and "*anzala*" (sent down) so that the people recognise the loftiness of the place from which the Book or guidance has descended. What does the word "*nasib*" mean? It means "a share or portion". For example, if twenty dinars are divided among four people, everyone will receive five *dinars*, which are called a "share" or a "portion" of the original sum of *dinars*. The word "*nasib*" refers to a share or portion which is allocated to a person.

Therefore, when Allah says, '...those who were given a portion of the Book?..' (*Al-'Imran*: 23), it draws our attention in a subtle matter to the fact that the Book of Allah, as a whole, did not remain with them; rather, a small portion of it reached them. The word "*nasib*" indicates that the Prophet and those who heard this saying should excuse those people because they received only a small portion of the Book of Allah.

Allah reveals this point in other verses: 'So, for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). The abandoned part of the Book was not received by those who were contemporary to Prophet Muhammad. Allah has clarified that some of them concealed part of the Book: 'Those to whom We gave the Book know him [Muhammad] as they know their own sons. But indeed, a party of them conceal the truth, while they know [it]'. (*Al-'Imran*: 146)

Due to the fact that some people concealed part of the Revelation, this meant that it would be concealed from those who were contemporary to Prophet

Muhammad. Some people among them were deluded due to the missing parts of the Book which was wiped from their collective memory. In addition, parts of the Book were concealed so that it was known to some people and was not known to other people. As for the parts they did not conceal, Allah says concerning them, 'There are some who twist the Book of Allah with their tongues to make you [people] think that what they say is part of the Book of Allah when it is not; they say it is from Allah when it is not; they attribute lies to Allah and they know it'. (*Al- 'Imran: 78*)

Therefore, the Book sent down to them by Allah has been exposed to much transgression on their part and only a portion of it remains. This portion of the Book is that by which the Quran debates with these people. The Quran does not debate with them in relation to that which has been altered by their former rabbis and monks; rather, it debates with them concerning the protected share that they have been granted.

Allah says, 'Do you not consider, [Oh Muhammad], those who were given a portion of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah that it should arbitrate between them; then a party of them turns away and they are refusing?' (*Al- 'Imran: 23*). To which Divine Book does this verse refer? Does it refer to the Quran? If so, this would mean that it inevitably arbitrated between them and Prophet Muhammad. However, those who were given a portion of the Book differed with each other. Why? If the Book referred to is the Quran, does the Quran not confirm what they have?

Therefore, when they are called to confirm that which was mentioned in their Books, this implies that the Quran will arbitrate among them. What is the meaning of '...they are invited to the Book of Allah...' (*Al- 'Imran: 23*)? The person who invited them here is Prophet Muhammad and they are the people who were invited. Allah says, '...those who were given a portion of the Book...' (*Al- 'Imran: 23*). Have they differed over the portion that they have in their possession, or over the portion that has been lost? The difference between them is over the portion that they had in their possession so that it could be a proof that they are not trustworthy even with regards to what was revealed to them and what they had in writing. When the scholars discussed this issue, they traced it back to a certain incident: they differed over the issue of our

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and said that he was a Jew, while others said that he was a Christian. The Quran settled the matter: 'Ibrahim (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was one inclining towards truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah]. And he was not of the polytheists'. (*Al-'Imran*: 67) Why? Because the words "Jew" and "Christian" appeared after the death of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and they had to be more rational and order events according to the time in which they occurred. Therefore, over which did they differ? Did they differ in regards to Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him*? Did they differ in regards to a ruling they found in the Torah? What were they called to? They were '...invited to the Book of Allah that it should arbitrate between them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 23). This indicates that the words: '...out of mutual transgression...' (*Al-'Imran*: 19, *al-Haqq*: 19) refer to a state that prevailed amongst them. When the scholars mentioned the incident in which they were called to the Book of Allah-that it should arbitrate between them-, they said that two Jews, a Man and woman from Khaybar, committed adultery and were both from the tribe's nobility. Those who were responsible for judging the matter according to the Torah did not want to apply Allah's ruling on this matter that was stated in the Torah: stoning. They devised a trick, which was to go to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Why then did they go to Prophet Muhammad in this regard? We consider the mere referral of the issue to Prophet Muhammad as acceptance of his judgment.

Why did they not accept from the beginning the Message brought by Prophet Muhammad? They wanted to refer it to him in order that he might benefit them with regards to their issue. Otherwise, they would not have referred this issue to Prophet Muhammad. The fact that they went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* implies that they wanted a sentence more lenient than stoning. The two adulterers of Khaybar wanted to save themselves from the Torah's ruling of stoning, for they were from the nobility of Khaybar and because the Jews at that time made a temporal power for themselves. Therefore, the adulterers went along with the rabbis, who wished to circumvent Allah's ruling which was revealed in the Torah: stoning.

When they visited Prophet Muhammad, there was a person named An-Nu'man ibn 'Awf, and another named Bahary ibn 'Amr. They said, 'Oh Messenger of Allah,

judge between these people'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'Do you not have a ruling?' Then, he added, 'I defer to the Torah, which is your book'. They said, 'You have done justice to us'.

The Messenger of Allah clarified for them that Islam's ruling in respect to adultery is stoning. The remaining part of the Torah which included this ruling came as a proof on the fact that Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* matters that never crossed anyone's mind. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said an oath that was mentioned in the Torah and then said, 'Which of you is most knowledgeable about the Torah?' They said it was a Man named 'Abdullah ibn Suriyyah and they brought him forward. He gave him the Torah and said, 'Read'. So, 'Abdullah ibn Suriyyah sat and read, and when he arrived at the verse in the Torah pertaining to stoning, he covered it with his hand and read something else. 'Abdullah ibn Salam was present, so he said, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, did you not see him covering the verse of the Torah with his hand and reading the following one?' Ibn Salam moved the Man's hand and read what the verse was of the Torah which the Jew had covered and which was relevant to stoning. This issue shows that the ruling of the Noble Quran is the same as that of the Torah with regards to adultery and also indicates that Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so as to know this part of the Torah that contained the text. Then one of the Soldiers of Allah, namely 'Abdullah ibn Salam, who had been a Jew and converted to Islam, disclosed the desire of these people to forge and falsify.

The story of 'Abdullah ibn Salam's conversion to Islam is incredible. After faith had ripened in his heart, he came to Prophet Muhammad and said, 'Allah has caused my heart to be delighted with Islam. There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. But before I declare my conversion to Islam, I would like you to gather the leaders of the Jews and ask them about my character because the Jews are a slanderous people known for lie, slander, and deception'. When Prophet Muhammad asked the leaders of the Jews about their opinion regarding 'Abdullah ibn Salam, they said, 'He is our master, the son of our master and our rabbi...,i.e.' They praised, commended and appreciated him extremely. Then, 'Abdullah ibn Salam said

to them, 'Now I testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. The leaders of the Jews then changed their minds and said the opposite of what they had said previously: 'He is the worst of us and the son of the worst of us..., i.e.' When they changed their praise into vilification, 'Abdullah ibn Salam said, 'Oh Messenger of Allah, have I not told you that that they are a slanderous people? By Allah, I wanted to show you their view of me before I have converted to Islam'.

This Man, 'Abdullah ibn Salam, is the one who removed 'Abdullah ibn Suriyyah's hand from the text of the Torah that contained the verse of the Torah on stoning and the following saying was revealed in this regard, 'Do you not consider, [Oh Muhammad], those who were given a portion of the Book? They are invited to the Book of Allah that it should arbitrate between them; then a party of them turn away and they are refusing'. (*Al-'Imran*: 23) They are the people some of whom turned away from the acceptance of the truth. Why did they turn away? Was it a general issue? Or, was the cause of this rejection the temporal power that the Jews wished to assume? The meaning of "temporal power" is that people take from the parts of religion that will provide them with sanctity which they enjoy, and then use it in other than religious matters. We said before that the cause of each act of perversion of Allah's Guidance is transgression. It is held that some of the followers of the Torah would predict their victory over the Arabs saying, "A prophet will come from the Arabs and we will follow him and fight you with him, as 'Ad and Iram were fought". When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them, they denied him. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* said in this regard clarifying their stance in regards to faith, 'And those who have disbelieved say, "You are not a messenger". Say, [Oh Muhammad], "Sufficient is Allah as a Witness between me and you and (The witness of] whoever has knowledge of the Scripture"'. (*ar-Ra'd*: 43)

This means that the one who had knowledge of the Book of Allah is supposed to testify to the veracity of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* otherwise, Allah would not have said, '...whoever has knowledge of the Scripture...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41). Allah says such only because those who have knowledge of the Divine Book know that Prophet Muhammad is truthful

with regards to the Message, a matter which is confirmed by Allah. The reason behind the attempt of some of the Jews to deny the Message of Prophet Muhammad was the temporal power and their desire to make religious matters overly for their followers.

Every impostor who tries to fabricate any principle attempts to assume temporal power and tries to decrease the religious obligations that might contain some difficulty for people, or to make a religion which contains only light acts of worship. For example, Musaylamah, a false prophet and liar, lightened the prayer so that those who found prayer difficult would join his religion. Musaylamah also reduced the *zakat*, an act which created the opportunity to escape from religious obligations. Therefore, the matter that distorted the pre-Islamic religions was that some clergy applied the facilitations they found in other religions to their religion because the religious obligations of true Islam are sometimes hard and no one can fulfil them except a person with real and true faith. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says concerning the pillar of worship-prayer, 'Seek help with steadfastness and prayer– though this is hard indeed for anyone but the humble'. (*al-Baqara*: 45) And He says in another verse about prayer: 'Order your people to pray and pray steadfastly yourself. We are not asking you to give Us provision; We provide for you and the rewards of the Hereafter belong to the devout'. (*Ta Ha*: 132) Allah is All Knowing and All-Wise; He is aware of the human being whom He has created and the weaknesses that may afflict his soul. He may not steadfastly pray, or he considers prayer a difficult obligation. However, the one who observes prayer steadfastly is truly devout.

Therefore, we find that every deviant person tries to lighten religious obligations and tries to make forbidden things permissible. We do not see deviant people increasing the number of impermissible things; deviant people always want to annul prohibitions. If we ask those deviant people about the reason for doing this, we will find that they do this in order to attract people to the forbidden matters which are made lawful by those deviant people. Accordingly, some of the Jews wanted to make the religion easy for their followers and some of their rabbis told the Jews not to worry about the Day of Resurrection. Then, Allah's saying reveals that they believed falsely that Allah had made previously forbidden things permissible for them. However,

Allah does permit lawful matters and forbids unlawful matters. As for Allah's saying, 'He has ordained a way for you [believers] to release you from [such] oaths — Allah is your helper: He is the All Knowing, the Wise' (*at-Tahrim: 2*), this verse is concerned with a specific context and means that the matters which Allah has allowed, no one should forbid them and the matters which Allah has forbidden should not be made lawful by anyone.

They desired to allow their followers to commit sins because they believed that Hellfire would only harm them for a limited number of days. However, if we scrutinize Allah's saying which quoted them, we will notice the following: It is well known that every event occurs in a certain time, with certain intensity. In relation to time, those who fabricated lies about Allah's rulings concerning the Day of Resurrection said that hellfire will be experienced for only a few days, i.e., it is not eternal punishment. Moreover, even if the torment is severe, it will only last for a few days and the human being can bear it. As for the intensity of the event, they desired to belittle it, saying that the torment is not severe; it is only a light touch. They tried to delude people in order to appease them. These rabbis said that they were the sons of Allah whom He loves. They believed that Allah selected Ya'qub (Jacob) as a prophet and he would never punish his progeny except in much as required for releasing oneself from an oath.

In regards to Ayyub (Job), Allah says: 'Take a small bunch of grass in your hand and strike [her] with that so as not to break your oath. We found him patient in adversity; an excellent servant'. (*Sad: 44*) When Ayyub *peace be upon him* swore that he would whip his wife one hundred times if he regained health, Allah wanted to release him from this vow, so He ordered him to take a small bunch of grass in his hand, or straw, consisting of one hundred stalks and hit her once lightly, in order to fulfil his vow. This was a mercy from Allah to him and his wife, who had taken care of him during his illness. Ayyub (Job) was a grateful servant to Allah. It was as if a single blow was equivalent to one hundred blows. In this way, he was released from the vow.

Some of the children of Israel said that that the progeny of the children of Ya'qub (Jacob) will not be tormented by Allah except in so much as is required for releasing oneself from an oath. They said this to attract the people to embrace

their religion, in which punishment in the Hereafter will only be a touch of the fire that will last only a few days. They said this, claiming that the sons of Ya'qub (Jacob) are Allah's children and His beloved people and that Allah promised Ya'qub (Jacob) that He would not punish his children except in so much as required for releasing oneself from an oath. Certainly, this is clear fabrication of Allah's Religion and Guidance. They turned away from Allah's Guidance in disobedience. This clarifies what Allah says: 'All because they declare, "the Fire will only touch us for a limited number of days". The lies they have invented have led them astray in their own religion'. (*Al-Imran*: 15)

They turned away in aversion from Allah's rule. They believed that the fire would not touch them, except for a limited number of days. We must understand the meaning of the Arabic words *gharrahum* (led them astray) and *ghurur* (going astray). They mean "the desire for something that is unrealistic and cannot be obtained." When someone is described as *maghrur* (going astray), this means that this person is following a path that will not lead him to the desired goal. Therefore, *ghurur* (going astray) is the desire for something unrealistic and unobtainable. Accordingly, Allah describes Satan as 'the deluder': 'People! Allah's promise is true, so do not let the present life deceive you. Do not let the Deceiver deceive you about Allah: Satan is your enemy—so treat him as an enemy—and invites his followers only to enter the blazing fire'. (*Fatir*: 5-6)

Satan is the one who beautifies some things for people and urges them to wish them to happen, but when these things occur, no benefit will be gained from them. Satan has beautified them and so their yield is not worthy. Allah *Glorified is He* says, concerning this world, '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)

A Man who has no experience is described by the Arabic word "*ghir*" (fool), meaning that he does things without any experience, so he does not benefit from

them and they are inappropriate. Accordingly, all the words that share the root of the word "*Al-ghurur*" (going astray) mean "aspiring for something unrealistic and unobtainable" and therefore Allah calls Satan "*Al-Gharur*" or "the deceiver" because he influences humans to desire unrealistic and unobtainable things. Satan will disavow himself on the Day of Resurrection from those who followed him and will accuse them of foolishness: 'When everything has been decided, Satan will say, "Allah gave you a true promise. I, too, made promises but they were false ones. I had no power over you except to call you and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with Allah before". A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers'. (*Ibrahim*: 22)

The Arabic word "*sultan*" means "power that urges a person to do a certain action". There are two kinds of power: the power of persuasive evidence when a person is urged to do something, while being convinced and the other type is that of coercion which means forcing a person to do a certain act. Therefore, Satan declares to his followers on the Day of Resurrection that he had no power over them, i.e., he had no persuasive evidence to convince them to commit sins, and nor did he have any power to compel them to do such. Rather, they were on the brink of committing sin and he called them and they responded to him. Satan adds, addressing his followers, '...I cannot help you, nor can you help me...' (*Ibrahim*: 22). In other words, Satan confirms that he will not call on any of his followers to save him. The Arabic word "*yasruk*" here means "to call on someone for refuge and help." Therefore, Satan says he will not save anyone from Allah's punishment and no one will save him from Allah's punishment.

In this way, some of the people of the Book were deluded and ascribed fabricated statements to Allah that did not come from Him and believed in their fabrications. If only their delusion had not been with regards to religion! For delusions in non-religious affairs can be tolerated, but delusion with regards to religious affairs is grave. This is because religion is not confined to a limited period of time; it is permanent because it represents guidance sent from Allah to mankind. If a person experiences failure in any aspect of life due to delusion, his failure will be confined to that particular aspect and will not last for the rest of his worldly life. However, delusion with regards to religion causes permanent

loss because such a person has not followed Allah's guidance. Moreover, he will experience loss and torment in the Hereafter.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ
وَعَرَّهُمْ فِي دِينِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**‘The Fire will only touch us for a limited number of days.’
The lies they have invented have led them astray in their
own religion [24] (The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 24)**

“Lying” means “telling fabrications deliberately”. Allah clarifies the meaning for them, saying that they rejected His rulings and Judgment which are mentioned in His Book claiming that the fire will not touch them except for a limited number of days which represented - as claimed - the number of the days in which they worshipped the Calf. They also said that they were Allah's children and beloved people. They made these fabrications and lies on purpose. If this is their case in the worldly life, what will be their status when Allah gathers them on a day in which there is no doubt? In this respect, Allah says,

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جُمِعْتَهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَوُفِّيَتْ كُلُّ
نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**How will they fare when We gather them together for a Day
of which there is no doubt, when every soul will be paid in
full for what it has done, and they will not be wronged? [25]
(The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 25)**

Their lies will be disclosed on the Day of Resurrection, a day wherein Allah will expose all the people who lie, cheat, and make false claims. Allah says that they commit all these misdeeds in the worldly life, in which He has given them free will to do whatever they want, while knowing that He will give good rewards to those who follow His obligations and will punish those who deviate from His obligations. How will they behave when Allah will deprive them of free will on the Day of Resurrection?

In this worldly life, Allah gives people free will and choices between alternatives and has created them in a manner that enables them to control

their limbs. Some of them use their limbs in a way that pleases Allah, while others use these limbs in a way that displeases Him. A person's limbs are subservient to his will, which allows him to choose between different alternatives. The limbs that obey those who deviate from the Path of Allah in the worldly life will disobey them on the Day of Resurrection because the limbs will not be subject to the human will and their nature will change: '...on the Day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will testify against them about what they have done. On that Day, Allah will pay them their just due in full– and they will realise that Allah is the Truth that makes everything clear'. (*an-Nur*: 25)

On the Day of Resurrection, the tongue that is used to announce disbelief will witness against a disbeliever, the hand that is used to commit acts of disobedience will witness against its owner and the skin will also testify. In the worldly life, limbs are subject to the people, but they commit sins unwillingly and so Allah says: 'How will they fare when We gather them together for a Day of which there is no doubt, when every soul will be paid in full for what it has done and they will not be wronged?' (*Al-'Imran*: 25) What will their status be on the day when Allah will gather them in order to hold them to account? It should be taken into consideration that this day will certainly come because there is evidence that confirms that it will come.

Despite their enmity towards Allah, He will not wrong them; rather, He will judge them justly:

قُلِ اللَّهُمَّ مَلِكُ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ
الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَنْ تَشَاءُ
بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Say, 'God, 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 [26] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 26)

There is a difference between the Arabic words *mulk* and *milk*. The latter means "a person's ownership of some things, such as his clothes, books...etc".

But when we refer to possessing a person who possesses properties, we use the word “*mulk*”. If the properties possessed are apparent to us, we refer to them as “*‘alam al-mulk*”, but when we refer to the possession of unseen properties, we call it “*‘alam al-malakut*”. Therefore, the words under discussion are *milk*, *mulk* and *malakut*. When Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* revealed Himself to Ibrahim (Abraham), the elect of Allah and revealed to him apparent and unseen matters, He said, ‘In this way We showed Ibrahim (Abraham) [Allah’s] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth so that he might be a firm believer’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 75)

This means that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wanted Ibrahim (Abraham) to witness the *malakut* (dominion) of the heavens and the earth, i.e., everything both apparent and unseen to people. The following are the levels of possession: *milk* refers to the case when a person owns his properties, but the owning of a person who owns properties is referred to as *mulk*. Every human being owns some properties and the ownership of all those who possess properties returns to One Owner: Allah. Ownership with regards to human beings refers to the case when a person possesses some properties. It also applies to a person whom Allah gives authority over people and causes to become a king.

As for the divine realm, we see that the One Who possesses every owner and king is Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*. No one believes that a person can possess anything in this world without Allah’s Will. Every person possesses things according to Allah’s Will. If the people go astray, it is inevitable that Allah will place a wicked ruler in authority over them because virtuous people may not excel in chastising people. Allah says, ‘In this way, We make some evildoers have power over others through their misdeeds’. (*al-An‘am*: 129)

Allah *Glorified is He* intends to reveal that virtuous people may spare themselves the trouble of taking revenge on the evildoers, as He gives a worse tyrant authority over the evildoers. Allah takes revenge for the virtuous people without letting them engage in committing misdeeds. Therefore, Allah says: ‘In this way, We make some evildoers have power over others through their misdeeds’. (*al-An‘am*: 129)

There is a well-known saying: "Allah gives oppressors authority over other oppressors". If those who were oppressed could gain authority over their oppressors,

they would not treat them as harshly as oppressors would treat each other. Allah gives oppressors authority over oppressors and spares benevolent people the trouble of taking revenge from their oppressors. Therefore, there are the words *malik*, *mulk*, and above all-Malik *Al-mulk*. Allah has not said here that He is *Malik Al-mulk* (King of all dominion), because if we consider the matter of ownership well, we will find that there is no true owner except Allah.

‘Say, “Allah, holder of all control”...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 26) He is in full control of His dominion. No one should imagine that anyone can have authority over Allah’s creatures against His Will. However, when people disobey Him, He causes an oppressive ruler to rule them. Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith (direct revelation from Allah in the Prophet Muhammad’s words): Prophet Muhammad said, ‘Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* will roll up the heavens on the Day of Resurrection and then take them in His Right Hand and say, “I am the King! Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant people?” Then, He will roll up the Earth in His Left Hand and say: “I am the King! Where are the tyrants? Where are the arrogant people?”’

The believer should not imagine that anyone can take sovereignty from Allah. He gives sovereignty to those who will chastise some people. If the ruler disciplines people oppressively, Allah will send to him someone who will oppress him. Allah may cause the person who has been treated oppressively by this ruler to see him oppressed. This noble verse confirms that Allah Alone is the Lord of all dominion. Allah *Glorified is He* orders His Prophet, Muhammad, saying: “Say, ‘Allah, holder of all control’...” (*Al-'Imran*: 26). The word "Allahumma" (Oh, Allah) is itself a linguistic marvel. The Quran was revealed in Arabic and the Arabs of that time were eloquent in speech, oratory, and rhetoric. Allah willed to give the word "Allah" a unique distinction in the Arabic language.

Arabic has a grammatical rule stating that it is not correct to refer to a noun with a definite article using the Arabic word article "*Ya*". The Arabs do not say, "*Ya Al-rajul*" (Oh, Man!), but they say, "*Ya ayyuha Al-rajul*" instead. However, the language that Allah has facilitated for His servants has this divine name distinct in terms of sanctity (Allah), so people can say, "*Ya Allah*" (Oh, Allah). This holy expression is distinct, even with regards to its pronunciation.

This fact was not clear to the Arabs from among the disbelievers of Quraysh, although they were eloquent. This means that Allah makes this holy word distinct, compelling the disbelievers to say along with the believers, "*Ya Allah*" (Oh, Allah).

As for the rest of the nouns which were preceded by definite articles, it is not possible to precede them with "*Ya*", saying for example, "*Ya Al-Rajul*" or "*Ya Al-'Abbas*", but we should say, "*Ya ayyuha Al-rajul*" or "*Ya ayyuha Al-'abbas*". Even when calling the Prophet, we do not say, "*Ya Al-Naby*," instead we must say "*Ya ayuha Al-Naby*". However, when calling upon Allah, we say "*Ya Allah*" (Oh, Allah), a distinct name to which Allah draws our attention, clarifying that it is specific to Him alone. In addition, no word is prefixed by the Arabic letter "*Ta*" to make an oath, except the holy name Allah, as we say "*tallahi*" (by Allah), but this Arabic letter never precedes any other name to make an oath. For example, "*ta-Zayd*" and "*ta-'Amr*" are impossible to find in classical Arabic.

The Arabic letter "*Ta*" is not used for making an oath except with the Divine Name. In addition, there is no proper noun in Arabic with which the vocative "*Ya*" can be replaced by the Arabic letter "*Mim*", except the Divine Name. We say "*Allahumma*"; this indicates that the name itself has the distinct features of the One holding it. 'Say: "Oh Allah!.."''. (*Al-'Imran*: 26) The removal of the vocative letter shows us that Allah is the Only One Who is called without a vocative letter. Some dialects combine the "*Ya*" and the "*Mim*," as in the poem:

If a calamity ever befalls me, I call *Ya Allahum Ya Allahumma* (Oh Allah! Oh Allah!).

This indicates the distinction pertaining to the One Who is most distinct.

'Say: "...holder of all control"...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). A person may ask, "Why does Allah not say "*Malik Al-mulk*" (King of all dominion) here?" We must be aware that a day will come when no one will possess anything but Allah. Therefore, He will be the Only Possessor and He says: 'He is Exalted in rank, the Lord of the Throne. He sends Revelations with His teachings to whichever of His servants He will, in order to warn of the Day of Meeting, the Day when they will come out and nothing about them will be

concealed from Allah. Who has control today? Allah, the One, the All Powerful'. (*Ghafir*: 15-16) Allah's saying, 'Say: "...holder of all control"...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26) clarifies that Allah's ownership is eternal, omnipotent, mighty and confirmed. If Allah had described Himself as the "*Malik Al-mulk*" (King of all dominion) here, it would have meant that some people would hold ownership alongside Him; rather, He alone is Lord of all dominion. Allah is Lord of all dominion, as He may grant it to whom He wills and take it from whom he wills. This meaning comes after the establishment of clear reasoning and after some of the people of the Book abstained from applying Allah's rule when they were called to it. Some of them obstinately turned away from Allah's rule. They justified this by claiming that they were Allah's children and beloved people and that the fire would not touch them, except for a limited number of days.

Out of Allah's kindness, He gave His servants choices: either to follow Allah's rule, or to follow one's vain desire. However, they made the wrong choice and followed their vain desire. Consequently, Allah informed them of the day that will come, a day on which no one will have any power or choice. The right of making a choice exists in this worldly life, so people must make the right choices in light of Allah's guidance.

In this respect, there is an example which the prophetic biography stated: On the Day of the Battle of the Confederates, all the enemies of *Da`wah* (the call to submit to Allah in Islam) gathered together and the Jews plotted and vowed dissension among themselves. Then, Prophet Muhammad wanted to dig a trench around Medina, upon Salman Al-Faresi's advice. It is worth mentioning that a trench is a large hole in the ground which is dug up to impede passing. The fighters knew that a horse can leap a certain distance while digging the trench, the believers tried to make it wider than a horse's leap. Prophet Muhammad's wise leadership should be taken into consideration; when Salman Al-Faresi suggested that the trench should be dug- and it seems that he got the idea from his homeland, a land of disbelievers- Prophet Muhammad accepted the idea and the Muslims carried it out.

Not everything the disbelievers did was rejected by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, he put into practice any useful action,

whether it was done by disbelievers or not. Prophet Muhammad felt that such digging would be arduous because of the rocky and hard nature of the land in some areas. Therefore, he allocated a piece of land amounting to forty cubits long to each group of ten companions. In this way, Prophet Muhammad allotted work and responsibility and did not leave it up to each group for fear that they might depend too much on each other.

Assigning responsibility means that every group knows the size of the task that it will carry out, along with the other groups. A person may ask, "Why did not Prophet Muhammad allocate responsibilities to every individual?" The reason is that Prophet Muhammad's insight and good Management made him aware of the fact that the Companions who would dig the trench were not all of equal strength. Therefore, he wanted every weak person to be supported by nine companions.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not make the matter open, but he specified responsibilities for his companions. He did not specify this responsibility for each individual in order that the strong would help the weak. Prophet Muhammad veiled the weakness of some companions with their brothers' strength. If a weak person finds himself in a group of ten brothers, carrying things and digging together, he will feel a sense of love and comradery towards them and the strong will aid the weak.

'Amr ibn 'Awf belonged to the group of ten Companions, among whom was Salman Al-Faresi. When they came to dig, they encountered a piece of land called "Al-ka'ud" (insurmountable) which was a piece of land that was very hard and could not be dug up easily, while digging the earth, a digger might find the land soft and easy to dig, but if he encountered a hard patch of land impossible to dig with his spade, it was said that the land was insurmountable. When 'Amr ibn 'Awf, Salman Al-Faresi, Al-Mughirah and others encountered this rocky and insurmountable piece of land, they said to Salman, "Go and tell Prophet Muhammad about our problem". We learn from this situation the lesson that when someone is given a responsibility and encounters a problem preventing him from carrying it out, he must refer it to the one who assigned the responsibility to him.

Salman Al-Faresi went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who accompanied him to the place and struck the rocky land with the spade. Upon doing so, sparks flew up due to the strength of the strike of the iron against the rock. Prophet Muhammad exclaimed, 'Allah is the Greatest! The palaces of Basra in the Levant will be conquered'. Then, he struck the rock again and said, 'Allah is the Greatest! The palaces of Al-Hamra' in Byzantium will be conquered'. He struck the rock a third time and said, 'Allah is the Greatest! The palaces of Sana'a in Yemen will be conquered!' It seems that every time he struck the land, Allah showed him one of the places Islam would conquer. When these statements reached the enemies of Prophet Muhammad, they said to the Companions, 'Muhammad gives you a reason to hope for conquest of the palaces of Sana'a in Yemen, Al-Hamra in Byzantium and Basra, while you are not even able to meet us in battle'. Following this incident, Allah revealed the verse, 'Say, "Allah, holder of all control, You give control to whomever You will and remove it from whomever You will..."' (*Al-'Imran: 26*).

The matter is intention on the part of the believers, as they should have the intention to do a good deed, as much as they can. If they do so, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* will help them. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One who gives control and who removed control from the disbelieving rulers of Persia, Byzantium and Sana'a and gave it to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah and his companions. He also removed it from Quraysh and the Jews of Medina, when they desired it. Allah's saying: 'Say: "...and remove it from whomever You will..."' (*Al-'Imran: 26*) makes us wonder: what does the Arabic word "naz'" (meaning "remove") mean here? It means "plucking out by force." Kings usually desire to cling on to their thrones because some of those who hold power view it as a privilege without paying attention to responsibility, hard work, or concern for human rights. They forget to ask themselves about how they benefit people. They do not pay attention to the necessity of fearing Allah with regards to the people's rights and exerting every possible effort to protect human rights.

There are rulers who are avid for power, so this implies that they regard it is a privilege, not a burden. In this regard, we should consider what 'Umar ibn

Al-Khattab said, when the people said to him, 'If we lose you – and we hope not to lose you – we will appoint 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, as he is a very pious person. 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab said, 'It is enough for the family of Al-Khattab that one Man from amongst them should be asked concerning the *ummah* of Muhammad'. He said this because ruling in Islam is hardship and toil.

Allah says, 'Say: "...and remove it from whomever You will..." (Al-*Imran*: 26) to draw our attention to those who cling on to authority and so Allah seizes it from them. A believer should consider the nations that were very prosperous and powerful and then power was removed from their rulers for the simplest causes, all because it was the Will of the Supreme Creator Whose will cannot be overturned. Allah either takes power from this kind of ruler, or takes them from their position of power. We see that some rulers attempt to keep their power so that it becomes difficult for anyone to dethrone them easily, but Allah removes power from them whenever He wills.

Then, Allah says: 'Say: "...You elevate whomever You will and humble whomever You will..." (Al-*Imran*: 26). Power is not restricted only to rulers, but there are some people surrounding every ruler known as "shadow rulers." This means that they also hold power and authority, but not in apparent manner, and these shadow rulers are often a source of evil. They hide behind the king's authority so they do whatever they want and others follow their orders. When power is seized from them, those who were oppressed will doubtlessly be elevated by Allah, while the oppressors will be abased by Allah. Therefore, Allah's saying 'Say: "...You give control to whomever You will and remove it from whomever You will..." (Al-*Imran*: 26) is followed by 'Say: "...You elevate whomever You will and humble whomever You will..." (Al-*Imran*: 26). Rulers are surrounded by those who enjoy their power and influence, yet when the authority of this ruler is removed, these people appear suddenly. This happens in every age.

'Say: "...You elevate whomever You will and humble whomever You will. All that is good lies in Your hand..." (Al-*Imran*: 26) We notice here that people regard the blessing of dominion and power as good and the removal of power and authority is bad. Let me say to them then: the removal of power is bad for those from whom it is taken, but it is good for whomever

it is granted to. It could also be good for a person from whom it has been removed because sometimes Allah has removed power from him to lessen the burden of his oppression. If the deposed ruler is wise, he will accept this and say, "Allah wants to remove my burden so that I may repent".

Therefore, if individual and general cases are considered, we will find that the blessing of power and the honour and elevation that follow it, as well as the removal of power and the abasement that follows it, are all a source of ultimate goodness. Therefore, Allah says here, 'Say: "...All that is good lies in Your hand..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). If all people consider matters carefully, they will find that Allah is the One Who gives and takes power and the One Who elevates and abases, causing goodness in all cases. Therefore, He says, 'Say: "...All that is good lies in Your hand. You have power over everything..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 26)

Giving power requires preparation and logical causes. Sometimes, gaining power takes place by means of military or political coups and the removal of power also needs the same effort. Allah clarifies this meaning, saying that it is not a difficult matter for His absolute, omnipotent power, for He does not handle things by work or endeavour; He merely says "Be" and it is so. Then, Allah brings evidence from the His signs in the universe which prove the truthfulness of His saying, 'Say: "...You have power over everything..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). Allah says,

تَوَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَتَوَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَتُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَتَرْزُقُ مَنْ دَشَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

You merge night into day and day into night; You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living; You provide limitlessly for whoever You will' [27] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 27)

Allah says that this is a type of phenomena which comes frequently to you: the night and day, and life and death. We are all aware of the phenomena of night and day because they are miraculous signs. Allah says, 'Say: "...You merge night into day and day into night..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27). Allah did not fix the hours of night and day, but He *Glorified and Exalted is He* willed that the

night may sometimes last five hours more than the day and that the day may exceed the number of hours of the night by five hours. The question is: Do these five hours decrease from the night or the day suddenly? Does the day become seven hours after it has been twelve hours long suddenly? No; this change happens gradually, in a manner that is unnoticed. There is a type of motion called "clockwork motion." When we examine a clock's movement, we see that it depends on several cogs, each of which has a moment when it stops, and when it stops, we must wind it again so it continues to work. If we examine the minute hand carefully, we will be able to notice this. There is a moment of rest between the movements of the minute hand from one minute to another. This type of movement is called "clockwork motion." There is another type of motion called "streamlined motion," where movement exists at all times, which is the case of human, plant and animal growth.

The new-born child does not grow from morning to evening in a noticeable manner. He could grow only as much as a millimetre during the whole day. The infant does not have a constant weight or height for twenty-four hours and then suddenly grows at the end of the day. Rather, the infant's daily growth is spread out over the whole day. This process requires extreme precision in the distribution of the elements of the event over the elements of time, an action which shows the magnificent power of creation, which the human being will be forever incapable of replicating.

I said once that if a person looks at his newborn child and keeps an eye on him constantly, he will not notice his child's growth at all. However, if a person is apart from his child for a month or several months and returns, he will be able to see very clearly the total growth which his child has experienced during his absence. If a person who sows a certain plant watches its growth, he will never be able to notice the growth of that plant because the parts grow in a manner which the human being cannot notice.

We should be aware that anything that grows can also shrink and the human being cannot notice that directly, either. There are other examples in life, from which we will consider the following example: when scientists began to photograph the earth from satellites, the first photograph of New York City was an image of an undistinguished speck. When the scientists enlarged this

image, the details emerged, such as streets, etc. Where were the streets in this tiny speck? The streets were shrunk in the image in a manner that was impossible for the human senses to discern and so it was necessary to enlarge the image in order for a person to see it. Distant things appear small to us, but when we approach them, we see them as larger.

Therefore, Allah's saying, 'Say: "...You merge night into day and day into night..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) alerts human attention to the fact that night and day do not have defined boundaries splitting them equally. Rather, by His Omnipotent Power, Allah merges night into day and merges day into night. The meaning of the Arabic word "tulij" is "merge or cause to enter into". For example, the *mue'dhdhin* calls for the *Maghrib* (sunset) Prayer on a given day at five o'clock and calls for it on another day at seven o'clock. This does not happen suddenly and sunset does not change from five o'clock to seven o'clock from one day suddenly to the next, but this happens gradually and smoothly. We take lessons from these facts.

Oh Servant of Allah, when you see a king ruling over a stable civilisation, you should know that subtle events which cannot be noticed by the eye eat away at that dominion until the day arrives when it will come to an end. Accordingly, civilizations collapse after reaching the peak of advancement, while their populations were attaining great potentials and overwhelming capabilities because the causes of collapse have been eating away at these civilisations from inside.

Allah draws our attention to the magnificence of His Omnipotence and the accuracy and precision of His creation by the example of night and day: 'Say: "...You merge night into day and day into night..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27). Then, Allah sets another example, saying, 'Say: "...You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27). This is absolute Omnipotent Power, without the employment of means.

If we pause for consideration here, we will see how we have been guided by the discovery of some of the secrets of the universe which Allah has revealed to some of His servants.

Science has arrived at the fact that everything has its own unique life - we see that many processes occur inside the leaves of the plant and each one has

its unique life. In addition, some interactions occur inside each atom and each one has its own unique life. "Interactions" imply movement and it is well-known that movement manifests life essentially; there is a difference between how life is perceived by ordinary people and how it is perceived by educated people. At the time the Quran was revealed, an ordinary person did not know that there is life in a sperm and in a seed; only scientists and knowledgeable people knew such things. Ordinary people did not know that the seed has a visible life and has unseen growth. In addition, they did not know that there is a difference between a living object and an object that can be alive.

For example, the date pits that we take and plant to grow palm trees remain simply as pits until someone takes them and places them in the right environment to enable palm trees to grow from them.

The date pits are potentially alive. When we consider grains of soil, we are not able to plant them just anywhere to produce something from them. However, grains of soil have certain energy. Scientists say that the energy contained in the heads of the sticks of a single box of matches is sufficient to enable an electric train to circle the world for several years.

Scientists are aware of these facts, but ordinary people do not know them. When ordinary people listen to Allah's saying, 'Say: "...You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living..."' (*Al-Imran: 27*), they would say that an example of this is date pits, for they are aware that palm trees grow from date pits. However, scientists have performed research and discovered that there is life within the date pits and identified how they grow. Scientists know that everything in existence has a life that suits its purpose. Life is not only apparent movement and obvious growth; rather, there is life in everything.

Ordinary people can find clear examples of the fact that Allah brings the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living. As for scientists, they are aware of Allah's Omnipotence through their awareness of the fact that everything has life. If we take some of the soil in which seeds are planted and place it in isolation, nothing will come from it. This is what scientists describe as "dead in the first degree." As for pits that can be taken and placed in this soil, scientists term it "dead in the second degree."

When we move the dead in the first degree to be used as a means of planting something dead in the second degree, the results of this indicate the life present in both the soil and the pits. The Quran handles this issue with great precision because when the Quran mentions things that intellects might be curious about, it handles them in such a way that all intellects accept including the elite and the ordinary people. This is because the Quran deals with any issue using comprehensive language that is acceptable to all. Then, the human intellect discovers new details about the matter.

For example, the Quran did not say to us that the atom has energy and life within it, as well as charges that produce a certain type of power. Rather, it handled the atom and other matters with the elucidation of divine omnipotence, especially that those things were not associated with any controversy regarding any ruling or guidance. If the human being had been aware that the atom contained life within it at the time of the Revelation of the Quran, this information would not add anything to him. Moreover, if someone proved that atoms do not contain life within them, this would not affect the rulings of the religion. If we consider the Quran intelligently and understand the significance of its words, we will find that the word "life" has an opposite, which is "death". Allah *Glorified is He* has not used the word "death" in several verses, replacing it with "to perish", such as His saying: '...so that those who were to perish might perish after seeing a clear proof and so that those who were to live might live after seeing a clear proof— Allah is All-hearing and All-seeing.' (*al-An'am*: 42).

The word "perish" is used here as the opposite of living. The word "death" is not used here because the Creator is aware of His servants and knows that they differ concerning the issue of death: some of them define a person who does not move, sense, or grow as "dead." However, this dead body has a form of life which suits it such as the life existing inside the atoms, the grain of sand, or that of any dead thing. In this way, we understand from the previous verse that the opposite of living is perishing. Allah *Glorified is He* says the following about the Hereafter, to inform us of what will occur on the Day of Resurrection: '...Everything will perish, except His Face' (*al-Qasas*: 88). Allah has excluded His Face or Divine Entity from the things that will perish. Since everything will perish, this means that everything is alive even

if we are not aware of its life. Therefore, true life is present in all things in the manner that suits them: sometimes you recognise it and sometimes not.

Accordingly, Allah's saying, 'Say: "...You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living..." (Al-'Imran: 27) can be understood according to how ordinary people will perceive it, or to how the elite (the scientists) will perceive it. This is an apparent matter that can be perceived by seeing the night merging into day and day merging into night. In the Arabic language, a Man's closest friends are termed his "*walijah*" (confidants) which is derived from the Arabic word which Allah uses when referring to the night that merges into the day and the day which merges into the night. This is because friends are closely interlocked together in friendship; therefore, if any person wants to know the innermost character of any other person, he should meet his friends, who closely mix with him.

In this way, the concept of night's merging into the day and day's merging into the night is completely clear and the issue of life and death is handled with expressions that both ordinary people and the elite can understand. If these phenomena reveal part of Allah's Omnipotence, a person can never find it far-fetched that Allah also has the power to give power to whom He wills, to elevate who He wills, to take power from who He wills and to abase who He wills. Evidence has come from the signs inherent in the universe, which we witness every day, first-hand.

'Say: "Allah, holder of all control, You give control to whomever You will and remove it from whomever 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) Allah is the One Who has established all these things in His Universe, which are all good even if their goodness is not apparent to some people.

When a person sees that his son has a medical problem, he takes him quickly to the doctor and asks him to do all the necessary measures to restore the health of his son even if it be a surgery. The father is doing what is good for his son, though the treatment might cause the child to feel pain. If this is true in regards to the relationship between two created beings, what about the Supreme Creator who does what He wills in His creation giving power and removing it,

and elevating and abasing people? All of these things must lead to goodness. Allah's signs bear witness that He is able to do what He wills; the next verse (Quranic verse) states it as such: 'Say: "...You merge night into day and day into night; You bring the living out of the dead and the dead out of the living; You provide for whomever You will beyond reckoning..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27).

If a person is aware of the night merging into the day, or the bringing of the living out of the dead, he must be aware of His sustenance, for all human beings have an inevitable relationship with their sustenance and so Allah mentions this clear reality: 'Say: "...You provide for whomever You will beyond reckoning..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27). When a person hears the Arabic word "*hisab*" (reckoning), he will know, as we have said previously, that this word means "a clarification of that which is for him and that which is against him."

When Allah says, 'Say: "...You provide for whomever You will beyond reckoning..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) we know that "reckoning" necessitates the presence of someone who reckons, someone who is reckoned and something to be reckoned for. When Allah says, 'Say: "...You provide for whomever You will beyond reckoning..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27), we must consider: from whom and for whom? From where does this sustenance come and where does it go? It comes from Allah and goes wherever He decrees, as He is the Sustainer and Allah whom no one can hold to account. He is the One Who reckons us all, has no partner, and does whatever He wills.

Allah performs reckoning for mankind and He does not only give them sustenance according to how hard they work; rather, sometimes He provides them with sustenance that is greater than what their efforts have earned. Allah may grant you something that you have not expected because "reckoning" entails holding an account of the matters that a person expects and plans for; for example, when a farmer reckons the yield of the land which he sows, or a craftsman expects a certain income from his craft. This is considered reckoning, but sometimes a person finds that Allah has given him sustenance, without any reckoning, or he may expect to receive something, but he does not get it.

For example, it is said that a certain country announced that it had sown enough wheat to suffice the entire world, but when the crop ripened, a storm came and destroyed it and the country had to import wheat from abroad.

Those who had announced that they would feed the people ended up being fed by the people.

This proves the veracity of Allah's saying: '...beyond all reckoning' (*Al-'Imran*: 27). Allah does not count the people's work to provide them with sustenance equal to it, but He sometimes gives them more than what the effort they have exerted deserves.

We see our brothers whom Allah has blessed with oil wealth which sprang without any effort from them. Allah wished to show people His omnipotent power and that sustenance is in His Hand. We see people pointing to the oil-bearing regions and accusing the people there of laziness and we find that Allah has harnessed to them active people in order to work for them. When Allah blessed the Arab regions with oil, the other countries which regard themselves "developed" have become in need of them, this is provision without reckoning.

These reflections confirm to a believer Allah's Absolute Omnipotence. He has created the means and has not left people to control matters; He has given them to the human being to make use of, though He may not grant him sustenance in accordance with his efforts. Allah may provide people by other means, for which they did not reckon. One who considers his affairs and the affairs of those he knows, will find that this matter prevails throughout creation: Allah grants sustenance beyond all reckoning; He does not give people their sustenance according to the efforts they exert. He gives without reckoning on the part of the human being because the scales by which a person measures could be nullified by incidents which he does not expect.

Therefore, 'Say: "...You provide for whomever You will beyond reckoning..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 27) means that Allah's Absolute Power over sustenance is beyond all reckoning from any authority higher than His authority that might question Him. Moreover, He gives sustenance to His creatures, often more than the effort they have exerted would earn. He also may give people sustenance that they do not expect; everything is under Allah's control and He is the Lord of all dominion Who gives to whom He wills, elevates whom He wills, causes day to merge into night and grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.

Therefore, the foolish person is the one who gives allegiance to someone who has no authority and abandons this Supreme Authority (Allah).

Let us consider this issue of faith: since all these matters are under Allah's control, people should not give allegiance to His foes because everything is in His hand. Allah says, 'You who believe: do not take for your intimates such outsiders as spare no effort to ruin you and want to see you suffer. Their hatred is evident from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made Our Revelations clear for you; will you not use your reason?' (*Al-'Imran*: 118)

Allah commands us not to give allegiance except to Him. If a person makes reckoning for everything, he will not give allegiance to anything except the Possessor of all of these things. He should beware of relying on an enemy to the Omnipotent Power which is in control of everything in existence, and of relying on Allah's enemies by taking allies from amongst them. If he does so, he is not of sound mind. Allah says,

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ
يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاتَ
وَيَحْذَرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ

The believers should not make the disbelievers their allies rather than other believers – anyone who does such a thing will isolate himself completely from God – except when you need to protect yourselves from them. God warns you to beware of Him: the Final Return is to God [28]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 28)

A person will not take a warring disbeliever as an ally unless he sees signs of strength in this disbeliever and weakness in himself. The Arabic word "*wali*" means "ally". When we say, "Allah, *Huwa Al-Wali*" (Allah is the ally), we use the word in its broadest sense. However, when we use it to refer to people, we use it in the limited and relative sense. Allah says, 'Allah is the ally of those who believe: He brings them out of the depths of darkness and

into the light...' (*al-Baqara*: 257). Allah is an "ally" in the broadest sense of the word. He also says, 'But for those who are on Allah's side, there is no fear, nor shall they grieve' (*Yunus*: 62).

The singular of "*awlia' Allah*" (Allah's allies) is "*waly Allah*" (Allah's ally); a believer is Allah's ally. Allah says, 'In that situation, the only protection is that of Allah, the True Allah: He gives the best rewards and the best outcome' (*al-Anfal*: 44). We notice here that allegiance is sometimes attributed to Allah and sometimes to Allah's servants. It is understood and well known that Allah is the ally of a believer, but how can a believer be an ally to Allah? We can understand the matter in this way: Allah is the helper of His believing servants, so He is the ally of those who believe, i.e., their helper and supporter. The allies of Allah are those who support Allah and so He helps them. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

'You who believe! If you support Allah, He will help you and make you stand firm' (*Muhammad*: 7). Is Allah not able to take revenge on those who fight against Muslims, all at once and cause them to perish? However, Allah says, 'Fight them: Allah will punish them at your hands, He will disgrace them, He will help you to conquer them, He will heal the believers' feelings' (*at-Tawba*: 14). If Allah were to fight them, His fighting would be a hidden affair, and they might say that this is a natural phenomenon. Therefore, He caused the believers to fight the warring disbelievers who considered them weak. So, sometimes the word "*wali*" means "helper" and sometimes it means "the one who is helped" because if a person supports Allah and He becomes this person's ally, this means that Allah is the Helper and this person is the one who is helped.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants His religion to prevail by His servants' belief in Him; otherwise, He would have compelled all humanity to obey Him by His Omnipotent Power, as no one can escape Allah's Power. It is incumbent on a person to think deeply and know that his life from birth to death is under Allah's control: 'The creation of the heavens and earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind, though most people do not know it' (*Ghafir*: 57). Nothing escapes the Creator's Will. Allah handles the affairs of the motion of the heavens and the earth with the strength of His Might and Absolute power.

Nothing escapes His Hand. As for humanity, He wishes for the people to believe in Him and love Him, but faith is left up to a person's choice. Certainly, Allah can make all people believers, but He wishes to see who will believe in Him, while having the option of not believing.

The subduing of things shows Allah's absolute power and the human being's free will shows their love of Allah, who wants us to see His power and come to His Path (Islam, submission to Allah) out of love. Therefore, He says: 'The believers should not make the disbelievers their allies rather than other believers...' (*Al-'Imran*: 28). The meaning of this verse is that if the warring disbelievers appear to be allies to the believers, they will try to make them feel at ease with them. Perhaps the warring disbelievers may approach the believers stealthily and with subtlety and false affection. Since they are warring disbelievers, they do not love the believers, as there is no meeting between faith and warring disbelief. Therefore, Allah says, '...anyone who does such a thing will isolate himself completely from Allah...' (*Al-'Imran*: 28).

Whoever takes the warring disbelievers as allies isolates himself from Allah because he thinks that these warring disbelievers can help him. Therefore, Allah warns us and clarifies the matter for the believers saying that they should not be deceived by the power of the warring disbelievers and take them as allies. A believer should not say that he has nothing else to do, because Allah wants him to do his best. Therefore, He says, 'Prepare whatever forces you [believers] can muster, including war-horses, to frighten off Allah's enemies and yours and warn others unknown to you but known to Allah. Whatever you give in Allah's cause will be repaid to you in full and you will not be wronged' (*al-An'am*: 60).

Allah did not ask the believers to prepare that by which they will defeat the warring disbelievers. He says, 'Prepare whatever forces you [believers] can muster...' (*al-Anfal*: 60). A believer must exert every possible effort and trust Allah. Therefore, there are certain things that the intellect might question, but Allah reassures the believers concerning them. He tells the believers not to panic and not to think that the large numbers of the warring disbelievers can defeat them and not to say that "there is nothing we can do." Allah has taught us what will protect us from this situation and so He says, '...I shall

put terror into the hearts of the [warring] disbelievers– strike above their necks and strike all their fingertips!...' (*al-Anfal*: 12)

When Allah puts terror into the hearts of these warring disbelievers, what could they do, however large their numbers and preparations? Is this not the end of the matter? Terror is one of Allah's soldiers. The believers must not take allies from among the warring disbelievers, in preference to the believers so that the saying of Allah may not apply to him: '...I shall put terror into the hearts of the [warring] disbelievers– strike above their necks and strike all their fingertips!...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 28). Allah then gives an exception to this: '...except when you need to protect yourselves from them. Allah warns you to beware of Him: the Final Return is to Allah.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 28)

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* gives guidance to the human being, who is one of His creatures and He knows all his instincts, emotions and thoughts and that circumstances may be greater than he can bear. Therefore, Allah treats him as a creature with limited abilities. In another verse, Allah gives another exception, saying: '...if anyone does so on such a day– unless manoeuvring to fight or to join a fighting group– he incurs the wrath of Allah and Hell will be his home, a wretched destination!' (*al-An 'am*: 16)

Allah says in this regard, 'The believers should not make the (warring) disbelievers their allies, rather than other believers– anyone who does such a thing will isolate himself completely from Allah– except when you need to protect yourselves from them...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 28).

Tuqah means "protection". They may be extremely powerful and it might be unlikely that a believer could gain victory over the warring disbelievers. In this case, a believer may seek protection from their evil by seeming to be allied with them. Concealment is a concession from Allah. It is related that Musaylamah, a false prophet and liar, brought two Muslims and said to one of them: 'Do you testify that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah?' One believer said, 'Yes'. Musaylamah said: 'Do you testify that I am a Messenger of Allah?' The believer said, 'Yes'. Musaylamah brought the other Muslim and said, 'Do you testify that Muhammad is a Messenger of Allah?' The second believer said, 'Yes'. Musaylamah said, 'Do you testify that I am a Messenger of Allah?' The second believer said, 'I am deaf'. How could a believer answer

him by claiming to be deaf? Musaylamah knew he was feigning deafness, so he took him and killed him. The matter was raised before Prophet Muhammad. What did he say? He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'As for the one who was killed, he said the truth openly, so glad tidings for him. As for the other person, he made use of Allah's concession (to conceal his faith). So, concealment is a concession and announcing the truth is a virtuous act'. 'Ammar ibn Yasir made use of this concession, whereas Bilal ibn Rabah chose to bear the hardship.

Let us consider the wisdom of legislation in this matter. Every principle of goodness came to counter a Manifestation of evil. This principle required guidance from a wiser being and demanded firm conviction and strong will and the guidance needed to be borne. In order that it could remain for humanity, strong will was required so that a believer could face warring adversaries. If Allah had not allowed concealment with His saying, '...with the exception of those who are forced to say they do not believe, although their hearts remain firm in faith...' (*an-Nahl*: 106), we would truly have to sacrifice for Allah's Religion by giving our lives easily in Allah's cause. But if every believer took this stance, then who would carry Allah's knowledge to others? For this reason, Allah legislated resorting to concealment in order that some believers remain to hold the Message. He established sacrifice for the sake of the faith, and concealment for the sake of preserving the faith. Allah brought two matters: standing in the face of falsehood and achieving martyrdom for His cause, and concealment of one's religion to protect some people so that His Guidance would not be lost if a tyrant came to put an end to all the believers. Therefore, Allah legislated that which would preserve self-sacrifice for some believers and preserve others to carry His Religion. Allah desired that His guidance would fill the entire earth and be passed down through generations. If He had not allowed concealment with His saying, '...with the exception of those who are forced to say they do not believe, although their hearts remain firm in faith, those who reject Allah after believing in Him and open their hearts to disbelief will have the wrath of Allah upon them and a grievous punishment awaiting them' (*an-Nahl*: 106).

Accordingly, there is no allegiance between a believer and a warring disbelieving people except if he fears something from them because Allah warns us to beware of Him, saying: '...Allah warns you to beware of Him:

the Final Return is to Allah' (*Al-'Imran*: 28). A believer should beware of following the way that the disbelievers present to him pretending to make use of concealment. A believer should know that the reason for permitting disguising one's faith is to protect the guidance and to save oneself for the purpose of preserving the path of faith. If a person follows this guidance in this regard, he is really considered a true believer. Allah says, '...Allah warns you to beware of Him: the Final Return is to Allah' (*Al-'Imran*: 28).

Allah orders the believers not to conceal their faith in order to attain something that they desire, however. Allah set certain limits for this matter, saying, '...with the exception of those who are forced to say they do not believe, although their hearts remain firm in faith, those who reject Allah after believing in Him and open their hearts to disbelief, will have the wrath of Allah upon them and a grievous punishment awaiting them' (*an-Nahl*: 106). The main objective should always be Allah's cause, which is why the believers should beware of fooling themselves. Then, Allah says,

قُلْ إِنْ تَخْفُوا مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ أَوْ تُبْدُوهُ يَعْلَمُهُ اللَّهُ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

Say [Prophet], 'God knows every- thing that is in your hearts, whether you conceal or reveal it; He knows everything in the heavens and earth; God has power over all things' [29] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 29)

This is because a disbelieving person may misuse concealment, but a believer never does this because the warning in this verse is clear. A person may say, "Concealing that which is in the heart is known to Allah. As for revealing that which is in the heart, people also know it. So why is this saying mentioned?" This beautiful verse was revealed because someone may imagine that because Allah is unseen, He only knows the unseen and not the apparent. However, Allah is not veiled from one place by another or from one time by another. A believer should beware of imagining that because Allah is unseen and He only knows the unseen. Allah knows both the unseen and that which is apparent.

Then, Allah says,

يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُّحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ
سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ
نَفْسَهُ وَاللَّهُ رَءُوفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ ﴿٣٠﴾

**On the Day when every soul finds all the good it has
done present before it, it will wish all the bad it has done
to be far, far away. God warns you to beware of Him,
but God is compassionate towards His servants [30]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 30)**

An action is a phenomenon which has a beginning and an end. How, then, can a person come on the Day of Resurrection and find his previous actions? There is no doubt that he will find the recompense for his actions. Perhaps Allah will enable some later people to discover the secrets of existence and make more additions to the explanation of this verse. It is now possible to make a recording of an action and after a time, a person may show another person that which he did and said, recorded in a way that can be viewed later. If we humans can do this with our capabilities, what about Allah's Capabilities? There is no doubt that they are beyond ours, as He knows everything in the heart and in the heavens and earth. Allah's wisdom encompasses the entire universe, as He says, 'He has the keys to the unseen: no one knows them but Him. He knows all that is in the land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowledge, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything, fresh or withered, that is not written in a clear Record'. (*al-An'am*: 59)

Allah ends this verse with His saying, '...Allah has power over all things' (*Al-'Imran*: 29). He knows the people's heedlessness and so warns them of the absoluteness of His Power, as He says in the previous verse '...You have power over all things' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). We are Allah's creatures and He is the Highest Power, able to do anything and will bring to all people a record of their reckoning on the Day of Resurrection: 'As for him who is given his Record in his right hand, he will say: "Here, read my Record!"' (*al-Haqqa*: 19). So, bearing this point in mind, one should remember the Day he will be brought to justice and find "...all the good that he has done..." (*Al-'Imran*: 30), being provided with the reward of his actions. As for the evil deed a person has

done, he will wish that there was a great distance between him and his evil and will say to himself: "If only it had not been so!"

Allah *Most High and Glorified is He* says: '...And Allah warns you against Himself (His Punishment) and Allah is full of Kindness to (His) servants' (*Al- 'Imran*: 30). Here Allah repeats the warning so that we are mindful of His Absolute Power. But at the same time, He is also the Allah of Mercy and He is Compassionate and Merciful. Then, Allah says:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ
لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

Say, 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you and forgive you your sins; God is most forgiving, most merciful' [31] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 31)

We must take note that the word "Say" in the Quran indicates that what follows is a Message that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is passing on from his Lord; it is indeed a Message of command directed to those concerned with it (i.e. mankind, the believers, etc.). But some people whose hearts are deviated from the Truth might say, "It was possible for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to simply say 'If you (really) love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you...' without the word "Say". To such people, we say: if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had done that, he would have thus been delivering a Message without properly carrying out the command itself (from his Lord) Why? Because the command is in the word "Say" and the subject of command here is "If you (really) love Allah, follow me". So, this makes it clear to us that in any situation of divine command from Allah preceded with the word "Say", what was expected of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was to deliver both the command from Allah and the Message itself (i.e. the subject of command), which gives an indication that whatever he (Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*) conveyed is a direct Message from Allah.

Some people claim that the word "Say" should be removed from the Quran so that instead of saying, for instance, 'Say: He is Allah, the One and Only'

(*al-Ikhlās*: 1), we should simply say “He is Allah, the One and Only”. To those people, we say: This claim reveals your desire to see Prophet Muhammad delivering only what is commanded and enjoined, detached from the wording and expression of command itself.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say [Oh Muhammad to mankind]: “If you (really) love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you”’. (*Al-Imran*: 31) What does this Quranic verse indicate? No doubt, some people claim that they love Allah, but they do not follow Allah in what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought. It is as though they draw a distinction between love for Allah and abidance by His commandments. In truth, they should realise that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Mighty Creator and Sustainer and this is a blessing which Man should be grateful for. And at the same time, He has favoured Man (His creature) with responsibility, the benefit of which all returns to him (as a creature of Allah), not to Allah, the Source of responsibility, and this is another blessing.

Allah *Glorified is He* is not in need of anything or of anyone. By making us responsible, Allah wants us to follow the laws that make life better for human beings. We have mentioned before the example of tools made by humans. As we know, any tool designed by an engineer is accompanied by a pamphlet or a brochure that gives information about the product and its safe use. The pamphlet serves as a guide, with instructions of “do’s and don’ts”, for the safe use of the tool.

So, as we know, having a list of rules for the safe use of a particular tool and distributing them in a small booklet is for the benefit of those who use the tool. This is with regards to Man-made products, so what about Almighty Allah’s design, and creation? The aspect of Allah’s Blessing for Man is reflected in His creation, sustenance and His choice to make Man religiously responsible. So, Allah thus made Man’s responsibility a means for realizing the wisdom behind Allah’s Creation and His Sustenance. If Allah had not fashioned our life on a certain system, guarded by laws and regulations, the whole aspect of living would have been corrupted. One of Allah’s perfect blessings upon His creatures is that He laid down for us a system of religious responsibility. So, if Man, Allah’s servant, with his recognition of Allah’s

blessings through His Creation and Sustenance, has realised His true worth, still more, he should also recognise Allah's favour upon him, by accepting the tasks Allah laid on him. Not only that, but he should also love his Lord, thanking Him for the fact that He charged him with religious responsibilities.

You might be saying you love Allah, but you must be fully aware of the difference between you loving Allah and Allah loving you. Religious responsibilities might seem too arduous for you and for this you may tend to show recalcitrance or neglect. But listen: it is not enough for you to love Allah only from the aspect of recognizing the blessings of His Creation and Sustenance because by so doing, you are neglecting the other blessing which is inherent in the concept of Allah's commissioning you with tasks and making you responsible. This is also for your own good! Mankind must realise that rising to the expectations and discharging the tasks ordained by Allah is for his own good, so he should not neglect them.

It is possible to find people who love Allah just for being their Creator and Sustainer, but they should know that Allah's love for His servants emanates from a servant's perpetual recognition of Allah's blessing of making him responsible and commissioning him with deeds. Allah loves a servant who understands the value of that blessing.

We, as humans, often notice a person loving another person, but with no reciprocal love from the latter; it is a one-sided love. The poet Al-Mutanabbi says: You are my beloved, but I pray against being a lover who is not loved. As you can see, Al-Mutanabbi detested loving someone who does not reciprocate one's love, so he sought Allah's refuge from it. To those who claim that they love Allah just because they recognize Allah's blessings of creation and sustenance, but they are too proud to bring themselves to live up to their responsibility, we say: You have refused a portion of the aspect of love of Allah. Whatever Allah ordains is not for His own good; He ordains it for Man's own good and benefit because the act of Allah's charging His servants with responsibilities goes side-by-side with the purpose of Allah's Creation and Sustenance. Why? Responsibility, in Islamic Law, involves having a proper perception of Allah's creation and sustenance and love, as we know, makes a heart glow. And when we apply that to Man's

relationship with Allah, the more the heart gets attached to Allah with love, the more we see its glowing and beautiful effects on everything, reflected in compassion, mercy and satisfaction.

Also, with regards to Man's heart when it is filled with love for Allah, we see its effect in the way he shows obedience to Allah. Love which makes the heart grow and glow is within the realm of Man's capacity. What this means is that everybody can show love. However, Allah requires that, along with what love does to the heart; its effects must be transparent on the surface (being reflected in actions). Man must seek to understand Allah's commandments and live up to them -out of obedience and love for Allah- to be rewarded with Allah's love and love's effects of mercy, compassion and pleasure in one's life.

The love that is required by Allah differs from our narrow understanding of love. The reason I say this is that I want us to know that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Upholder of justice and does not command unfairly; He does not command anything that is beyond Man's capacity to do. The type of love required, with regards to religious responsibility, is an intellectual one. Let me quickly explain the difference between intellectual love and emotional love: Emotional love is controlled by nature, not by laws. I cannot order you, "You must love so-and-so emotionally!" because emotional love is not subject to laws. As we know, it is natural for Man to love his son even if he is not that brilliant, or he is disabled; such love is emotional; just as distaste a person naturally has towards a child who is not brilliant; such dislike exists according to logic or intellect, not emotion.

For instance, when a person shows love to his neighbour's child for being brilliant and even to his enemy's child, that love is not emotional love, but rather, it is intellectual love. One does not naturally show emotional love to one's neighbour's child or enemy's child the way one does to his son. It is your son whom you naturally pamper with gifts or presents, not your neighbour's son. All this shows the difference between intellectual love and emotional love.

Responsibility, in the context of Islamic law, is always something possible to attain and it is controlled by intellectual love. Within the context of such love, a person might ask himself: "What would my life be like if I had not embraced this religion? Would I survive in life without Allah's mercy and the

blessings of this religion He generously gave us and sent to us with His Noble Messenger?" Such discourse is controlled by intellect, not emotion and it is emanated from intellectual love.

Such love might grow into emotional love, but that which is required to fulfil Allah's commands is intellectual love, not emotional. For this reason, we must consider what was narrated from 'Umar ibn-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'None of you will have [perfect] faith until he loves me more than his love for his father, his children and all mankind'. Prophet Muhammad's Companion, 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him*, paused at this point, and said to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: "Is it possible that I could love you more than I love myself? I love you already more than my wealth and my child... but myself? How come? I do not really get this."

Here we see a perfect example of honesty, in the religious context, from 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him*. Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* repeated it a second time and a third time and at this point, the Companion 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* realised that it had become a religious responsibility. That is an instance of a love which is easily attainable and this is intellectual love, not emotional love.

Then, 'Umar said: 'Now, Oh Messenger of Allah?' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* replied 'Now, Oh 'Umar', i.e. it is now time you have your faith completed. So, from this we understand how Prophet Muhammad's Companion 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* understood the meaning of this love which is an intellectual love.

Let us give an example, so this issue does not become an obstacle to hearts or minds. With regards to taking a bitter medicine, a person asks himself: "Do I have to love that medicine or not?" So, it is clear that it is a mandatory love we have for bitter pills; it is love by mind, not by heart.

So, what we love with our mind is something we know is good for us, something beneficial, even if we dislike it. When the true worth of something becomes clear to you, you love it and that love sinks into your heart. So, the love required for religious responsibility is intellectual love which then often

develops into emotional love and this is the meaning of what Allah *Glorified is He* says here: ‘Say: “...If you (really) love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you...”’. (*Al-'Imran*: 31) This love is not a mere claim. When someone claims he loves a person, everything connected with that person will be loved as well, in such a way that his love for that person spreads. Did the poet not say: ‘And whatever my beloved may do, it is ok (I have done it)? So, in the same context, if you love Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* follow him by rising up to meet all religious requirements.

Let us take note of the two phrases here: “follow me” and “listen to me”. What is the difference between them? The word “follow” here means when one takes a person as a leading example, in his manners and conduct. So, by saying you love Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it requires you to observe what he *peace and blessings be upon him* used to do and to do your best to do the same. But if you are merely claiming to love him and you do not follow the example of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* this is insincere love. The proof of the love you claim is that you follow Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If we truly follow Prophet Muhammad, then we should perceive all the aspects of Allah’s Commandments as a blessing and we should be accepting and obeying them, without any hesitation eventhough they might seem difficult and arduous.

This will earn us Allah’s love, rewarding our sense of putting Allah first and our choice to go through hardships in obeying His Commands. Understanding this Quranic verse leads us to realise that Allah is alerting us. It is as if He is saying to us, “You love Allah because of His blessings of creation and sustenance, but you have stopped short of your religious responsibilities because they are difficult for you.”

Let us consider responsibility: Is it for the benefit of the Allah, the One Who commands it, or is it for the benefit of those who receive it? It is surely for the benefit of the one being addressed by Allah’s Command; it is for the sake of those who are religiously responsible, in the eyes of Islamic Law. In this way, we must include “responsibility” among Allah’s blessings. So, these blessings are creation, sustenance, and responsibility. If you love Allah for His creation and sustenance, you must also love Him for His enjoining responsibility

to you. The proof of sincere love is a servant's fulfilling of his responsibilities. Since you express your sincere emotion in loving Allah, He will surely love you and we all know that our love for Allah is not of any consequence in the scheme of things; it is Allah's love for you that matters.

The words of Allah *Glorified is He* which He taught His Messenger (Muhammad) to convey to mankind are: 'Say: "...follow me and Allah will love you..."'. (*Al-'Imran: 31*) This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was sent by Allah, has conveyed everything that Allah revealed, without concealing anything, so no one can put a boundary between Allah's Messenger and Allah *Glorified is He*. The mission of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was to deliver everything that Allah revealed to him.

Then, Allah says, 'Say: "...and forgive you of your sins..."'. (*Al-'Imran: 31*) The point here is: In the phrase "...and forgive you,..." we see something similar to what is known in man-made laws called "retroactive law". So, if somebody does not know the impact of Allah's love for us and for our choice to follow the instructions of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he should still know that it is his responsibility to immediately begin following the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and fulfilling his religious responsibilities. In doing so, Allah will forgive him for all that he has done wrong. But which sins does Allah forgive here? They are those sins which made some people turn away from obeying Allah's Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* came with divine commandments regarding this matter.

Thus, it is clear to us that, considering His Supreme Justice, Allah *Glorified is He* does not punish any of His servants for a previous sin, as long as he has agreed to abide by his religious duties henceforth. Having received the Message from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* creates an obligation upon people to use their brains in comprehending the Message he conveyed to them. But I have to stress that religious responsibility follows commandments, i.e., once Allah's Message has been delivered, it becomes binding on people to follow. In this context, it has already been delivered. What follows is that Allah forgives sins committed before the Message was conveyed. Then Allah

Glorified is He says: ‘Say: ... and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 31) We know that mercy and grace are both from Allah. After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ ۖ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

**Say, ‘Obey God and the Messenger,’ but if they turn away,
[know that] God does not love those who ignore [His
commands] [32] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 32)**

I have said this before: when it comes to Allah’s Command for obedience, it only occurs in the Quran in three forms. Sometimes, Allah *Glorified is He* says, “Obey Allah and His Messenger,” as mentioned here in this Quranic verse which we are now discussing and trying to reflect on. We notice here that Allah did not repeat the command of obedience (as was the case in some other verses), but He used it only once, saying: “Obey.” And if someone asks, “Who should be obeyed?” the answer is: both Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

So, the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while conveying Allah’s Message, ‘...follow me. Allah will love you....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 31) mean that showing obedience to Allah’s Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is part of obeying Allah. It is also important to note here that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not order us to obey him; rather, he ordered us to obey Allah, hence Allah did not repeat the command of obedience. Allah used it once, giving an indication that it’ is for both, Allah and His Messenger. In Arabic, when Allah commands his servants to “obey Allah,” it is linked with “obey His Messenger” *peace and blessings be upon him* by the coordinating conjunction “wa,” meaning “and.”

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: “Obey Allah and obey the Messenger [Muhammad]”. If they turn away, then he is responsible only for what he is charged with. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided. The Messenger is responsible only for delivering the Message clearly’. (*an-Nur*: 54)

Allah *Glorified is He* repeats the command to obey three times: once, it is a command to obey Allah, then, it is a command to obey Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him the third time, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Oh you who believe! Obey Allah and obey Prophet Muhammad, The Messenger and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination’. (*an-Nisa*: 59)

What exactly is the concept of “command” to obey, as mentioned in the above verse? It implies obedience in different forms of responsibilities. The rulings that the believers are required to obey are sometimes commandments which have come from Allah, or which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as confirmed with his words and deeds. If a believer obeys these commands, he is obeying Allah and the Messenger together. Sometimes, the ruling comes from Allah in a general form and the Messenger specifies it, such as the command from Allah: ‘And establish prayers and (ensure) the payment of *zakat* and accomplish (absolute) obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that you may be granted mercy’. (*an-Nur*: 56)

None of us could have known how many prayers there are in a day, or the number of cycles in each prayer, or the manner of their performance, without Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* having specified the matter for us for every prayer. So, while a believer obeys Allah’s Command in general matters, he also obeys Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in specifics. We must be aware that there are two types of obedience: firstly, obedience to Allah; secondly, obedience to the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the command is one, the obedience is for both Allah and the Messenger because it is a single command.

As for it when a general commandment comes from Allah, the details and explanations are left for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as part of his mission from Allah. A believer obeys Allah in regards to the general aspects of His Divine Command such as the prayer and its establishment, and obeys Prophet Muhammad in regards to the details of the prayer and the manner of its performance. Sometimes, there are some instances when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was given higher authorization from Allah to explain some important details about religion and so it is as if

Allah tells His Messenger, Muhammad, that he has the authority to articulate on the affair and this is also explained by Allah *Glorified is He* when he says, ‘...And whatever the Messenger [Muhammad] gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it...’. (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* left it up to Prophet Muhammad to establish the legislation necessary to make the lives of the believers righteous. He gave him general authorization to do so. In that context, with Allah giving Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such general authorization, it becomes imperative for the believers to show obedience to Prophet Muhammad in everything that he says even if Allah did not say it explicitly.

For example, we do not find evidence in the Quran that the dawn (*Fajr*) prayer is comprised of two *rak’as* (cycles), but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who specified the details of the prayer to us, so we know that the dawn prayer (*Fajr*) is of two raka’s (cycles). The same applies to the other prayers: the midday prayer (*Zuhr*) is four, just like the afternoon prayer (‘*Asr*), the sunset prayer (*Maghrib*) is three and the night prayer is four raka’s (cycles). The evidence is in the specification given by Prophet Muhammad, on which Allah *Glorified is He* has made clear to us how we ought to respond to that, as He says: ‘...and whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7)

This is the evidence from the Noble Quran. Thus, the command for obedience occurs in the Quran in three forms. Firstly: if the “obedience” is for both Allah and His Messenger, then the conjunction “and” is used here to link “the Messenger (Muhammad)” with Allah *Glorified is He*. Secondly: Obedience to Allah in a general matter and obedience to Allah’s Messenger, Muhammad, with regards to the details, as Allah *Glorified is He* has made clear in the following: ‘Say: “...Obey Allah and obey the Messenger...”’ Thirdly: The issue on which there was no specific ruling from Allah, and so the matter was left for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to legislate in line with what Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And whatever the Messenger [Muhammad] gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7) This is pertaining to showing obedience to Allah’s Messenger, Prophet Muhammad.

Then with regards to the issue of obeying those who have been entrusted with authority, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Oh you who believe! Obey Allah and obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those of you (Muslims) who are in authority. (And) if you differ in anything amongst yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination’. (*an-Nisa*: 59)

As we see, Allah *Glorified is He* did not put the command of showing obedience to rulers and people in authority in a way that will make it look like it is being mixed with the command of showing obedience to Allah and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad. He did not make it look like a single act of obedience; rather, He mentioned the issue of “obeying those in authority” in the Quranic verse in which He made a distinction between obedience to Allah and obedience to His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Allah is making it clear that obedience to those in authority is part and parcel of showing obedience to the Messenger. Why? It is because there is no inherent required obedience to those in authority, unlike Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who commands a very special and inherent obedience. As for obedience to those in authority, it takes its significance and merit from obedience to Allah and His Messenger; there is no obedience to those in authority in a matter in which there is no obedience to Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say: “Obey Allah and His Messenger”. And if they turn back – verily, Allah does not love those who reject the Faith”’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 32) In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* instructs His Messenger to address those who claim that they love Allah, in the way that believers earn Allah’s love, so that they can reap benefits from such love and thus the benefits extends to mankind. Allah’s love is greater than anything mankind could offer. So, there is no doubt that the actual form of obeying Allah and His Messenger emanates directly from following the instructions of Prophet Muhammad and meeting our religious responsibilities.

This is the best way for people to express their love for Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* And then Allah says, “...if they turn back”, i.e. if they do not listen to you, Oh Muhammad and do not follow

you, they will then be regarded as disbelievers and may Allah save us from that. This is in line with how Allah *Glorified is He* described such people: '...And if they turn back – verily, Allah does not love those who reject the Faith'. (*Al-'Imran*: 32) There is no graver abomination than this.

The phrase “turn back” gives an indication of renouncing Allah’s Command and rejecting it after being exposed to it. So, due to laziness, they fail to respect Allah’s Decree and honour their religious obligations. Rather, they disdain Allah’s Divine Decree. For this reason, I have said and I still say that those who disobey Allah’s Command should beware of making a distinction between accepting what is considered a binding rule and bringing oneself to follow the rule and carry it out; they are one in the same.

Beware, Oh Muslim, of denying a rule that you are unable to bring yourself to follow. If you deny it, you take yourself out of the sphere of Islam into the sphere of disbelief and we seek Allah’s refuge from that. You must abide by and believe in Allah’s ruling and in case you fall short, you should say: “I believe it is Allah’s rule and there is no doubt, but to err is human and I cannot control myself.” This failing to obey Allah's Command will make you just a sinner and not a disbeliever.

We have seen Allah *Glorified is He* explain to us the roots of faith with His Words, ‘Allah bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped but He and the angels and those having knowledge (also give this witness); (He is always) maintaining His creation with justice. None has the right to be worshipped but He, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise’. (*Al-'Imran*: 18) We then see also how Allah gave the believers the glad tidings that He would grant them dominion of faith (i.e. He would grant them authority in this world, based on their true faith), and that He has the Supreme power to do that and among the signs of His Absolute Power is that He enters night into day and day into night and brings life from the dead and death from the living. Not only that, but we have also seen how He describes His love and makes it clear that if a believer claims that he loves Allah for the blessings of His Creation and Sustenance and he wishes to earn Allah’s love in return, he must obey Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by living up to the responsibilities prescribed by Allah. And then, we have

seen how Allah *Glorified is He*, explains to us the religious principles, be they creedal or legislative ones.

After all this, He gives us practical examples from people's behaviour. This is because there is a difference between theoretical doctrines and putting them into practice; when it comes to applying the doctrines, some people fail to rise to expectations. Allah *Glorified is He* does not make people responsible frivolously or meaninglessly; He says to us, "I have charged you with religious responsibilities and there are people just like you who are capable of living up to and honouring them". For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us examples that clearly show this.

Let us also recollect, Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to illiterate people and Islam was new to them. For this reason, Allah gave them some antique examples that would suit their mentality. This highlights the fact that Islam is not a religion of tribalism because it is the same religion that came down from Allah to Adam *peace be upon him* and the same religion that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* brought from Allah. It is the same religion that was revealed to the Family of 'Imran and Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as well as Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

So, it is clear that Allah *Glorified is He* gives attributes of nobility to those who follow religions that are based on the guidance that He revealed. And Islam, upon its advent, abrogated some of what these previous Messages brought and placed them all in a single religion that would continue until the Day of Resurrection. This is the religion of Islam, which is the final compilation of magnificence.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

God chose Adam, Noah, Abraham's family, and the family of 'Imran, over all other people [33] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 33)

This is an indication of justice which is one of the characteristics of the Noble Quran; it also gives a sense of justice in the way Allah *Glorified is He*

revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knowledge about some of his good ancestors. The Message was carried over by these noble descendants, and it would be a shame for descendants to veer away from the line of good ancestors!

‘Verily, Allah has chosen Adam...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 33) The word “chosen” gives a sense of a satisfactory selection. We may ask: “Did Allah *Glorified is He* choose those Messengers, Adam, Nuh (Noah), the Family of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the Family of ‘Imran, *peace be upon them* all, while they were already obedient servants of Allah? Or was the choice a resultant effect of Allah’s Supreme Knowledge of their inherent righteousness, i.e. that they would be automatically obedient?

Of course, Allah’s Knowledge is Eternal and it is not dependent on things; rather, it preceded them. Sometimes, in our human capacity, for example, we entrust somebody with a position, based on our predictions and when that person succeeds, it elates us and we get excited about getting it right. But is this not by means of Allah’s Knowledge and Power?

So, it is clear that it is by the Eternal Knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* that Messengers were chosen for the mission because He knew, from pre-eternity, that they would be obedient. Someone might say, “They are obedient to Allah because He made them special.” To such a person we reply: On the general level of being human beings, they were inherently “obedient servants” and then the moment they were charged with this responsibility and were specially chosen for it, their level of piety and obedience increased. This means that had Allah *Glorified is He* left it up to their intellects, they would still have been guided to obedience. And when they were charged with this responsibility, they were specially chosen by Allah to become Messengers, conveying His Heavenly Guidance.

When a person hears Allah *Glorified is He* saying: ‘Verily, Allah has chosen Adam...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 33), he might wonder about its meaning. This is because by saying “Allah has chosen Adam” *peace be upon him* it would mean that Allah chose him and singled him out from others. How could that be? How could Adam be chosen when there was no other human being before

him or with him at that time? Since he was the first human, how could he be chosen and from whom? Yes, this sounds like a valid question.

We know that Allah's choosing of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* is quite easily understandable because he was chosen from amongst other humans who were in existence at that period of time. The same is true with the case of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who is known as the Friend of Allah the Most Merciful and this is also the case with the rest of the Prophets.

So, what about the case of Adam *peace be upon him*? How was he chosen? The meaning of "Allah has chosen Adam", as we said, is that Allah *Glorified is He* selected him and it might mean that "the chosen one" would come from him and from his progeny. And, as we know, the chosen one has truly come from his progeny, so this explanation fits. Allah says: 'Verily, Allah has chosen Adam and Nuh (Noah)...' (*Al-Imran: 33*) We know that Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was sent by Allah, but a group of people disbelieved in him and Allah *Glorified is He* drowned them with the Flood as a punishment and saved Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and those with him by His Will and Decree.

Thus Allah says: 'At length, behold! There came Our command and the fountains of the earth gushed forth! We said: "Embark therein, of each kind two, male and female and your family - except those against whom the word has already gone forth, - and the believers". But only a few believed with him'. (*Hud: 40*)

Those who remained after Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* were believers, but then, they turned to worshipping other false gods, and rejecting the True Faith, and unfortunately this act of worshipping false deities spread after them, thus leading to the situation where we had disbelief and faith side-by-side in society. Why? It is because when Allah *Glorified is He* created Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* He gave him a test of responsibility, while making him dwell in paradise and it was essential that what Allah taught him should be transferred to his descendants.

Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* passed on to them the details of their material lives and taught them how to eat and drink and so on. It was essential

that they had moral values. Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* delivered his Message along that line. He taught his offspring how to take care of the material aspects of their lives and he taught them moral values as well. However, with the passage of time, some of Adam's progeny began to deflect from their religious responsibilities and bit-by-bit, with this kind of heedlessness on their part, the religious doctrines got weaker, forgotten and then completely vanished.

But out of His pattern of mercy and graciousness towards His creatures, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* renews His Divine Message from time-to-time by sending new Messengers.

First of all, the new Message tries to keep and maintain those things that are true and basic from the old Message, such as doctrines and information, in addition to things that do not normally change. Then, the new Message sets forth rulings that are appropriate to the time in which it comes. It is an established fact that when Man succeeds in creating a system of law and order in the society, life will be better for everybody and no crime will go unpunished. This is an important yardstick for a Divine Message to remain intact and flourish and thus enabling its adherents and the society to remain in prosperity. Why? The reason for this is that there is a tendency towards restraint that is naturally inherent in human beings, something we can feel and notice.

For instance, when a person upon dropping his standards and becoming unable to control himself commits a sin, with just a quick strike from his reproaching soul, we see him turning remorseful and thus seeking repentance. Another person with no such reproaching soul may not be able to have this quick comeback. So, it is something existing in some people and lacking in some other people. But in general, it is better for the society to be blessed with people who command good and forbid evil. If the people in the society are void of faith-based personal restraints and there are no people who are religiously equipped to restrain people from evil, things will certainly become gloomy in such a society and failures and dispiritedness will become the norm. In that case, it becomes imperative for a new Divine Message to come down through a Messenger who will be sent by Allah and aided with a miracle.

It is clear that Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that no other Messenger would come after our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* And this

stands as a testimony for the special status of the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it is also a clear evidence that Allah has secured His religion (Islam) through Prophet Muhammad's followers; and it is quite evident that in this ummah (global community of Muslims), people are imbued with communal religious restraints, which are never lost, even if individual's personal restraint gets weaker or lost. And this must be the case since he is the last Messenger of Allah; otherwise, it would have been necessary for Allah to send a new Prophet.

So, in this, we see why Allah *Glorified is He* did not bother to send any other Prophet after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because He *the Almighty* has secured His guidance and imbued the ummah of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with what it takes for them to preserve His Message.

Also, with regards to what we said about Allah's equipping the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with a powerful religious spirit of restraint both on an individual and communal level which help them to preserve Allah's Message, Allah *Glorified is He* referred to this in the following verse: 'You are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah. If only the People of the Book had faith, it would be best for them. Among them are some who have faith, but most of them are perverted transgressors'. (*Al- 'Imran: 110*)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses us so we know that the spirit of communal religious restraints will always remain active in the soul of the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. And after the waves of disbelief and heedlessness that followed the demise of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*, Allah, out of His Mercy for mankind, selected and chose others as Messengers who were sent to guide people to the Right Path. On this, Allah says: 'Verily, Allah has chosen Adam and Nuh (Noah), the Family of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the Family of 'Imran over all the worlds'. (*Al- 'Imran: 33*) We call Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the 'Father of the Prophets' and in the above verse, Allah mentioned some of the progeny of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) i.e. The Family of 'Imran and He gave them higher distinction.

When the name “Imran” is mentioned in any Islamic context, we should be aware that there are two people with this name: “Imran” was the name of the father of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Prophet Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*, but there is another “Imran”. With regards to the first, “Imran”, the father of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Prophet Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* was born to someone called Yashur whose grandfather’s name was Fahath. Next in the line was Lawa; before this, was Prophet Ya’qub (Jacob), and before this, Prophet Ishaq (Isaac), and all the way back to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. The other “Imran” is the father of Maryam (Mary), the mother of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon her and him*.

Some scholars and researchers might be confused and wondering about “Which ‘Imran did Allah refer to here?” This confusion might likely come from the fact that the name of the sister of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Prophet Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*, was also named Maryam (Mary), *Allah be pleased with her* and of course, she was also “the daughter of ‘Imran” which some might allude to the above verse.

So, both of these women were named Maryam (Mary), “the daughter of ‘Imran”. The name Maryam (Mary) was very common in those times because it means ‘devout’. For those scholars who fall into this confusion, it is because they forgot that the Quran is clear and precise in its meanings. They should have understood that the intention here is not ‘Imran, the father of Moses and Aaron, *peace be upon them*; rather, the Quran is referring here to ‘Imran, the father of Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* the mother of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. This ‘Imran, (the father of Maryam (Mary)), was the son of Mathan, in the family line of Prophet Sulaiman (Soloman), son of Prophet Dawud (David), son of Awsha, son of Judah, son of Prophet Ya’qub (Jacob), son of Prophet Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*.

Years ago, during our days at schools, we used to memorize the following phrase, using the first letters of the names, saying (‘am’am sad’iyya’), which means (Prophet) ‘Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with them* Maryam (Mary) daughter of ‘Imran, son of Mathan, son of (Prophet) Sulaiman (Solomon), son of (Prophet) Dawud (David), son of Awsha, son of Judah, son of (Prophet) Ya’qub (Jacob) son of (Prophet) Ishaq (Isaac) *peace and blessings*

be upon him but as you can see, this matter has confused some people and they have been unsure as to which ‘Imran, of the two, Allah *Glorified is He* is referring in this noble Quranic verse. The fact that Allah mentioned the name of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* immediately after this, shows that it is ‘Imran, the father of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* being referred to. We must also be aware that Allah *Glorified is He* said concerning Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*: ‘Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner and caused her to grow like a lovely plant and told Zechariah to take care of her. Every time Zechariah entered the shrine to [see] her, he found she had already been supplied with food. He said: “Maryam (Mary), where did this provision come from?” She replied, “This is from Allah. Allah provides for whomever He wills without measure”. (*Al-‘Imran: 37*)

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was the son of Adhan, who was a contemporary to Mathan. So, in this context, it is ‘Imran, father of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* who is the one meant here. Thus, it is clear now that we have clarified which “Imran” Allah *Glorified is He* meant when He said: ‘Verily, Allah has chosen ‘Adam and Nuh (Noah) and the Family of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the Family of ‘Imran over all the worlds’. (*Al-‘Imran: 33*)

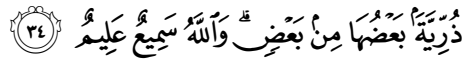
With regards to the word “chosen”, when you say that you have chosen somebody and preferred him over somebody else, this means that you have picked that person out of a group and rated him above the others. For this reason, we can clearly understand the meaning of the phrase “over all the worlds” in the above Quranic verse as giving an indication that the people mentioned in the verse were chosen from the people of their time, and Allah *Glorified is He* chose one person from amongst them. But this aspect of “being chosen and given preference” is not applicable to the generations that came after these people, which means that this is not applicable to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, i.e. none of these were given preference above him.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘They are the offspring of one another. And Allah is All-Hearing, All Knowing’. When Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘They are the offspring of one another,...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 34*), there is a question here: Is this referring to descent of lineage, or of religion and moral values? We must take note that Allah has taught us through the example He gave about

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that the bloodlines are not of any significance when it comes of the Prophets of Allah; what is of a paramount importance with regards to the Prophets is the posterity of moral values and religion.

We have already considered this in the following statement of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘And when his Lord put Ibrahim (Abraham) to a test with certain Words and he fulfilled them, He says, “I am going to make you an Imam (leader) for mankind”. He [Ibrahim] asked, “And from among my progeny?...” (*al-Baqara*: 124)

So, Allah *Glorified is He* answered him, saying: ‘...He (Allah) replied, “My promise does not extend to the unjust”’. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* was addressing all humanity through Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* saying: ‘...’My promise does not extend to the unjust”’. (*al-Baqara*: 124) Why? It is because a leader should be followed in matters of guidance. So, this issue of Prophetic leadership is not something based on a bloodline; it transcends that level. That is how Allah *Glorified is He* made this clear to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: the posterity of the Prophets is not based on heritage or ancestry. This is what Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to understand in His Words,



**In one line of descent – God hears and knows all [34]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 34)**

This is in order to show us how such extraordinary nobility was passed down in moral values.

We hear, in the Quran: ‘The hypocrites, both men and women, are all alike. They enjoin what is evil, forbid what is right and they are stingy when it comes to spending for the cause of Allah. They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them. The hypocrites are the disobedient ones’. (*al-Tawba*: 67) The hypocrisy referred to here has no relationship with lineage; it is a matter of moral values. And so the Quranic phrase, ‘And Allah is All-Hearing, All Knowing’ (*Al-'Imran*: 34), means that Allah knows all words, deeds and secrets. Then, Allah says: ‘Remember when the wife of ‘Imran said, “My

Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service. So, accept this from me. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the All Knowing’.

When you read the word “when,” know that it is an adverb of time and in linguistics, it can mean “remember when....” Someone may say (in Arabic) “*idh je'etuka*” meaning “remember when I came to you.” When Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Remember when the wife of ‘Imran said...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 35), some of the people with proper enlightenment understand this as a perfect indication of how Allah *Glorified is He* is of Supreme Awareness and full comprehension of what was going on at the time when:

إِذْ قَالَتْ أَمْرَأْتُ عِمْرَانُ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي
مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٣٥﴾

**‘Imran’s wife said, ‘Lord, I have dedicated what is growing in my womb entirely to You; so accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all,’ [35]
(The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 35)**

So, they attempt to link this Quranic verse with the one preceding it, which said that Allah *Glorified is He* is “All-Hearing, the All Knowing.” Let us consider the statement of ‘Imran’s wife: ‘My Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service....’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 35). When we hear the Arabic word “*muhararan*” as mentioned in this verse, we understand that it means “not owned by anyone; it gives a sense of freedom. So, if we say, “I freed a servant,” this means that he is now a free person and no longer in bondage. Another meaning for that Arabic word is “to revise,” so when I used it for a book, it means “I corrected the errors in it.” Therefore, the general meaning of that word (*muhararan*) is to rectify the faults in something and purge that thing of all its blemishes, or keep it away from restraints. As for the statement made by ‘Imran’s wife here: ‘My Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 35), it is a prayer to Allah, an invocation. But what is the reason behind this supplication?

‘Imran’s wife lived in an environment in which people exulted in their children. As we know, parents influence their children’s manners and as they

act as watchdog for their kids, children also have an impact on their parents' behaviours. And it is also true that parents strive hard to make their children better successors and a source of delight. This makes the society prosperous, thanks to such material continuity of legacy. But this is not what 'Imran's wife wanted for her and for her child. She wanted the child in her womb to be free of all such material constraints. She wanted him to be completely dedicated and committed to something of higher value, something bigger than herself. This means that she wanted the child in her womb to be unconnected to anything, or with any physical love or patronage.

It is because no matter level of maturity a person reaches in life, he always gets affected by his circle of social connections and it is normal for such a thing to sway or distract him from his purpose. For this reason, 'Imran's wife wanted the child in her womb to be free from all this. It could be said that by this vow, 'Imran's wife was attempting to control the nature of a fellow human being, blending it to resemble her own nature. We answer this as follows:

In the past, parents used to dedicate their children to the service of the Temple and they took vows for that. This vow would last as long as the child was in their custody thus preserving him to do what they planned and desired for him and that would continue until the child reached adulthood. Then, the child had the right to choose between remaining as his parents wished, or choosing his own lifestyle.

Reaching adulthood is an acknowledgment of a person's maturity and readiness to make appropriate decisions in his life. As said above, 'Imran's wife did not want her child to be only a source of delight, or to have him just attached to her; no; she wanted the child to be completely devoted to the service of the Temple and from this it is understood by human comprehension that the child must have been a male because the ones who were chosen for such religious missions at that time were males.

Though we know that the word "child" can mean a boy or a girl, generally speaking, whenever the Arabic word "*walad*" is used, it refers to a boy. However, the linguistic meaning of that Arabic word is "child," whether male or female. Also, whenever we hear the word "vow," we understand that it means committing oneself to an act of worship above and beyond that which

one is charged with by Allah, but of the same type of act of worship which one is obliged to do.

For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* has made five daily prayers obligatory upon us. If a person vows to pray extra cycles of prayer beyond this, he has thus made it compulsory for himself to do something extra beyond that which Allah charged him with, but which is of the same type that Allah has obligated him with: prayer. Also, Allah *Glorified is He* has made fasting in the month of *Ramadan* obligatory. If a person vows to fast Mondays and Thursdays, or to fast for two solid months, this is up to him, but it is clear that he has chosen to abide by something extra, but something of the same type which Allah has obligated, which is fasting. Allah *Glorified is He* has also obligated *zakat* (alms giving) with the rate of 2.5% of a person's extra wealth, but a person might vow to give more than this, for example 10% or even 50%.

It is up to a person to make such vows. One is free to commit himself to doing more than what it is obligated by Allah on him, but of the same type of what he is originally charged with. Thus, such vows represent an intention to do more than what Allah *Glorified is He* ordained. One of the meanings of '...I have dedicated...' (*Al-Imran: 35*) is that the wife of 'Imran was a virtuous, upright woman and it is clear she was not compelled to make the vow, but she did so of her own volition in order to dedicate herself to the service of Allah's House (the Temple, at that time).

A vow, as we know, expresses a servant's longing and readiness to obey Allah's commandments by charging himself with extra acts of worship. Then 'Imran's wife prayed for Allah's acceptance of this vow, saying: '...So, accept this from me....' (*Al-Imran: 35*) "Acceptance" means taking something gladly. Something might be taken unwillingly, or reluctantly, but when the word "accept" is used, it means taking something with pleasure.

In responding to this supplication and a sign for answering that prayer, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner'. (*Al-Imran: 37*)

We notice here that 'Imran's wife said at first: '...My Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service, so accept this from me. Surely

You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing' (*Al-'Imran: 35*) and she did not say "Oh Allah, I have dedicated...." This is so that we come to know that her Lord is the One Who takes care of human beings and all creatures. Sometimes, one says "My Lord" and this gives a sense of invoking the One Who takes care of and sustains everything. And when one says "Oh Allah," this gives a sense of invoking a higher authority and a source of command. So, with 'Oh Allah', it is a call to the One Who is Only to be worshipped and obeyed in that which He commands. But using the word "Oh Lord," means calling on the One Who assumes care and sustenance. Imran's wife said: '...My Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service, so accept this from me. Surely You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing'. (*Al-'Imran: 35*) That's her prayer and look at how Allah answered her: 'And Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner....' (*Al-'Imran: 37*)

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about those things related to upbringing: '...and caused her to grow like a lovely plant and told Zechariah to take care of her....' All this is connected to upbringing and sustenance. We have seen how the wife of 'Imran invoked Allah and how she mastered that and vowed to dedicate the child in her womb to the service of Allah. Then, the answer came from Allah for her prayer in a way that gives an indication of Allah's acceptance and pleasure: 'And Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner....' (*Al-'Imran: 37*)

The word "handsome" here gives a sense of something extra; it exceeds the normal level of satisfaction because the word "acceptance" in the verse gives us the meaning of taking something with approval. So, the word "handsome" clarifies for us that there was an increased status of approval which indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* took what 'Imran's wife offered with approval, as something good and beyond expectation. And this also indicates that people would see her upbringing as something extraordinary, with higher distinction. Thus, it is not an ordinary acceptance; rather, it is extremely nice.

The verse '...and caused her to grow like a lovely plant...' (*Al-'Imran: 37*) indicates that the wife of 'Imran, when she vowed to dedicate the child in her womb to serve the Temple, did not have the intention to keep the child with her and then release it at the age at which it could serve Allah's House.

No, on the contrary, her vow was to release the child from the moment of its birth. She did not intend to have the normal enjoyment with her child and this is the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and told Zechariah to take care of her....’ (*Al-‘Imran: 37*) Zakaryya was the husband of Maryam’s (Mary) maternal aunt.

After the prayer of ‘Imran’s wife, Allah *Glorified is He* said:

فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَئِنَّ الذَّكَرَ
كَأَلَّا نُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذُرِّيَّتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ﴿٣٦﴾

But when she gave birth, she said, ‘My Lord! I have given birth to a girl’ – God knew best what she had given birth to: the male is not like the female – ‘I name her Mary and I commend her and her offspring to Your protection from the rejected Satan’ [36] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran: 36*)

This statement came from her because she had said that she had vowed the child in her womb to be devoted to the service of the Temple. Her word “dedicated” gives an indication that she wanted a male child to serve the House of Allah, but the child was born female. It is as though she was saying: “It looks like I will be not be able to fulfil the vow and this is something beyond my power; it is predestined that the child would be female”. However, Allah *Glorified is He* says after this: ‘...And Allah knew very well what she had given birth to....’ (*Al-‘Imran: 36*) So, this means that she did not intend to inform Allah about the child’s sex; she was just expressing her grief because she thought the goal of her vow would not be realised.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘...a male is not like a female....’ (*Al-‘Imran: 36*) The question here is: Is this her statement, or Allah’s?

‘Imran’s wife said: ‘...I have given birth to a girl’ (*Al-‘Imran: 36*) and Allah says: ‘...a male is not like a female....’ (*Al-‘Imran: 36*) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was saying to her, “Do not think that the male child you dreamt of having could ever reach the rank of this female child you are blessed with. Behold, this girl has a mighty and elevated status!” Or, we could say the statement could have been a completion of her statement “...I have given birth

to a girl...” (*Al-'Imran*: 36) and the words of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘...And Allah knew very well what she had given birth to...’ was between brackets and the rest of her statement was ‘...a male is not like a female..’, as if she was saying “Oh my Lord, a male child is not like female one: she cannot, for instance, serve the Temple”.

Let a believer take the meaning that he likes; we find that the first meaning is more illuminating. It suggests that Allah *Glorified is He* said addressing ‘Imran’s wife: “You want a male child so that your vow can be fulfilled according to your understanding and so that he can serve the Temple; and I have given you a female child, but I will give her a sign much greater than dedicating service to the Temple. The sign that I will give this female will make her a great support for the creed, not just a service of a plot of land where rituals take place. I will make this sign a means for the creed to remain established in the world until the Day of Judgment. And because I am the Creator, I will also bless this female child with a sign that does not exist anywhere else and it would be a sign that confirms the omnipotence of Allah.”

As I have said before, an Absolute Power is different from an ordinary one: power gets created using means, but from where do the means come? The means come from Allah, the Source of Power. So, as Allah, the Creator of means, desires to use these means to create, this is up to His Supreme Will and no one can question that. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* gave us the ability to witness the absoluteness of His Power because it is a matter of faith which must remain central to doctrinal awareness and solid in the mind of a believer, and be always intact.

Allah *Glorified is He* created some creatures with means, as He created us and all other creatures through means of reproduction: from fathers and mothers. As for Allah’s creation of Adam *peace be upon him* it was accomplished without any means. We know that everything divided into two has a logical and rational permutation; since there is a system of creation where we have mothers and fathers, males and females, there will definitely be reproduction...

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And in everything, We created pairs so that you might bear in mind [that Allah alone is One]’. (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49) When a pair come together, this makes a complete image and this is the imaginable

level of the first logical permutation. The second logical permutation imaginable here is in the scenario of having both pairs absent. Another case is to have one of the pair absent (female, for instance), while the other (male) remains and this is the third logical permutation imaginable. The fourth logical permutation imaginable is to have the other one of the pair (male) absent and the first one remaining (female). So, therefore, we have here four logical permutations imaginable.

All of us human beings come from the mating of two elements of creation: a man and a woman. As for Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* created him by His Omnipotent Power, that he would be the means for the creation of others. In this way, Hawwa' (Eve) *peace be upon her* was created from Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*. And then Allah brought out from the mating of Prophet Adam and Hawwa' (Eve) *peace be upon them* his progeny. There was a female, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* from whom the Messiah, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) came without means of a male. And this is definitely a sign for mankind and it confirmed a pinnacle of faith.

No one should say "I want a male child!" or "I want a female child!" We should all learn from the wife of 'Imran whose intention was to serve Allah by having a male child, but look at how the Mighty Lord willed something higher than the worship that 'Imran's wife understood. Thus Allah says: '...a male is not like a female...' (*Al- 'Imran: 36*) i.e. no male could ever reach the rank of this female (Maryam) *peace be upon her*.

Then, 'Imran's wife said: '...and I have named her Maryam (Mary) and placed her and her children in Your protection from the rejected Satan'. (*Al- 'Imran: 36*) The wife of 'Imran spoke in a way that indicated her perception, for when the child was born a female and because of her being a female, she was therefore unable to serve in the House of Allah. 'Imran's wife then reaffirmed her wish that the child would be obedient and pious, so she named her Maryam (Mary) because, as we said, in their language this name meant "devout".

Then, as we know, Satan always comes to dissuade Man from worship and he uses all his schemes to influence mankind to rebel against worship. One of the schemes Satan uses is laying down traps for people to fall in, thus leading people astray from worship. The wife of 'Imran wanted her daughter to be protected against the insinuations of Satan. So, she named her Maryam

(Mary) in hopes that she would be a devout servant of Allah. Also, given the fact that 'Imran's wife possessed a sound religious intelligence and was imbued with a high level of creedal guidance, she said: '...and I place her and her children in Your protection from the rejected Satan'. (*Al-'Imran*: 36)

As we can see, it is the divine protection from Allah *Glorified is He* that she sought and Satan is the one against whom the protection was sought. When Satan approaches Man to trap him into committing sin, he enters into conflict with him; but Satan is unable to engage in a conflict with his Lord and for this reason, it is said about Satan that when he hears the remembrance of Allah, he flees. The Noble Quran describes Satan as "the one who withdraws." Satan is only able to be in a person's company when that person is far from Allah and for this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches mankind, saying: 'If Satan should prompt you to do something, seek refuge with Allah- He is All-seeing, All knowing'. (*al-A'raf*: 200)

Satan trembles fearfully whenever Allah's protection is sought. And when Satan's trembling is repeated because of these words, he knows that this person will not be led astray from Allah's obedience and cannot be pulled down into committing sin. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for instance, taught us on the significance of seeking Allah's refuge from Satan saying that when Man wants to have intercourse with his wife which is a very important moment that can lead to pregnancy, he should say: "Oh Allah! Shield me from Satan and keep Satan away from what you grant me." (Excerpt from the prayers of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) Whoever says this statement before sexual intercourse, Satan will have no authority or power over the child that will come, by Allah's decree. For this reason, the wife of 'Imran said, '...and I place her and her children in Your protection from the rejected Satan'. (*Al-'Imran*: 36)

People might understand that the Arabic word "*dhurriyya*" (which means "children") implies a large number of offspring, but the word itself could mean one, two, three or more children and not necessarily in higher multitudes. And the word "children" in respect to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*, means Prophet Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and no other person.

After the prayer of 'Imran's wife, '...and I place her and her children in Your protection from the rejected Satan' (*Al-Imran: 36*), Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner and caused her to grow like a lovely plant and told Zechariah to take care of her. Every time Zechariah entered the shrine to [see] her, he found she had already been supplied with food. He said: "Maryam (Mary), where did this provision come from? She replied,

فَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ
عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَلْمِزِي أَمْنِي لَكَ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ
مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

Her Lord graciously accepted her and made her grow in goodness, and entrusted her to the charge of Zechariah. Whenever Zechariah went in to see her in her sanctuary, he found her supplied with provisions. He said, 'Mary, how is it you have these provisions?' and she said, 'They are from God: God provides limitlessly for whoever He will' [37] (The Quran, *Al-Imran: 37*)

We know already the meaning of 'in a handsome manner' and also the phrase 'to grow like a lovely plant'. As for the words of Allah *Glorified is He* '...and told Zechariah to take care of her' (*Al-Imran: 37*), this means that this command came from Allah *the Most High*. It was Allah who accepted Maryam in a handsome manner and it is He who caused her to grow like a lovely plant. So, it is clear that having Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* take care of the child was only by Allah's decree. The evidence of this is what happened, while Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was placed into the custody of somebody.

The leaders of the people gathered, all wanting to take her into their care and they drew lots to decide the matter. In such situations, when you find people drawing lots, or casting divining arrows, this means that they have left their own desires to follow Allah's will. Sometimes, when we differ on something we draw straws: everyone takes a straw and after this, we see which person's straw was shortest, and everyone accepts the result in order to prevent human

caprice from influencing the decision. The matter is taken out of the hands of the people and put in the Will of Allah. This is what happened when Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was placed in the care of Prophet Zakaryya's care *peace be upon him*. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast their lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her]'. (*Al-'Imran*: 44)

So, this means that the custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* provoked a kind of competition and this is proven by the fact that they resorted to drawing lots to decide who would take care of her. It is not possible that they would resort to drawing lots unless there had been some sort of dispute and competition on who would take custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*. And it was by the grace of Allah *Glorified is He* that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was married to Maryam's (Mary) aunt, Ishai', sister of Hannah, who was Maryam's (Mary) mother.

The Quranic exegetes say that the words "their lots" here refer to either the divining arrows that they used to make in the past, or they refer to the pens that they would write the Torah with and then throw into the sea; the owners of the pens which floated would not take the custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and the owner of the pen which sank would gain custody of her. That is how the matter was taken out of their own will and put completely in the Will of Allah.

Leaving behind desires and caprices and resorting to an object with no will of its own, as drawing lots, does not engender any bitterness in the soul. However, if someone had taken custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* by means of strength and force, this would inevitably have caused the souls of the others to be filled with rancour or anger. That is why the drawing of lots was prevalent in those times: they would resort to it if it was feared that someone would be wronged, or someone would be thought badly of. In the story of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* when the ship was close to sinking, in order to save it, someone had to jump into the sea. Allah *Glorified is He* describes this in the following verse: 'Jonah, too, was one of the Messengers.

He fled to the overloaded ship. They cast lots, he suffered defeat, and a great fish swallowed him, for he had committed blameworthy acts. If he had not been one of those who Glorified Allah, he would have stayed in its belly until the Day when all are raised up'. (*as-Saffat*: 139-144)

Someone had to jump the ship and so lots were drawn so that a dispute or fight would not ensue among the people on-board the ship and the matter would not reach the level of "survival for the fittest." Drawing lots is normally an effective tool to ward off such an unpleasant situation. So, the people on-board the ship said, "Let us draw lots and whoever's lot is drawn will be thrown over." Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* had to jump into the sea and the whale swallowed him. However, because he was one of those who glorify Allah, He saved him. Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* accepted Allah's decision and even in this terrible situation, he did not forget to glorify Allah and so he was saved. This is how we read Allah's words, to understand that Prophet Zakaryya's winning of the custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was the decision of Allah *Glorified is He*:

'Her Lord accepted her in a handsome manner and caused her to grow like a lovely plant and told Zechariah to take care of her'. (*Al-Imran*: 37) The words "to take care of her" mean He was assigned all the affairs of her upbringing. We know that in our culture that the Arabic word "*kafil*" means "guarantor," or the one who assumes payment of a debt if a person is unable to pay. Allah's words '...and told Zechariah to take care of her...' (*Al-Imran*: 37) give us the clear meaning that Prophet Zechariah *peace be upon him* was the one who undertook responsibility for all of the affairs of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: '...Every time Zechariah entered the shrine to [see] her, he found she had already been supplied with food'. (*Al-Imran*: 37) Prophet Zakaryya did not visit Maryam just this one single time; rather, he visited her in the sanctuary many times. Every time Prophet Zechariah *peace be upon him* visited Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* he found she had provisions with her. For this reason, he must have wondered from whence this provision came. His question was surely an expression of amazement and so Allah *Glorified is He* says that Prophet Zechariah *peace be upon him* asked her, '...where did this provision come from?'

When we hear ‘...where did this provision come from’ (*Al-'Imran: 37*), this indicates that he had secured the place where Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* stayed; otherwise, it might be supposed that someone had visited Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and supplied her with provision. But Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* had locked the doors on Maryam for security reasons. So, if the doors had not been locked, it would be assumed that someone had visited Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and supplied her with the provisions.

“Provision” is whatever one is benefited from. When Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said: ‘...where did this provision come from?’ (*Al-'Imran: 37*) let us remember what we said before that. If a Man who is entrusted by Allah *Glorified is He* with responsibility and authority such as a ruler discovers that some of his subjects live in excess, possessing extra wealth beyond their means or their income, he must surely pose this same question: “Where did this provision come from?” This is because corruption gets spread in homes and communities due to a lack of such concern for “checks and balances” and the need for calling people to account, using this similar phrase, “Where did this provision come from?”

The same applies to domestic affairs. If a person, upon entering his house, finds his daughter wearing an expensive dress beyond the means of the family, or finds that his son has bought something that the family would be unable to afford, he, whether he a father or a guardian, will find time to ask, “Where did this provision come from?” This is a means of protecting the family’s moral standards from collapse or dissolution. Thus, if every family man was shrewd enough to ask his family and everyone within his care, where this provision came from, he would then be able to monitor the acts of the people under his care, knowing the details of their actions and deeds. He knows that if the reins are slackened, everything will be ruined.

So, the question posed by Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*: ‘...where did this provision come from?’ (*Al-'Imran: 37*) is a direct question about the source of this provision. Let us consider the response of Maryam (Mary): ‘...She would answer: “This is from Allah...”’ (*Al-'Imran: 37*) She did not leave the intuition of faith up to Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*

without mentioning it herself. She did not forget a plain truth present in the central understanding of every believer: '...Allah provides for whomever He wills without measure'. (*Al- 'Imran: 37*) This issue touched Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* deeply and as we can see, it was an extraordinary matter. Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* told him that the provisions she had with her were from Allah Who grants sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning; He is the Almighty Allah, capable of saying: 'Be' and it is!

Then Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* reminded himself of Allah. It was as though his soul was saying to him, "If Allah is able to act without means and give without reckoning, I desire a son to succeed me, eventhough I am old and advanced in years, and my wife is barren". The matter of the provision Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* found every time he visited Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* caused him to hope and wish.

It is clear that the thoughts that go through a person's mind are many, but those thoughts do not become forefront in Man's consciousness. There is a difference between notions that exist at the forefront of Man's consciousness and thoughts that occupy the margins, which are only called for when it is necessary. When Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* found the various provisions that Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* had and when she said to him concerning their source, '...It is from Allah; Allah provides for whoever He wills without measure', Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said: 'How could this matter have escaped me?' And so, Allah *Glorified is He* said of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*: 'There and then Zakaryya (Zechariah) prayed to his Lord, saying, "Lord, from Your Grace, grant me virtuous offspring: You hear every prayer".'

When she (Maryam) told Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* that the provisions came from Allah and that He grants them to whom He wills beyond all reckoning, this statement stirred up a very important faith issue in him and so hope arose in the consciousness of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*. He said to himself, "Let us ask our Lord to provide us with what we wish for ourselves". Since he uttered this statement, this shows that he believed deeply, with conviction, that the provisions supplied to Maryam (Mary) came from Allah. Another evidence for his trust is that he

must have noticed that the kinds of provisions that Maryam (Mary) had were not from the surrounding environment or from its season and yet it was all present in the Sanctuary.

We know that the word “sanctuary” means a place of worship. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘They made for him whatever he wished of sanctuaries and statues and basins as [large as] great watering-troughs and cauldrons firmly anchored. [And We said]: "Labour, Oh David's people, in gratitude [towards Me] – and [remember that] few are the truly grateful [even] among My servants!"’ (*Saba'*: 13) The Arabic word for “sanctuary” (*mihraab*) is also used for a place in the mosque where the Imam stands during prayers. It is also used as a chamber which is reached by a staircase such as the places built in some mosques to show the movements of the prayer.

So, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* informed Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* about the source of the provision she was blessed with, while she was in the sanctuary and that Allah was her Sole Provider. We have seen how the incident had a very powerful touch of faith on Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and what was his reaction? Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* invoked Allah, whilst he was in the sanctuary, saying:

هٰذَا لَكَ دَعَا زَكَرِيَّا رَبَّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ هَبْ لِي مِنْ
لَدُنْكَ ذُرِّيَّةً طَيِّبَةً إِنَّكَ سَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

There and then Zechariah prayed to his Lord, saying, ‘Lord, from Your grace grant me virtuous offspring: You hear every prayer’ [38] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 38)

He was asking for a child. We should, however, note the following: Did his request for a child follow the same pattern of ordinary people in the sense that they pray for a child just for the sake of enjoyment, or preserving their ‘ancestry’, or merely from being obsessed with a male child? No; Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* invoked Allah for pious offspring and using the phrase of “pious offspring” indicates his full awareness of the fact that a person might be afflicted with bad offspring.

Then in the statement of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* quoted by Allah *Glorified is He* ‘...to be my heir and the heir of the family of Jacob...’ (*Maryam*: 6), we can see that he was praying for someone to inherit his Prophethood and the heritage of guidance and morality. This was how Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* supplicated to Allah for a child: he requested it for a mighty mission. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...Oh my Lord! Bestow...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 38), which means that he was requesting something without any recompense and was acknowledging that saying, “I do not possess the qualifications necessary for a person to have a child, for I am old and my wife is barren. So, my Lord, your granting me a child is a blessing from you, not a right”. Even in the situation that all such qualifications are present, having a child is still not a right and so everybody must know that Allah’s granting him a child is a blessing. So, beware of thinking that the presence of means, like youthfulness, vigor, health, etc., is what brings children. Allah *Glorified is He* is alerting us in the following verse that we should not fall into fooling ourselves and getting deceived by the presence of means:

Allah says, ‘Allah has control of the heavens and the earth; He creates whatever He wills- He grants female offspring to whomever He will, male to whomever He will, or both male and female and He makes whoever He wills barren: He is All-knowing and All-Powerful’. (*ash-Shura*: 49-50) This is a clear Message and warning that we should not become infatuated with the means. So, everything Allah grants is a blessing from Him and having the means does not automatically grant a person what he/she desires.

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...Oh my Lord! Bestow upon me, too, out of Your grace....’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 38) When you say “out of Your grace”, this means “grant me my requests out of Your means, by Your Grace”. Why? That is because everything is from Allah.

However, there is a difference between Allah’s blessing us with means such as a person going to seek knowledge and spending, for instance, for 20 years before attaining his goal, whereas you can see another person being blessed with knowledge from Allah without having to go through all this ordeal, i.e, his knowledge is a blessing from Allah. This is what the Illuminati

people call “The knowledge of blessing,” i.e. knowledge granted as a blessing from Allah without being worked for. So, the phrase ‘...out of Your grace...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 38), indicates that no means were employed here and this is what Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* means in his prayer, ‘...Oh my Lord! Bestow upon me, too, out of Your grace....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 38) Furthermore, the word “bestow” clarifies for us what is mentioned in the Quran (chapter of *Maryam*), when Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said: ‘Oh my Lord! How can I have a son when my wife has always been barren and I have become utterly infirm through old age?’ (*Maryam*: 8).

The word “bestow” clarifies these meanings for us. The prayer of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was ‘...Oh my Lord! Bestow upon me, too, out of Your grace, the gift of pious offspring; for You, indeed, are the Hearer of all prayers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 38) Does this mean that Allah hears prayer, or answers prayer? Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was placing all his hope in Allah, as though he was saying, “Oh Lord, as soon as You hear me, You will answer me by virtue of Your Omnipotent Power. Oh Lord, You know the sincerity of my intentions. You know that I want a boy, not to be a source of delight, or just a source of pride, or for honour, or anything else; I want a child so that he can inherit from me the bearing of Your guidance on earth”.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* said,

فَنَادَتْهُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ يُصَلِّي فِي الْمِحْرَابِ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكَ بِيَحْيَىٰ مُصَدِّقًا

بِكَلِمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَسَيِّدًا وَحَصُورًا وَنَبِيًّا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

The angels called out to him, while he stood praying in the sanctuary, ‘God gives you news of John, confirming a Word from God. He will be noble and chaste, a prophet, one of the righteous’ [39] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 39)

Did all the angels gather or call Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*? No, Angel Gabriel *peace be upon him* was the one who called him. Why did Allah say that the angels called him? This divine statement came in order that we could be aware of something: the human voice makes a sound

which comes from a definite direction, but as for the voice of angels, a person does not know from whence it comes and hears it as though it is coming from every direction. It is almost as though there are angels everywhere. In today's world, the modern surround-sound technology has developed, making sound that encompasses the listener from many directions.

So, the following statement from Allah *Glorified is He* '...the Angels called out unto him...' (*Al-Imran*: 39) means that the voice came to Prophet Zakaryyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* from all directions: 'Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out unto him: "Allah sends you glad tiding of [The birth of] John, who shall confirm the truth of a word from Allah and [shall be] outstanding among men and utterly chaste and a Prophet from among the righteous."' (*Al-Imran*: 39)

The angels called to him when he was in the most devout moment of spiritual connection with his Lord. When he prayed, he followed what Allah *Glorified is He* taught the Prophets: in times of severity, they resorted to prayer. Was his request not from Allah? If so, then it was definitely logical that he stood before Allah in supplication. All of us should try this whenever things become difficult for us, or when life becomes stressful with no means to turn things around. So, in such a situation, a person should get up, perform ablution (*wudu'*) and focus his intention even if he is already in a state of purification. Standing up before Allah, he can say, "Oh my Lord, there is a matter within Your means which is difficult for me", or something like this. I believe that if a person prays with such humility, by the time he finishes his prayer, deliverance will have come. Have we not received such a great guidance from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Whenever things got rough and he got sad, he would rush to Allah, standing in prayer.

And what we mean by "things got rough and he got sad" is that his means became sparse, so he (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) would invoke Allah, the Creator of means, supplicating to Him in prayer, seeking means from the Creator of all means. Rather than being preoccupied with yourself, go to Allah through the shortest path which is prayer. Why would you tire yourself out, Man, oh servant of Allah, when you already have

a wise Lord? It was said in the past that “whoever has a father has no worries and is it not more fitting for one who has a Lord to have peace of mind?”

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* called on Allah in his time of severity and hardship and to do that, he stood in prayer and so the angels called him, while he was praying. They did not wait for him to finish his prayer: ‘Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out unto him, “Allah sends you the glad tiding...”’.

‘Glad tidings’ means information about something good, the time for which has not yet come. If this is the case, let us consider: who was the one who gave these tidings? Was it one who was able to bring them about, or not? If Allah *Glorified is He* was the One Who gave the tidings, He was indeed able. So, in that case, there is no doubt that what was promised would be delivered: ‘...Allah sends you the glad tiding of [the birth of] John....’ Allah *Glorified is He* said to him, “I will give you”. In addition to this blessing, Allah named the boy “John”, he who would ‘...confirm the truth of a word from Allah....’ (*Al-Imran: 39*).

Let us consider the precision of Allah’s words: ‘...John, who shall confirm....’ (*Al-Imran: 39*) This is an indication that the promised child (Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*) would live in accordance with Allah’s guidance and that his acts of obedience would follow this path and would be a confirmation of it, and that he would bring Allah’s word, or that he would come to believe in the words of Allah *Glorified is He*. Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* was later the first to believe in the Message of Prophet Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. He is described by Allah *Glorified is He* as ‘...outstanding among men and utterly chaste and a Prophet from among the righteous’. (*Al-Imran: 39*)

The phrase “utterly chaste” means he is absolved from everything that is forbidden to him, or absolved from the supreme instinct, which is desire. And the phrase “a Prophet” indicates that he posed as an example of a follower of the Messenger sent in his time. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* called upon Allah and stood in prayer and received the glad tidings about Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*. Here, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in his humanity, was dumbfounded by the turn of events and Allah *Glorified is He* depicted him as saying:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَقَدْ بَلَغَنِيَ الْكِبَرُ وَامْرَأَتِي
عَاقِرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٤٠﴾

He said, ‘My Lord, how can I have a son when I am so old and my wife is barren?’ [An angel] said, ‘It will be so: God does whatever He will’ [40] (The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 40)

As you can see, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* – the one who made the request – was amazed by the response and so wondered: how could this be? Allah *Glorified is He* relates this in order to show us that the human soul is always in the realm of uncertainty, not in the realm of certainty. This is so that Allah *Glorified is He* could give those of His creatures who have not been guided onto the straight path an example that, if a person is afflicted by tribulation, they must turn to Allah. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me and my wife is barren?’ (*Al-’Imran*: 40).

Reaching old age does not make a person incapable of producing children because a person could be old and still be able to impregnate a woman. This is because for some men, impregnation is not a difficult matter, even if they become old, as long as they are not sterile; the woman, however, is the important element. If she is barren, this is the height of incapability. If Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* had merely said “my wife is barren” without mentioning his own case of being very old, it would not have been pleasant for his wife for this would mean he had attributed vigor to himself and incapability to her.

This is one of the instances of the high virtues and the good manners of Prophethood. For this reason, he (Zakaryya) *peace be upon him* began with, ‘...old age has already overtaken me and my wife is barren...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 40) Let us consider the precision of the phrase: ‘...old age has already overtaken me...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 40) He did not say “I have become very old”; rather, he said, “Old age is what has overtaken me; it is not something that I did to myself”. Reaching something means that there is an intention and a desire to go for it. When Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said ‘...my wife is barren...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 40), this was a magnification of Allah’s omnipotence to

anyone who listens to the story: it has mentioned all human misgivings and then the final word comes: ‘Thus it is: Allah does what He wills’. This is the Divine Omnipotence which is above all means, for it is that omnipotence which creates all means. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said: ‘Oh my Lord! Appoint a sign for me!’ The angel replied, ‘Your sign shall be that for three days you will not speak to men, other than by gestures. And remember your Lord unceasingly and declare His limitless glory, by night and by day’.

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* sought a sign from Allah that his dream - on which he had received a glad tiding - would become a reality. Zakaryya (Zechariah) exclaimed: ‘Oh my Lord! How can I have a son when my wife has always been barren and I have become utterly infirm through old age?’ (*Maryam*: 8-9) No doubt, this word serves as a strong sign of Allah’s Supreme Omnipotence, for if Allah *Glorified is He* merely says something, it is done, pure and simple, with no doubt. So, what did Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* want after that? He wanted a sign, an indication that Prophet Yahya (John) had been created in his mother’s womb. As the woman was old, she must have apparently even passed the menopausal state. So, the Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* must have known the sign because he knew his wife was barren.

However, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* did not want to miss a single moment of having Allah’s gift within his reach. Since his wife had conceived (by Allah’s Grace), the prayer of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was something like, “Oh Lord, do not leave me to recognise the pregnancy by the usual physical signs; for I want to live, from the first moment of Your favour upon me, in a state of being always thankful to You for your favour. The mere conception of a child is sufficient to make it incumbent upon me to turn my whole life into an expression of thanks because otherwise the favour might come, whilst I am not thankful”.

So, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* sought a sign from Allah so that he might make his life an expression of thanks; he did not seek a sign because he doubted the power of Allah. Rather, it was just that he did not want a single moment of the favour to pass by, from the beginning of its existence, without him meeting it with full thanks and gratitude. What gives us this impression is Allah’s words,

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً ۖ قَالَ ءَايَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ
إِلَّا رَمَزًا ۖ وَادْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعِشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَرِ ﴿٤١﴾

He said, 'My Lord, give me a sign.' 'Your sign,' [the angel] said, 'is that you will not communicate with anyone for three days, except by gestures. Remember your Lord often; celebrate His glory in the evening and at dawn.' [41]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 41)

The meaning of this must be that he wanted to speak, but was unable. There is a difference between someone's being able to speak but not speaking and someone being totally unable to speak. Since the sign is a gift from Allah, He, Allah, is the One Who said to him: "I will prevent you from speaking, so, when you find yourself unable to speak, know that it is the sign, but you will be able to speak to people with hand-gestures". And so that we would know that the sign is from Allah - and that Allah knows that His servant does not wish to allow a single moment of Allah's favour to pass him by without giving thanks to Him for it- and that Allah *Glorified is He* will allow him to speak later, He says, '...And remember your Lord unceasingly and declare His limitless glory by night and by day'. (*Al-'Imran*: 41) .

So, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wanted to live that moment in full thankfulness and gratitude from the first moment, appreciating Allah's favour and to fill his time with remembrance and did not want to be distracted by people through any form of worldly matters, such as talking. Allah knew that the intention and aim of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* when he requested the sign was to spend the whole moment in ceaseless remembrance of Allah, thanking Him for His Grace. So, the words of Allah *Glorified is He* '...And remember your Lord unceasingly...' (*Al-'Imran*: 41) indicate that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was able to remember Allah's faithfulness inwardly, but unable to speak about it to the people because Allah did not want him to be distracted by speaking to the people. It is as though Allah wanted to say to him, "As you desire to live in thanks for My favour, I will make you unable to speak with the people, but able to make remembrance of me".

“Remembrance” here means making mention of Allah and His Power, Might, Omnipotence and attributes of perfection. “Declaring Allah’s Glory” means to declare His Unique Perfection, for that which Allah does, cannot be done by any other. “Glory be to Allah!” means that Allah is uniquely perfect, for He can do that which the means (His creation) cannot and that which no one else can do. Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wished to give thanks to Allah who gives sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning. Such a remarkable observation was passed to Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* through the demeanour of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*.

As we know, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was her guardian and the fact that she spoke this statement is evidence that Allah had given her provisions which had come from other than Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in the form of her receiving things without any means. It was as though Allah wished for her to have a taste of such a tremendous divine experience, of being supplied with provisions without human intervention, as a prelude to what would happen to her later, for she would be exposed to a situation connected with a woman’s honour and dignity. So, it was necessary for her to know, before this, that Allah gives sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning and without the use of means. If she then happened to conceive without the means of a father, it would be then, no strange thing for her, for she would know that Allah grants sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning.

When Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* heard this from her, he said, “Since Allah grants sustenance without reckoning and brings things without the use of means and I have reached such old age and my wife is barren...why should I not ask my Lord to bless me with a son?” So, the words of Maryam (Mary): ‘...behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning’ (*Al-'Imran*: 37) caught the attention of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and aroused the faith present in the depths of his consciousness. We do not say that it created a new belief in Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* that Allah *Glorified is He* grants sustenance to whom He wills beyond all reckoning; rather, it brought this matter of faith from the margins of his consciousness to its forefront.

Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said to himself, “As long as the matter is so, I will ask Allah to bless me with a gift of son”. So, the words of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* ‘...Bestow upon me, too, out of Your grace, the gift of pious offspring...” (*Al- ‘Imran*: 38) indicate that he and his wife were unable to produce children and so he appealed for a gift from Allah. The word “gift” means something given, free of charge. When he ,Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* prayed to Allah for this, his prayer was answered with Allah saying to him, essentially, “I will bless you with a son without the means of your fertility, or your wife’s ability to conceive. The matter will occur without means and I – the Creator – will undertake its creation, by My word “Be!” and for a lofty, noble purpose, I will grant you something else, which is usually undertaken by you, fathers and mothers”. Allah bestowed them with another favour, which was the naming of the child after He had bestowed His mercy on them by blessing them with a child in their states.

Here, let us consider the gift of the name. ‘Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out unto him: “Allah sends you the glad tiding of [the birth of] John, who shall confirm the truth of a word from Allah and [shall be] outstanding among men and utterly chaste and a Prophet from among the righteous.”’ (*Al- ‘Imran*: 39) When people have children, they give them names and this is one of the well-established human customs and traditions. However, people, being concerned with the child’s welfare, try to be positive when naming their children, so they tend to choose names that have good and positive meanings that imbue them with high spirit and hope. For instance, they might choose a name like Sa’id (which means “happy” in Arabic), hoping that this might be an omen of happiness for them, or they might name the child Fadl (“goodness”), or Karim (“generous”).

So, parents choose names that they would like to see their children live up to. This is their hope, but as a saying goes: “If hopes and wishes were horses, beggars would ride for free.” A child might be named Sa’id, but turn out miserable, with his life full of sadness. Likewise, a child might be named Fadl (which means “goodness”) but he is very far away from being good. Also, a child with the name ‘Izz (“honour”) might turn out to be a full disgrace to the

family. But what happens when Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* names someone? There is no doubt that it will be completely different. So, when He says to Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* that the child's name would be Yahya (John) (which in Arabic means "he lives") this meant that he indeed would live, and would not die young.

In the old days, a poet would say, with high optimism, when he named his child Yahya (John):

I named him Yahya (John) so that he might live; But there is no way Man can go against his destiny.

Thus, as you see, the poet named his son Yahya (John), hoping that he would live, but Allah *Glorified is He* did not will this, so the boy died. Why? It is because men are mortal, regardless of the names given to them; humans are naturally weak. However, the One Who gives life is the Omnipotent Allah, and it is no doubt that when the One Who has Omnipotent Power gives someone a name, implying that a person will live, according to His Will, there is no doubt that this person will live a distinguished life. It should not be inferred that the life Allah *Glorified is He* indicates with His Words "his name is John" is different than the ordinary life known to mankind; for when a Man names his son Yahya (John), he hopes that he will live long, or at least reach the normal, average age of people at that time, such as sixty years, or seventy, or whatever number of years were written for them. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* gives the child the name Yahya (John), He does not intend "he lives" to be taken in an ordinary way, the way that people might have perceived it. Rather, He must surely have given him more than the ordinary human life-span and created for him enemies that would kill him and make him a martyr, and by his martyrdom, he would remain alive in a religious sense, granted a permanent life, for as we know, martyrs are alive with their Lord and are provided for.

In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* willed that Prophet Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* would live a normal life and then live a longer life beyond what is ordinary, i.e., remain alive until the Day of Judgment. We can also take note of the fact that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* when he was

given the glad tidings that Allah *Glorified is He* would bless him with a son and would name him Yahya (John), he was astonished. How could Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* have received the news of his being given a son with such astonishment, though he had already envisioned it when he saw the unusual provisions he found with Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* bearing in mind this Quranic verse, 'Allah provides for whomever He wills without measure'. (*Al-Imran: 37*)

To this, we ask: Would you like to see such a miraculous, extraordinary situation happening to Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and see him receiving that as if it were an ordinary matter, not worthy of any astonishment or amazement? No, he surely must have been astonished and amazed and so he said, 'Oh my Lord! How can I have a son...?' (*Al-Imran: 40*) It is as though this amazement alerted him to the fact that an incredible sign would come; were it not for this amazement, the matter would have been lack-lustre and would have been perceived as if it was an ordinary issue. So, Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was alerting us to the incredible matter that Allah had distinguished him with. The affair was also in contradiction to the laws of reproduction and procreation: '...old age has already overtaken me and my wife is barren...' (*Al-Imran: 40*). The entire matter was a gift from Allah.

When the glad tidings came, Allah did not say to him, "I will bless you with a son named Yahya (John), while your wife is in this situation (of being barren) and you are also in the state (of being very old)", which would have prompted him to be confused. He may have then responded: "Do You say that a child named Yahya (John) would come from me, when I am in this state, with my wife barren and I have reached this old age?", or perhaps he might have assumed that Allah would make them young again so that his wife could conceive, or perhaps that Allah would bless him with another woman to marry so that he could have a child; any of these are possible confusions he could have faced.

The astonishment we see in him was related to the manner in which the conception would occur. So, the question posed by Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*, '...how can I have a son when old age has already overtaken

me and my wife is barren?...'. (*Al-'Imran*: 40) was his way of seeking knowledge of the manner in which this conception would occur, for conception occurs in many different ways. And in confirming this, Allah says, 'Thus it is....' What does this mean? It means, "You and your wife will conceive, though you are in the condition you are in, your having reached old age and your wife being barren" because that was the point and that was the reason for amazement. Again, was it logical that Allah would make them young again in order to facilitate the Will of Allah for them to have a child? No, definitely not. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Thus it is: Allah does what He wills' (*Al-'Imran*: 40), i.e. "as you are, in the state you both are currently in".

Allah *Glorified is He* made the sign that Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* would not speak to the people for three days except by gestures. The inability to speak might seem to people to be some kind of illness, but it was not so because Allah *Glorified is He* said to him, '...And remember your Lord unceasingly and declare His limitless glory by night and by day'. (*Al-'Imran*: 41) So, Allah *Glorified is He* made Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* able to declare His glory, though not, while he was unable to speak. This is another manifestation of Allah's Omnipotence: a man with the same tongue, at one time, is unable to speak so that even if he tried to, his tongue would not move, yet at a different time, with this same tongue, the person is able to declare and make remembrance of Allah by night and day. This remembrance was made with the tongue so that people could hear. This is a clear indication of Allah's Omnipotence.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* takes us to another issue which is connected with Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and she is the subject of all of this discourse because the provision that came to her from Allah *Glorified is He* without reckoning, was what inspired Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* to invoke Allah for a son. And thus Allah *Glorified is He* brings us the story of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and the child he was given, and then He takes us back to the story of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*: 'And lo!:

وَاِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ يٰمَرْيَمُ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰكِ
 وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفٰكِ عَلٰٓى نِسَاءِ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

**The angels said to Mary: ‘Mary, God has chosen you
 and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all
 women [42] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 42)**

The word “angels” in ‘the angels said...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 42) refers to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. The reason for Allah’s referring to Jibril (Gabriel) as “the angels” is that human speech, as we mentioned previously, emerges from a certain source and the voice’s direction determines the location of that source. Observe what you do when you hear a sound: you move your head to put your ear in the direction from which the sound comes. If the sound comes from the direction of your right ear, you turn your head to the right; if it comes from the direction of your left ear, you turn your head to the left. However, the speaker here is Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and his voice comes from every direction in a wondrous way. That is why the speech here is attributed to “the angels” (plural).

What did Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* say? Passing on Allah’s Message, he said: ‘Mary, Allah has chosen you and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all women’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 42). What does “choosing” mean? It is selecting and distinguishing one among all others. It is derived from the Arabic word “*Al-safw*” (noun) or “*Al-safi*” (adjective), which refers to something free from doubt. A meaning is usually derived from physical denotations. As we have said, the root of the word “chosen” in Arabic is “*safi*”. When water is described as *safi*, this means clear, pure water, or as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...rivers of honey clarified and pure....’ (*Muhammad*: 15) In this case, “*musaffa*” is used, meaning “clarified and pure”.

When Allah says, “Allah has chosen you and made you pure: He has truly chosen you above all women” (*Al-‘Imran*: 42), we notice that the choosing of Mary occurred twice. The first occurrence is not followed by “above”; the second occurrence is followed by “above.” The meaning of the first occurrence is to tell Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* that Allah has distinguished her with faith, righteousness and good conduct. The occurrence of choosing Maryam

(Mary) *peace be upon her* is not followed by “above” because there might be others who are distinguished with the same characteristics. This is indicated by Allah’s words: ‘Indeed, Allah chose Adam, Noah, Abraham’s family and the family of ‘Imran over all other people’. (*Al-'Imran*: 33) Allah then mentions that He purified her. Then, the second mention of choosing her comes followed by “above” for He says: ‘...chosen you above all women’. (*Al-'Imran*: 42) This excludes men from the scope of selection and clarifies that it has no relation with masculinity; she is chosen above all women. This implies that there is no other woman in the world who shares the blessing of being distinguished with her. Why? She is the only one who will have a child without the involvement of a man and this is something that no one else will share with her.

Allah says: ‘...chosen you above all women’. (*Al-'Imran*: 42) This statement must have made her wonder what it was that distinguished her from all women. The mind would be occupied with such a question and it would also be occupied with an issue related to the role of a female. If we add this to what Allah says on Maryam’s (Mary’s) tongue, ‘Allah provides limitlessly for whomever He wills’ (*Al-'Imran*: 37), we find that all are allusions to what would happen later: the incident that would involve her honour and virtue. Thus, it was inevitable that Allah would have paved the way to assure her that nothing would hurt her dignity.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...chosen you above all women’. (*Al-'Imran*: 42) We can ask, “What was the result of this choosing?” We have learned that “choose” means to select and distinguish. In Arabic, it can be read “mustafa”, meaning “the one who is chosen” and can also be read “*mustafi*”, meaning “the one who chooses”. The one who chooses here is Allah, but what is the reason for this choosing? When Allah chooses someone or something, He chooses them to undertake a mission and particularly a difficult one. Thus, Allah chooses this specific person so that this choosing becomes widely known amongst the people. It is as though Allah has chosen this thing, in particular, for the sake and benefit of people, whether the chosen one is a place, a person, or a time so that this distinction becomes widelyknown among those above which the chosen is distinguished. For example, why did Allah choose the *Ka'ba*? It was chosen so that every human being would turn to its direction. Allah has

chosen it for the sake of mankind and to spread its distinction everywhere else. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about the *Ka'ba*: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Mecca. It is a blessed place, a source of guidance for all people'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 96)

If Allah, *the Glorified*, has chosen a time such as His choosing *Ramadan* (a month in the Gregorian calendar) as a special time of fasting, then why has He done so? He has chosen it so that its distinction and the distinction of what was revealed in it become widespread in all times. So, Allah's choosing of a particular person, place, or time is for the benefit of the rest of humanity, places, and times. Why? Because none of the creation is Allah's child and there is no one with a better position than another is in Allah's sight. However, Allah chooses a certain time over another, or a place over another, or a person over another in order that the distinction of the chosen one becomes widely known amongst those over which the chosen is distinguished. So, should people rejoice over the chosen one or not? Yes, they should rejoice because it has been chosen for their benefit. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Mary, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself in worship, bow down with those who pray'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 43)

It is as if the previous findings of both the first and second choosing call for her devoutness and her sincere, submissive, and humble worship. Someone may wonder, "Why would Allah choose one thing in particular to make its distinction widespread among people?" It is because the blessing of being chosen by Allah entails that the chosen is absolved from whatever its counterparts might fall into, among them, unsatisfactory decisions. Allah *Glorified is He* intends what He chooses to be a model from which only goodness should come. The best example of this is Allah's choosing of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He willed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only acted in a praiseworthy manner from the very beginning of his Prophethood in order to provide us with the model of faith throughout the twenty-three years of his mission.

Allah says to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* on the tongue of the angel: 'Mary, be devout to your Lord'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 43) This is a command to remain in constant, sincere worship of her Lord. The Arabic word "*lirabbiki*" (your Lord)

indicates edification. It is as though being chosen by Allah is one of His favours upon Maryam (Mary) and they merit devotion from her. 'Prostrate yourself in worship, bow down with those who pray...' (*Al-'Imran*: 43) means humble and submit yourself in excess, by placing your forehead, the noblest part of the human body, onto the floor, for prostration is the highest level of submission.

However, does this form of submission excuse Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* from having to bow to Allah alongside other people? No, for Allah's true command to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was to 'bow down with those who pray'. (*Al-'Imran*: 43) Hence, she was not excused from bowing in congregation by performing a higher act in terms of submission which was prostration; rather, she still had to bow down with those who bow down. Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* did not have the right to say, "Allah has commanded to perform a higher act of worship, so I will not perform the lower one". Allah commanded her, also, to join the procession of bowers.

This is similar to Allah's statement concerning the disbelievers: "What drove you to *Saqar* (the Scorching Fire?)" [they will ask] and they [those in the hellfire] will answer, "We did not pray..." (*al-Muddaththir*: 42-43) They were disbelievers, so how could they pray? This is an admission by them that they were disbelievers and did not follow the path of those who pray and an admission that they were not Muslims (following the religion of Islam), and nor were they believers in Allah. Here, someone may ask: "Why does Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* say to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* 'Mary, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself in worship, bow down with those who pray' (*Al-'Imran*: 43) and not say "with those women who bow down (pray)"?

In answer to this, we would like to provide you with a simple introduction to the philosophy of terminology. Names are words in a language used to identify certain objects. There are names of inanimate objects, names of plants, names of animals and names of subtle beings such as jinn, angels and everything that Allah *Glorified is He* has made unseen. These names refer to their meanings. Allah *Glorified is He* guided humanity to this when He taught Adam *peace be upon him* all the names; how else would Adam *peace be upon him* have been able to refer to those things with their names? So, everything must have a name to be distinguished among other things by one single simple word.

Were it not for this, how would a person be able to talk with another person about a mountain, for instance? Should the speaker take the listener to where the mountain is located and point to it? Or would it be enough for him to say the word “mountain” so that the listener could recall the picture of the named thing in his mind? So, Allah’s philosophy of teaching us the names of things removed the load of futile misunderstanding from our shoulders. Were it not for this, we would have been unable to make anything understood unless it was directly in front of us so that we could point to it. The word “mountain”, the word “rock” and other similar words, are names of things and beings. When I speak, for example, about America, I do not have to take the listener there and point to it, saying, “This is America”; rather, the single word “America” provides the listener with the meaning of what it refers to and so we attach terms to whatever they are used to name.

Since this is the case, names must exist for things or beings to which they refer. These are the names Allah taught to mankind so that they can understand one another. Man’s origin is from Adam *peace be upon him*. The word “Adam” in Arabic is grammatically masculine. The opposite of masculine is feminine. Allah, *Exalted is He* above everything, created males and females because by their union progeny comes forth. So, the distinction must have been made between the two forms of a single species. Males and females are the children of Adam *peace be upon him* and from them comes reproduction. However, it is extraordinary that Allah *Glorified is He* named Adam *peace be upon him* with a masculine name and named Eve with a feminine name and made a generic name to refer to all creation: “Soul”.

Allah says: ‘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; be mindful of Allah, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: Allah is always watching over you’. (*an-Nisa’*: 1)

Allah referred to Adam *peace be upon him* using the word “soul”, which is a feminine word. So, the concept of femininity is not less than the concept of masculinity; rather, the masculine form of words is merely an indication that gives things and beings their appropriate names and so is the feminine form.

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to every one of us as a “soul,” which is a feminine word and when He makes another statement about creation, He says: ‘Oh people, We created you all from a single Man and a single woman and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another. In the sight of Allah, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: Allah is All-knowing, All-aware’. (*al-Hujurat*: 13)

The word “people” here is the plural of a human being. In this way, we know that the word “human” can be used to refer to a male in one case and a female in another. Thus, the Lord has used a masculine word in one instance and a feminine word in another so that we would not claim that males are better than females. This distinction is nothing but a means of understanding. For this reason, Allah emphasizes to us that He has given names to things so that we can get to know one another by their means: ‘...and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another’. (*al-Hujurat*: 13) The meaning of “recognise one another” here is that all of us have a name by which we are known to others. In an example from our daily life, let us say there is a man who has many children and so he gives each child a name by which the community will know them. The extraordinary quality of this verse is that part: ‘...and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another’. We find that the Arabic word “*shu'ooban*” derived from *sha'b* (races) is masculine and the Arabic word “*qaba'ila*” derived from *qabeelah* (tribes) is feminine. So, there is no distinction based on preference; rather, the words here are just named so for the purpose of recognition. Allah *the Almighty* says:

‘By the declining day, Man is [deep] in loss except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth and urge one another to steadfastness’. (*al-'Asr*: 1-3) So, what about the women who believed? They fall into the category of “those who believe,” ‘*alladhina amanu*’ in Arabic, which is masculine. Why has Allah put the feminine among the masculine? It is because the masculine is the origin and the feminine is derivative, as a branch, from it. So, the feminine is included in the masculine in matters which apply to both sexes.

‘People, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you so that you may be mindful [of Him]’. (*al-Baqara*: 21) This means that the “feminine”

is included in the masculine in terms of worshiping. The general meaning specifies human beings, as a species, as those required to worship, both male and female. In matters specifically relating to women, Allah addresses women, in particular. Allah Almighty says: 'When Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad) have decided on a matter that concerns them, it is not fitting for any believing Man or woman to claim freedom of choice in that matter: whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger is far astray'. (*al-Ahzab*: 36) Why? It is because the matter here includes both sexes of the same species: the man and the woman, husband and wife. For example, a husband might want to divorce his wife and so Allah clarifies this in detail. If there is a matter specifically related to women, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* specifies His commands, such as in His wise words: 'Wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other woman. If you are truly mindful of Allah, do not speak too softly in case the sick at heart should lust after you, but speak in an appropriate manner; stay at home and do not flaunt your finery as they used to in the pagan past; keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah wishes to keep uncleanness away from you, people of the [Prophet's] House and to purify you thoroughly'. (*al-Ahzab*: 32-33)

Everything mentioned in the previous verse specifies the duties of the wives of the Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This speech, addressed to women, clarifies the specification by using the Arabic pronoun "na" used at the end of the following Arabic words: "*lastunna*" (you are not), "*ittaqaytunna*" (are truly mindful of Allah), "*takhda'ana*" (speak too softly), "*qarna*" (stay at home) and "*tabarrajna*" (flaunt your finery). The speech in this verse is concerned with women and so it addresses women using the feminine pronoun.

However, if a matter is related to mankind in general, Allah inclusively addresses all men and women using the masculine form. For this reason, when women asked why it should appear that men are better than women, Allah's words were revealed: 'For men and women who are devoted to Allah - believing men and women, obedient men and women, truthful men and women, steadfast men and women, humble men and women, charitable men and women, fasting men and women, chaste men and women, men and

women who remember Allah often - Allah has prepared forgiveness and a rich reward'. (*al-Ahzab*: 35)

Thus, Allah settles the matter, when He *the Exalted* says confirming this: 'Anyone, male or female, who does good deeds and is a believer, will enter paradise and will not be wronged by as much as the dip in a date stone'. (*an-Nisa*': 124) Here, the male and the female are both included in one description which is "a believer". So, when a commandment is related to a general matter, required from both men and women, women are included and addressed in the masculine form. The feminine is concealed into the masculine because a woman's position is based on her being concealed, veiled, and hidden in man. Therefore, she is included with him.

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* says to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*,

يَمْرِيْمُ أَقْنِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِيْنَ

**Mary, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself
in worship, bow down with those who pray [43]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 43)**

The bowing is not specific to women. If that was the case, Allah would have said "with those women who bow down." Rather, it is a general matter encompassing both men and women. For this reason, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was commanded to bow down with those who bow down (to pray). After this, Allah says:

ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اَنْبَاءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهِ اِلَيْكَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يُلْقُوْنَ
اَقْلَامَهُمْ اَيُّهُمْ يَكْفُلُ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا كُنْتَ لَدَيْهِمْ اِذْ يَخْتَصِمُوْنَ

**This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We
reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among
them when they cast lots to see which of them should take
charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they
argued [about her] [44] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 44)**

We said before that the word for "account" in Arabic is only used to refer to highly significant news. "*Al-Ghaybi*" (things beyond knowledge) refer to

what is beyond perception. There are some things beyond perception that a human like you can recognise and there are some things beyond perception that a human like you cannot recognise.

We also said before that the veils of the unseen (things beyond knowledge) are three: sometimes the veil is time that has passed; sometimes it is time that will come; and sometimes the veil is of the location. Why? It is because all events are based on the two factors of time and place. If someone gives me an account of an incident that took place in the past, they break through the time barrier; though the event took place several years in the past, I have been informed of it in the present and this means that the past time barrier has been penetrated. If they inform me of something that will happen two years from now, this penetrates the future-time barrier. Say that a person informs you of news that is contemporary to you. Here, the barrier of location is present, for, while I am with you now, I do not know what is happening in another city though the time is the same.

For this reason, we should know that the barrier is sometimes one of time –such as the past or the future– or the barrier might be one of location. If Allah informs His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this account, then the means by which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gained his knowledge are three, for the means by which an event is known about are three: witnessing, hearing, or reading.

The first means of knowing about an event –witnessing– necessitates that a person be present at the time of the event, yet the account that Allah gave to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was of an event that occurred at least six centuries before his mission. So, knowing about this event by means of witnessing must be ruled out because it took place in the past. Someone might say, “Perhaps the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* read or heard about it”. Yet even the enemies of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* admitted that he could not read, so this means is ruled out as well. The enemies of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* admitted that he had never sat with a teacher, so he could not have heard it from a teacher.

There was no means by which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could have known this account except by Revelation and so Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her]...' (*Al-'Imran*: 44).

We have said before, that Revelation means the imparting of concealed information because the ordinary act of informing happens when a person tells something to another person. As for the imparting of concealed information, it is called "Revelation." Revelation requires One Who reveals (who is Allah), one who receives the Revelation (who is the Messenger, Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him*), and something which is revealed (which is the Quran). If we consider the imparting of concealed information, we will find that it has many different methods.

Allah is the one who reveals, whereas the one who is revealed to is different. Allah Almighty sends Revelation to the earth: 'When the Earth is shaken violently in its [last] quaking, when the earth throws out its burdens, when Man cries, 'What is happening to it?'; on that Day, it will tell all because your Lord will inspire it [to do so]'. (*az-Zalzala*: 1-5) This is imparting of concealed information. None of us hears Allah when He sends Revelation to the earth. Allah also sends Revelation to the bees, the angels, and the Prophets. There are even revelations from other than Allah, such as the incitement coming from the devils: 'The evil ones incite their followers to argue with you: if you listen to them, you, too, will become idolaters'. (*al-An'am*: 121)

Human beings also give revelation in the form of suggestions to each other: 'In the same way, We assigned to each Prophet an enemy, evil humans and evil jinn. They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive - if it had been your Lord's will, [Prophet], they would not have done this: leave them to their inventions'. (*Al-'Imran*: 112) However, when the word "revelation" is used without qualification, it refers to Revelation from Allah to whomever He chooses to bear His Message. Other forms of revelation are called "linguistic revelation." The conventional use of the word "revelation" means Revelation from Allah to one of His Messengers. So, Allah's Revelation

to the Earth is not conventional revelation, nor is His Revelation to the bee, nor His Revelation to the mother of Musa (Moses), nor His Revelation to the disciples of Jesus. Allah says: ‘...and how I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My Messengers - they said, “We believe and bear witness that we devote ourselves [to Allah]”’. (*al-Ma’ida*: 111)

This is a form of unconventional revelation; indeed, it is linguistic revelation, meaning that He informed them of some concealed information. True Revelation is when Allah *Glorified is He* teaches whomever He chooses to deliver His Message and this is the Revelation given to the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon hi*.

Allah says: ‘This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her]’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 44) Thus, Allah informs us that the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received this account by means of Revelation; he neither read it nor saw it. We know that the enemies of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* testified that he couldn’t read, and nor did he hear anything from a teacher. Thus, Allah informs us that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not present with Maryam’s (Mary’s) people when they cast their lots.

The Arabic word for “their lots” here is “*aqlamahom*” meaning either the pens we use to write, or lots they used to cast to settle a dispute. When they disputed, they used lots to determine who would win the thing about which they disputed. This is called lot casting and it is performed to remove caprice from the process of allocation between individuals in order that no one’s whim could influence the decision in favour of one person or another over the rest. Nowadays, we also cast ballots combining pieces of paper representing several persons, then picking one of them. So, no one’s desires can influence allocation by means of voting. In this way, we refer the matter to Allah because a piece of paper has no inclinations. When Maryam’s (Mary) people disputed and argued over her custody, they decided to remove caprice from the matter and leave it up to fate so that the decision would be made by the lot, not by desires as these lots would be in accordance with fate.

Their “pens” or lots in this verse refer either to the lots that they used for casting, or to the pens with which they wrote the Torah, seeking its blessing. Some might wonder about the meaning of Allah’s words, ‘When they cast lots...’ (*Al- 'Imran*: 44) and about the place where these lots were cast. It is said that they were cast into the sea. When lots are cast into the sea, how could someone be distinguished by this procedure? It is said that if the lot (or pen) stood with its point upwards, its owner was the winner; if all the lots sank but one floated, its owner was the winner.

They must have agreed on some sign or signal that would distinguish the lot of the one who would take custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*: ‘This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her]’. (*Al- 'Imran*: 44) The phrase “when they argued” indicates that the strength of the dispute between the people wanting to take custody of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* reached the level of argument. Eventually, they resorted to casting lots to end the dispute. We'll move on now to another stage:

Allah Glorified and Exalted is He says:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَكَةُ يَمْرَيْمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْشُرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ
الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

The angels said, ‘Mary, God gives you news of a Word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, who will be held in honour in this world and the next, who will be one of those brought near to God [45] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 45)

The first stage of Maryam’s (Mary’s) preparation was Allah’s words on her tongue, ‘Allah provides limitlessly for whoever He will’. (*Al- 'Imran*: 37) Thus, she recognised Allah’s Omnipotent Power. The second stage was her hearing the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John), and Allah’s confirmation for her that He had chosen her above all women. This was a matter related to women. This was a source of comfort from Allah to her.

Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* then, proceeded to a new stage. 'The angels said, "Mary, Allah gives you news of a Word from Him..."' (*Al- 'Imran: 45*).

Glad tidings do not come except for momentous, happy news. Some might wonder what Allah means by, "a Word from Him". The answer is that Allah Almighty practices His Power in His dominion by means of merely a word, not by any biological means. Allah *Glorified is He* made us aware of this by His Words: 'This is how Allah creates what He will: when He has ordained something, He only says, "Be" and it is'. (*Al- 'Imran: 47*). This statement clarifies Allah's Omnipotent Power. We have no faster way of commanding other than the word "Be." Allah's Omnipotent Power, with its limitlessness, surpasses - with speed!- the time we take to pronounce even the first letter of the word "Be". Allah clarifies this in the closest way possible to our human perception. When Allah *the Exalted* wills a matter, He says 'Be' and it is. This is to clarify that the mere divine will of a matter makes it exist immediately. 'Be' is just a manifestation of the way He gives commands to humanity. Thus, we understand the meaning of Allah's giving glad tidings to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* of "a Word from Him". Allah says: '...whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary...' (*Al- 'Imran: 45*) These are three names: the Messiah, Isa (Jesus) and son of Maryam (Mary).

What is the meaning of "the Messiah"? It could mean one who is absolved from all sins, or that one of his signs was wiping the body of the sick with his hands to cure them, or it could mean "blessed". As for Isa (Jesus), it is the name of the child, whereas "the Messiah" is his title. "Son of Maryam (Mary)" is his surname. We know that proper nouns, in Arabic, are of three types: names, titles, and surnames. Ibn Malik said: 'There are names, surnames, and titles'. A proper noun for a person has three types. The "name" is what a person is called by, at first. The second name is what we give to a person, something which denotes the elevated status of a person, or otherwise, and it is called a "title". If the name includes the name of their mother or father, it is called a "surname". All three are mentioned to refer to Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* '...whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary'. (*Al- 'Imran: 45*)

Mentioning Isa (Jesus) by title, name, and surname has a wisdom that will be revealed to us later. Allah *Glorified is He* says of him: '...who will be held in honour in this world and the next...' (*Al- 'Imran: 45*) The Arabic word

“wajihan” (held in honour among his people) means that no one can deny him a request, for his honour showed in his face. In our daily lives, we say that it is not appropriate to cause embarrassment to someone by turning down their request. As common people exclaim upon accepting a request, “Can anyone turn down that face?” So, a person held in honour is distinguished and privileged, so much so that people cannot bring themselves to reject his requests. In contrast, there are others who beg from you or from others. This results in people neglecting them, for they dishonour themselves and the issue is put to an end.

Allah says, describing Isa (Jesus) that he is one who ‘will be held in honour in this world and the next’. (*Al-'Imran*: 45) It means that no one will turn him down if he asked them all because of the honour in his face. People are shy to refuse someone of such honour and for this reason, we find beggars sometimes say, “Give me for the pleasure of Allah’s face”, i.e. do not look at my face, but think of Allah’s face, for it is Allah, the Creator, who brought me into this world and created me; thus, He is responsible for my provision. When you assist in the providing for someone whom Allah called into existence, you have given for Allah’s pleasure; for He is the Creator who gives provision to all His creatures even those who disbelieve in Him.

So, a person’s giving to a beggar is not for the sake of the beggar; it is giving for the pleasure of Allah. Allah describes Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* as one ‘who will be held in honour in this world and the next....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 45) We know how a person can be distinguished in this world; why does Allah mention Isa’s (Jesus’) distinction in the hereafter especially when all the faces of the believers will be radiant, then? Allah mentions the distinction of Isa (Jesus) in the hereafter because he will be asked a question about the peak of faith: ‘When Allah says, “Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods alongside Allah’? He will say, “You are the Exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say - if I had said such a thing You would 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”’. (*al-Ma'ida*: 116)

Beware of imagining that this question is a rebuke from Allah to Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), *peace be upon them*; rather, Allah wants to

rebuke all those who made such claims. For this reason, Allah says about him, on his tongue *peace be upon him*: ‘Peace was on me the day I was born and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again’. (*Maryam*: 33)

This is because his birth caused a sensation and some of the children of Israel (Israelites) spoke ill of his mother, the virgin, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*. Later, they spoke of his “death,” and we all know the story of the crucifixion which also caused a sensation. He was not crucified; rather, the one who betrayed him and informed against him was crucified, for Allah cast Isa’s (Jesus’) likeness upon him and so they killed him. On the Day of Resurrection, when he will be raised to life again, Allah will ask him, “Did you say to people, ‘Take me and my mother as two gods alongside Allah?’” He will say, “You are the Exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say...”’. (*al-Ma’ida*: 116) It is Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), who is blessed by Allah with peace in these three states. Allah continues describing Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) as one who will ‘be held in honour in this world and the next, who will be one of those brought near to Allah’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 45) The words “brought near to Allah” indicate Allah’s sublime greatness; when some people get infatuated with a person, some others might get angry with this particular person though he himself is blameless.

Allah *the Exalted* teaches us that the one who goes to excess in religion will be recompensed for it, but the one who is the innocent subject of this going to excess will be saved by the mercy of the Most-Forgiving. Allah teaches us that the infatuation of some people with Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), does not affect the status of Isa (Jesus) in the sight of Allah; for he is one of those who are brought near to Him and the infatuation of the others does not affect his position.

Allah says:

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

He will speak to people in his infancy and in his adulthood.

He will be one of the righteous’ [46] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 46)

“Speaking to people in infancy” refers to the enunciation by which the thought of the speaker is transferred to the listener. Allah says: ‘...will speak

to people in the cradle (in his infancy)'. (*Al-'Imran*: 46) Those who will encounter Isa (Jesus) in his cradle are the people spoken to, and a cradle is whatever is prepared for a child to sleep in.

Allah mentions 'in the cradle (in his infancy) and in his adulthood...' (*Al-'Imran*: 46) in order to illustrate that Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), is a changeable being: one time, he is in the cradle; in another time, he is a grown man. Since he is subject to change, no one should become infatuated with him as though he is a "god," or the "son of a god."

We also understand from '...will speak to people in the cradle (in his infancy)...' (*Al-'Imran*: 46) the secret behind the existence of the sign of the miracle bestowed on him in the cradle by Allah. This is because the issue was related to the virtue, the honour and the morality of his mother. The sign had to come to exclude, in advance, people's possible astonishment at her giving birth without a father for the child, or a husband. We have no account of this being mentioned by them, though it was necessary for it to be mentioned because they glorify their Prophet and so they must not have been heedless of this extraordinary matter.

The speaking of an infant was very peculiar, and that should have been mentioned and circulated amongst the people. People would not have been content to merely relate the fact that he spoke in the cradle; they would have memorised what he said and repeated it many times. The words that Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said in the cradle do not sustain the argument of those who describe Isa (Jesus) in a way that contradicts his humanity because the very first thing that he said was: 'I am a servant of Allah'. They concealed this whole issue because these words refute the claim they wanted to ascribe to Isa (Jesus). Allah says: '...will speak to people in the cradle (in his infancy) and in his adulthood...' (*Al-'Imran*: 46).

We know that 'speaking in the cradle' means that he was an infant and that 'in adulthood' means when he would reach the age of thirty, i.e. his fourth decade. Some have said that the word "adulthood" means one who has reached the age of forty. In their account, the story of the crucifixion occurred before he reached this age and that he spoke in the cradle but did not get the chance to speak openly as a grown man. They say that the story of the

crucifixion (or his being hidden from human awareness) happened before he reached this age. Then, there must come a time when Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* will speak at this age. Allah's true words 'will speak to people in the cradle (in his infancy) and in his adulthood...' (*Al- 'Imran: 46*) also mean that he spoke in the cradle as a child and he will speak as a fully mature, grown man. We know that Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) underwent change and passed through different states. If they claim that he is God or the son of God, is the divinity in the cradle the same as the divinity in maturity?

If the divinity was in the cradle only, it is deficient because he did not continue being in the cradle and underwent changes. Since he underwent changes, he was mutable, and if he was mutable, he could not have been God or the son of God. After this, Allah says of Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary): 'He will be one of the righteous' (*Al- 'Imran: 46*). What is the story behind this? The prodigy that Allah speaks of is that when Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* spoke to the people in his cradle; it was not by his own choice and his speech as a grown man would be inspired by a Revelation, so he would have no choice in that, either. The statement, 'He will be one of the righteous' (*Al- 'Imran: 46*), refers to his deeds and behaviour. Why? Because it is not sufficient for him to just deliver the Message, and nor to bear signs; it was a must that he carries out the faith-based behaviours.

Allah says, on the tongue of Virgin Maryam (Mary):

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَلَّهُ
يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٧﴾

She said, 'My Lord, how can I have a son when no man has touched me?' [The angel] said, 'This is how God creates what He will: when He has ordained something, He only says, "Be", and it is [47] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran: 47*)

We wish to pause here and reflect on her statement: 'My Lord, how can I have a son when no Man has touched me?' (*Al- 'Imran: 47*) If she had stopped at 'My Lord, how can I have a son...' (*Al- 'Imran: 47*), her question would

have been logical. However, her addition of ‘...when no man has touched me?’ (*Al-'Imran*: 47) raises the question: why did she add the part ‘...when no man has touched me?’ (*Al-'Imran*: 47). Did someone say to her, “You will bear a child without means of a father”? The Angels did not tell her that. So, her thoughts were directed by them to the issue of being touched.

It is the instinct and intelligence of one who was ready and prepared to receive from Allah when He says to her: ‘...the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 45).

She said to herself, “By Allah’s command, his lineage is ascribed to me and so he has no father.” Allah calls Isa (Jesus) the ‘...son of Mary’ and so she asked, ‘...when no Man has touched me?’ (*Al-'Imran*: 47) It is not possible in her culture for a child to be ascribed to the mother, while the father exists. Thus, we see Virgin Maryam’s (Mary’s) shrewdness in receiving from Allah. She was concerned when she realised that Isa (Jesus) had been ascribed to her and she said to herself, “My pregnancy of Isa (Jesus) will occur without a father, yet how can pregnancy occur when no Man has touched me?”

The Creator *the Most Generous* says, ‘This is how’, i.e. that no man will touch you. He does not say to her, “We have ascribed him to you because you are vowed to the service of the Temple”; rather, He says: ‘This is how’, confirming what she had understood: that Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* would be conceived without any man touching her. The Omnipotence of His Power is revealed in His Words, ‘Allah creates what He wills...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 47) This is omnipotence of power, the absolute control over human reproduction, procreation, and childlessness. Omnipotent power does not stop at the creation of males and females. If this were the case, how was Adam, the first human, created? Allah is able to create without a male or a female as in the case of Adam’s creation *peace be upon him*. He also creates by means of only one of them such as the creation of Eve, or Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. *The Almighty* Creator who initially created masculinity and femininity is capable of fulfilling creation. The male and female can also be present and the ability to reproduce is not.

Allah says, ‘Allah has control of the heavens and the Earth; He creates whatever He wills - He grants female offspring to whomever He wills, male

to whomever He wills, or both male and female and He makes whoever He wills barren: He is All-knowing and All-powerful'. (*al-Shura*: 49-50)

This is the will of Allah, so do not say, "It is the completion of the two elements, male and female, that causes creation." Creation occurs by Allah's will. Allah says: 'This is how Allah creates what He wills: when He has ordained something, He only says, "Be" and it is'. (*Al-'Imran*: 47) You, oh mutable beings, act by the use of means, but the One Who created you and created the means has the power to create without means, for He created the world, in the beginning, without any means.

Allah Glorified is He says about Isa (Jesus) peace be with him:

وَيُعَلِّمُهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ

**He will teach him the Scripture and wisdom, the
Torah and the Gospel [48] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 48)**

When we hear, 'He will teach him *Al-kitab* [the Scripture]...', we understand that Allah will teach Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) the Revelations He will send down to him; namely, the Gospel. However, Allah says afterwards, '...and the Torah and the Gospel'; this matter poses a question: what, then, does "*Al-kitab*" refer to? Does it mean that he will be taught the Scriptures that have been previously revealed such as the Psalms and the Scriptures of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*? This may be the case. Therefore, 'And He will teach him *Al-kitab*...' may mean Allah has taught Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) the Books that were revealed before him: the Psalms of Dawud (David), the Scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and the Torah of Musa (Moses), all which Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) came to complete.

Some scholars have said that Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was endowed with nine-tenths of all the beauty of calligraphy ever granted to humankind. This means that we may also interpret *Al-kitab* as "writing" or "the ability to write". The Arabic word *ketab* (literally: "book") is derived from the stem *kataba* (literally: "to write"). Let us consider the meaning of the verse at hand. In addition to *Al-kitab* ("the scripture" or "the ability to write"), Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* received from Allah '...wisdom and the Torah

and the Gospel'. (*Al-'Imran*: 48) The word "wisdom" is usually mentioned in the Quran following mention of a revealed Scripture, as in Allah's words: 'And keep to mind what is recited in your houses of the communications of Allah and the wisdom; surely Allah is Knower of subtleties, Aware'. (*al-Ahzab*: 34)

"The communications of Allah" here means the Noble Quran and "the wisdom" means the teachings of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Prophet Muhammad received the Quran and delivered it as it is and Allah also revealed to him matters that he was allowed to deliver in his own words. That was the wisdom Prophet Muhammad shared. As for the Torah, Allah has taught it to Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. As we know, the mission of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was to complete the Torah and restore what the Jews had concealed of the truth told in it. The Torah was the basis of legislation during his lifetime and for the community to whom he was sent. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was, according to this verse of the Quran, '... a Messenger to the Children of Israel'.

Allah says:

وَرَسُولًا إِلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ
مِّنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ فَأَنْفُخُ فِيهِ فَيَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُبْرِئُ
الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ وَأُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا تَأْكُلُونَ وَمَا
تَدْخِرُونَ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

He will send him as a messenger to the Children of Israel: "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with God's permission, it will become a real bird; I will heal the blind and the leper, and bring the dead back to life with God's permission; I will tell you what you may eat and what you may store up in your houses. There truly is a sign for you in this, if you are believers [49] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 49)

Prophethood requires a sign to prove it. It is not for anyone to just claim, "I am a Messenger from Allah!" Rather, he must show people a miracle to prove

he truly is a Messenger from Allah. A miracle, as we know, is an extraordinary matter that goes beyond the limitations of natural laws and norms. Its purpose is to confirm the truthfulness of the Messenger. Such a sign stands as evidence against whoever denies the Message of Allah, as if it were saying to them, "If you deny that this is a Messenger of Allah, how, then, can you explain that he is able to perform a miracle, an extraordinary thing that goes beyond laws and norms?!" Thus, a miracle confounds a denier who defies the Messenger since he can neither explain it nor produce one like it.

For this reason, we have previously said that whenever Allah gave a miracle to a Messenger, it was meant to challenge his people with something at which they excelled. If Allah challenged a people with something they had no knowledge of, their reply to the Messenger would be, "You have brought something completely new to us. If we were familiar with it, we would certainly surpass you in it!" For this reason, whenever Allah granted a miracle to any of His Messengers, it was of a kind that his people were particularly excellent in. An example of this is the miracle given to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: Allah sent him to a people who excelled in magic, so his miracle was of a kind that was suitable to challenge magicians.

It is very important to note that the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) was by no means magic; it apparently resembled the magic that his people mastered, but it was a real miracle, not an illusion. Magicians used to deceive people with things that were not real. In the Quran, Allah clarifies to us the difference between the miracle He has given to His Messenger and his people's magic. Allah says: 'Musa (Moses), what is that in your right hand?' "It is my staff," he said, "I lean on it; restrain my sheep with it; I also have other uses for it." Allah says, "Throw it down, Musa (Moses)". He threw it down and— lo and behold! — it became a fast-moving snake'. (*Ta Ha*: 17-20)

Allah meant to tell Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that the limit of his knowledge of that thing in his hand was confined to its being a staff he used for those common chores. However, in the Knowledge of Allah and with His Power, it could be something entirely different. For this reason, Allah commanded Prophet Musa (Moses) to throw down the staff. Once he did, he saw it turn into a snake moving rapidly which cast fear into his soul. The fear

it cast into his soul was the sign that distinguished the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* from the magic of his people. Why? When a magician throws down his staff, people see it a snake, but he still sees it as a staff; people see his illusion, but he sees reality. If the magician himself saw it as a snake, he would be as frightened as his audience would. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* felt that fear since he saw his staff turn into a real snake. Hence, Allah says to him: 'He [Allah] said, "Pick it up without fear: We shall turn it back into its former state"'. (*Ta Ha*: 21) If it had been magic meant to delude his people, it would not have made him afraid because he would have seen reality, not the delusion. He would have seen it as a staff, though others would have seen it as a snake. This is the difference that proves it to be a miracle, a real one, and not sheer deception.

The people of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) were renowned for medicine, so Allah gave him a miracle that was related to medicine. Allah challenged the people of Prophet 'Isa, not just by making him superior to them in the field wherein they excelled, but He also made him bring the dead back to life. Needless to say, that it is completely out of the scope of medicine. A physician can never grant life to the dead, but the Messenger of Allah did it by Allah's Might and Will to prove his Prophethood. For this reason, Allah granted His servant and Messenger 'Isa (Jesus) a miraculous sign that went far beyond the scope of human ability. Prophet 'Isa did not only heal the sick, but also raised the dead by the Will of his Almighty Creator. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) said, '... "I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with Allah's permission, it will become a real bird...."' (*Al-'Imran*: 49) Let us ponder the meaning of this noble verse.

To "make" or "create" something means to produce something according to a design determined by its maker or creator. It is an idea that starts in the mind, and then it becomes crystallized and is finally put into reality accordingly. If the final product does not match that design, then it is not creation; it is just something random produced with neither knowledge nor design. If someone takes a piece of clay and makes a random shape of it, this is not creation. Creation means making something according to a definite design. An example of this is a cup or glass that we use to drink. Cups are not grown on trees. A

manufacturer melts sand, mixes it with chemicals to remove impurities from it and then shapes it into a cup. So, a cup does not exist until a maker determines its design and produces it accordingly. This is what “creation” means.

Nevertheless, there are remarkable differences between human creation and the creation of Allah *the Exalted*. Humans create things using materials that already exist, but Allah creates things from nothingness. A human employs the materials Allah has created for him to produce things by His Will. No one can produce a cup were it not for the raw material Allah has created. This is the first difference between the creation of Allah and the creation of humankind. Both are comprised of the process of production based on a definite design; however, Allah creates things from nothingness, based on no materials that had existed before, whereas man must use the materials Allah has made for him to create things.

Moreover, there is the secret Allah puts in His creation, a secret not in the scope of humankind to give: life. It is what makes the creatures of Allah grow, develop, and reproduce. One may create a cup, but it would remain a cup; it would not grow and there would never be male and female cups to reproduce! We may produce things, but the secret of life that leads to growth, development, reproduction, etc. is only in the Hands of Allah *the One and the All-Powerful Creator of all things*. Human creation is thus dependent on the existence of necessary materials and cannot exceed the limits set by Allah Who creates things out of nothing, without depending on previously-existing materials.

Also, Allah creates things male and female and gives them the capability to reproduce, as He says in the Noble Quran, ‘And certainly did We create Man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot and We made the clot into a lump [of flesh] and We made [from] the lump, bones and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So, blessed is Allah, the best of creators!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 12-14). Allah has created all things from nothing, whereas human creation is confined to the raw materials He has made available to them. Allah creates life in His creatures and endows them with the ability to reproduce. Humans can create

things, but they cannot put into them the secret of life. Glory is for Allah, the Best of all creators!

Now, let us reflect again on the words of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) as quoted in the Quran: '...“I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with Allah's permission, it will become a real bird...”’ (*Al-Imran*: 49) Any human being can create a statue in the form of a bird, but Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) made a real bird out of that statue and that was the miracle Allah gave him to support his call. Someone might ask, “Which did he breathe into? Did he breathe into the bird statue, the clay, or the shape he created?” The first supposition is that he breathed into the clay after he made it in the form of a bird and the case is similar if he breathed into the shape. Another verse of the Quran mentions that life was breathed into the shape: ‘Then Allah will say, “Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Remember My favour to you and to your mother: how I strengthened you with the holy spirit so that you spoke to people in your infancy and as a grown Man; how I taught you the Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel; how, by My leave, you fashioned the shape of a bird out of clay, breathed into it and it became, by My leave, a bird...”’. (*al-Ma'ida*: 110) The pronoun “it” in the aforesaid verse refers to “the shape”. So, the act of breathing is sometimes associated with the clay or the bird and sometimes with the shape.

About the Virgin Maryam (Mary), Allah says: ‘...And Maryam (Mary), daughter of 'Imran, whose body was chaste, therefore We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the obedient’. (*at-Tahrim*: 12) The act of breathing in this verse is associated with her womb to which the adverb “therein” refers. Another verse also in relation to Virgin Maryam (Mary) says: ‘Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign for all people’. (*al-Anbiya*: 91).

In one verse, the act of breathing is associated with her womb and in another with herself. The two statements have the same meaning. In the verse we are dealing with, the miracle is not that Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) made a clay statue of a bird because anyone can do such a thing; it is the act of breathing

into it thus causing it to be alive: ‘... I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with Allah’s permission, it will become a real bird...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 49).

As for the shaping of a bird from clay, anyone can do this. Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* shaped the bird and breathed into it. The assertion that he did that “by Allah’s permission” encompasses both the making of the bird form and the act of breathing into it that caused it to be a real bird. Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) would not have dared do all that without Allah’s permission. The statement “by Allah’s permission” was made by Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) as a recognition by him that this was not his own doing, but the Will and Might of Allah Who wanted to support him by that miracle. It was as though Prophet ‘Isa meant to say to his people that this miracle should not mislead them into worshipping him, or why were they not thus misled by the test they were put through when Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) cut up the four birds, placed each part on a separate mountain and then called them, so they flew to him: ‘And when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, “My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead”. Allah says, “Have you not believed?” He said, “Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied”. Allah said, “Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise”’. (*al-Baqara*: 260)

If the act of breathing into a bird statue and making it real should mislead you into considering ‘Isa (Jesus) a deity, then the temptation should have been stronger with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who slew the birds that then came back to him when he called them! If the reason you worship ‘Isa (Jesus) is that he came into this world without a father, then it would have been more fitting to idolize Adam whom Allah brought into this life with neither a mother nor a father! Thus, their flagrant sin of ascribing divinity to ‘Isa (Jesus) is entirely groundless and illogical.

Then, Allah continues to quote Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: ‘...I will heal the blind and the leper and bring the dead back to life with Allah’s permission...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 49). Why did ‘Isa mention these two diseases in particular? They were the two epidemics of that time. The Arabic word *akmah*

(rendered in the verse as “blind”) means he who is born blind and leprosy is a disease that starts with whitening of parts of the skin, even brown or dark skin. White patches continue to spread over the skin, which indicate a decrease in the substance that causes the skin colour. In the course of time, whiteness covers all the body and a person becomes a leper.

It has been proven that skin is given its colour by special glands in the body. If they stop producing the colour substance, leprosy occurs (and we seek refuge with Allah from it). It was an incurable disease then. When Allah sent ‘Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) as a Prophet, He gave him a miraculous sign in the same field his people mastered: medicine. He brought them a sign from Allah by curing what they could not cure despite their excellence in the field.

In an attempt to simplify the miracle of Prophet ‘Isa and make it easier to comprehend to the minds of people, some say they were only miracles given in their time, for it is possible that cures for these diseases will be discovered later. To them, I say: No, a miracle remains a miracle until the end of time. How is that?

For example, let us consider ophthalmology. They said there can be a cure for blindness by transplanting an artificial cornea into the eye of a blind person. Dermatologists also said there can be a cure for leprosy. Several kinds of treatment have been discovered to unify the skin colour eventhough the original colour of the skin cannot be restored. Such discoveries have made some people think that the miracles of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) were only advanced for their time. However, this understanding is obviously faulty bearing in mind the means used in each case.

Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* used to cure by words and prayers. No matter how much science develops, it will still be far behind such a method of treatment! Scientists do analysis, mix chemicals and conduct surgeries to treat diseases. Thus, till the end of time, the miracle of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* remains a miracle. Allah then mentions Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) saying: ‘...and bring the dead back to life with Allah’s permission; I will tell you what you may eat...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 49).

As for bringing the dead back to life, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) did not have an absolute power to do that without any limitations. He was not granted the power within himself to raise any dead person; he only did it with certain individuals by the permission of Allah, such as Sam, son of Nuh (Noah), and Lazarus (Eleazar). Allah enabled His Messenger to do that only to prove the truth of his call, but it was a limited ability over which Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) had no control. No Prophet or Messenger of Allah could contradict or change the life spans Allah has predestined for His servants. Due to this fact, it has been related that when Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) raised Sam, son of Nuh (Noah), from death, the latter came back to life only to say one word then returned to death again. It was as a mission assigned to him by Allah to support the call of His servant and Messenger.

Allah then states Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), as saying: '...I will tell you what you may eat and what you may store up in your houses...' (*Al-Imran: 49*).

Everyone has his personal life of which no one knows the details. Every person, for instance, prefers certain kinds of foods that he cooks in certain ways, ways which he knows well and others do not know. The other miracles, like creating a bird, healing the blind and the leprous and raising the dead, are general matters that have no relation to any particular person. However, the fact that he could tell what every person used to eat at home was quite a personal matter. How can anyone tell what you had for breakfast today unless you told him, or he saw you, or someone else saw and told him? Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) was given this miracle by His Almighty Lord. It is far from plausible to think that Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) entered every house or had any means to obtain such information other than by Divine Revelation.

The same applies to his knowledge of what his people stored up in their houses. Some would claim that perhaps Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) caught the scent of every person and thus managed to tell what they usually ate. To refute such a claim, Allah made him also tell his people what they stored up in their houses: that was an obvious sign that he received Revelation from Him Who knows all hidden affairs.

‘... There truly is a sign for you in this, if you are believers’ (*Al-'Imran*: 49). This is a wondrous sign that confirmed he received Revelation from a Transcendental Power, the power of Allah *Glorified is He*. If you believe in the existence of this power, then you must believe in the Message that ‘Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), brought. A “Messenger” means a servant of Allah chosen by Him to receive His Message and deliver it to those above whom he has been elevated. A miraculous sign influences only those who believe in the existence of the All-Powerful Allah. It is meant to firm up the faith of those who already submit to Allah and have readiness to accept His Message. As for him who does not believe in Allah in the first place, a sign, eventhough miraculous cannot benefit him or establish faith in his heart.

In the following verse, Allah continues quoting Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus):

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَأُحِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي هُرِّمَ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَجِئْتُكُمْ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

I have come to confirm the truth of the Torah which preceded me, and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of God, obey me [50]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 50)

We have said before that the word “confirm,” in this context, means that what Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) brought was in accordance with what came in the Torah. We have said before: the Torah was revealed before him and still existed at his time. Now, this might pose a question: If ‘Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), came to confirm the Torah and if the Torah still existed at his time, why then was he sent with a new Message? Allah answers this question in the same verse by telling us that Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) came with new rulings: ‘...and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 50) So, the Message of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) came, not just to confirm the truth revealed in the Torah, but also to make lawful some of the things forbidden in it.

Someone might wonder: If divine Books come to confirm one another, what is the point in their successive Revelation? The answer is: first and

foremost, each Book is revealed to remind those who have forgotten what was revealed in the previous Books. Second, each divine Book came with new rulings that suited the time, place and circumstances of the people to whom it was revealed. This is the point of sending the divine Books that were successively revealed by Allah to His Messengers: they have served as reminders to people of understanding and established new rulings.

It goes without saying that the fundamentals of faith do not change, and nor do events and stories of past nations. However, rulings are subject to change based on circumstances. This is the meaning intended by the words of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) as quoted in the Quran: '...and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 50) We know that Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was sent to the Children of Israel and whatever Allah has forbidden or permitted is for a reason He knows. There is wisdom behind everything Allah ordains. Do not think that everything Allah forbids is harmful. No, Allah may forbid certain things simply to discipline people. A believer should avoid whatever Allah forbids without questioning the reason or the harm such things may pose. One could live and die without discovering the harm behind some of the things Allah has forbidden. One may wonder: Why has Allah forbidden such-and-such? What harm does it do us? Allah does not always forbid things because they are harmful. Allah may forbid things for other reasons and therefore He says: 'For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before: for having frequently debarred others from Allah's path'. (*an-Nisa*': 160).

In another verse, Allah explains to us the "certain good things" the Jews have been forbidden: 'We forbade for the Jews every animal with claws and the fat of cattle and sheep except what is on their backs and in their intestines, or that which sticks to their bones. This is how We penalized them for their disobedience: We are true to Our word'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 146).

Therefore, harmfulness is not necessarily the only reason for the prohibition of a certain thing. This explains to us what Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), a servant and Messenger of Allah, said to the Children of Israel: '...and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden....' (*Al- 'Imran*: 50) Prophet 'Isa (Jesus),

son of Maryam (Mary), came with a command from Allah to make lawful for the Children of Israel what He had previously forbidden them.

Allah concludes the noble verse by quoting the words of His servant and Messenger, 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary): 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. Be mindful of Allah, obey me'. (*Al-'Imran*: 50) All that has been stated- the miraculous signs and the commands of Allah to allow some of what the Jews have been forbidden- constitute indisputable evidence: they prove that 'Isa (Jesus) was the Messenger of Allah, for it would have been impossible for a mortal like him to bring any such miraculous signs unless he had been sent and supported by Him *the Exalted and Almighty*. After thus proving his Prophethood, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) called his people to believe in Allah Who has Absolute Power and Might to suspend laws and norms and Who has given those miracles to His servant and Messenger. He called them to be mindful of Allah and obey His ordinances.

In the following verse, Allah still quotes Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary):

إِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him – that is a straight path [51] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 51)

In this verse, we find a declaration by Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) that he- as well as those he was sent to-were all servants of Allah Who has created them from nothing, provides for them and protects them. By this declaration, 'Isa (Jesus) asserts that he is but a servant of Allah. He meant to make it clear to his people that the miraculous signs he was given were by no means intended to make him a master over them, let alone a deity! Rather, both he and they were servants of Allah Who is worthy of worship.

'Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path'. (*Al-'Imran*: 51) A "straight path" is one that does not deviate, for if it does, it takes those walking along it away from their goal. Consider the circle as a geometric shape: it has a circumference, a centre, and radii that join this centre to any point on the circumference. The farther we get from the

centre, the greater the distances separating us and vice versa. Closeness to the centre means agreement and harmony. Differences occur between human beings when they stray from the centre. This centre is the essence of faith; it is servitude and submission to the One (Allah) Who has created us all. People split into sects when they follow their whims and stray from the Straight Path of Allah. Unity and harmony can only be achieved when we devote ourselves to Him *Glorified is He*.

Even the radii of a circle, from the circumference to the centre, are separated from each other by certain distances. Then, they get closer to each other as they approach the centre, and become all united in one point at the centre, with no distance whatsoever separating them. Likewise, people find harmony and agreement when they unite under the banner of servitude to Allah, the One God. If they stray from this point of agreement and unity, they become distanced from each other and disagreement ensues. For this reason, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), called people to the worship of Allah: 'Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 51) Such is the Message Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was sent with. Allah made him declare this creed when he was still in the cradle: 'He said, "Indeed, I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet"'. (*Maryam*: 30)

The issue of his servitude to Allah was settled from the beginning: 'Isa (Jesus) is a servant of Allah, not his son or partner, and this is the essence of his Message. Then his role as a Messenger who was assigned delivery of the ordinance of Allah to His creation comes so they would act upon it in every aspect of their lives. Normally, when a Messenger comes with guidance from Allah, his aim is to call all his people to follow this guidance and abide by the commands and prohibitions of Allah. Obedience to commands may involve difficulty since moral obligation is always heavy. Prohibitions also involve difficulty since they may deprive one from something he loves to do.

Throughout life, one often sways between two things: a difficult thing he tries to avoid and a desirable thing he craves. Divine guidance has been sent down to discipline humankind, to tell us what to do and what to avoid for our own good. However, moral obligation always involves the trying difficulty of

commitment to what is right, on the one hand, and holding one's reins to abstain from what is wrong, on the other hand. Most people do not realise the sublime end meant to be achieved through this commitment, so they let the evil inside them prevail over goodness and defy the commands of their All-Wise Creator. When evil insinuations tyrannize over one's mind, they drag him into rebellion against the responsibilities of faith. They tempt him into committing things prohibited by Allah. Such rebellion is what brings on disunity and dispute among people, of whom the majority fail to realise- let alone focus on- the ultimate goal behind their existence.

Human deeds fall into two categories: deeds complying with faith and thus causing harmony among humankind and the universe, and deeds committed in defiance or disobedience of faith which thus spoil this harmony and throw one into the calamity of conflict with oneself and the universe. Deeds that agree with and firm-up one's faith are considered deeds of righteousness. On the other hand, deeds that cause one to deviate from his goal are evil deeds. In all that one does, his goal is what motivates him and directs him to make his choice.

For example, a school or college student has the goal of graduating with a particular skill-set and starting a particular career. Assessment of his actions depends on these criteria: Does this action draw him closer to his goal, or farther from it? If he is hard working, then his conduct is of a kind that serves his purpose. If he is sluggish, he thus deviates far away from his goal. Therefore, goals contribute to determining whether a deed is useful or otherwise. Most people are deceived into directing their efforts to unworthy goals, thus straying from the real goal they should be reaching for. When one reaches for the wrong goal, he will slide into conflict, perplexity, and misguidance. Whoever makes this worldly life his ultimate goal will crave transient enjoyment however he can even by indulging in unlawful pleasures. Some people understand that this life is not the goal, but is only a journey. A question must follow: What is the goal, then? A believer would answer: It is the meeting with Allah and success in the Hereafter. His deeds will, therefore, be in line with this goal. However, a disbeliever who makes this life alone his goal, and who does not believe in the Afterlife (when people will enter Paradise or Hell), is immersed in his misguidance seeking whatever his soul desires and refraining from everything that tires him even if his ultimate happiness lies in it.

A believer, however, knows that the life of this world is just a journey and the goal is achieving success at the conclusion of this journey. For this reason, he strives to fulfil his duty to Allah in order to reach his goal: Paradise. So, behaviour is corrupted when one fails to determine the real goal he is brought to life for. Goodness is to realise this goal, know the deeds that get you closer to it and do them with diligence and patience. Evil deeds, on the contrary, make us refrain from reaching for this goal and do what causes us to deviate from it.

Knowledge of the goal we are created for comes first and foremost, and then comes our reaction to this knowledge. Some people's attitudes towards many events come in a way that is contrary to knowledge of the ultimate goal. If you know that we are all going to experience the Hereafter and will meet Allah, why do you grieve- to the extent of despair- when someone you love passes to the Mercy of Allah? Why do you immerse yourself in sadness when, in truth, Allah has only taken him nearer to the ultimate goal? Grieve we must, doubtless; your beloved person must be missed and you must feel sad for yourself for a time. As for sadness on his account, there is nothing to justify it: No harm has been done to him; he has only reached the goal we are all seeking.

Suppose a group of people wanted to travel to Alexandria from Cairo. One may have to go on foot because he has no money or access to a means of transportation. Another may go riding a donkey and a third on horseback. One may go on a bus, or on-board a plane. Maybe someone could even travel by a rocket! They perhaps take different ways, but each of them finally reaches the goal by the means available to them. Likewise, the journey of one person to Allah may take him seventy years, whereas another may be called to meet Him after a short journey. Why then, should you feel sad for him?

We should be sad for a person who has strayed from the goal and led a misguided life. As for him who was guided to serving the goal in the manner Allah has ordained, we should be happy for him: Allah has cut short for him the distance that separated him from his goal. A parent would break his heart over a beloved child who died at a young age lamenting his misfortune of not seeing enough of the world. Dear parent, just think again: Allah has only spared your child many sins he would have committed and a long journey he would have travelled, and has taken him faster to the ultimate goal we all seek, so why let

sadness overcome you? This is not meant to sound callous; rather, it is a call to resign ourselves to whatever Allah decrees in matters out of our hands. He is the All-Wise and All-Merciful and everything He decrees is for a reason.

After those noble verses where Allah speaks about the Virgin Maryam (Mary) and Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), He *the Exalted and Almighty* says:

فَلَمَّا أَحَسَّ عِيسَىٰ مِنْهُمُ الْكُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ أَنْصَارِي إِلَى اللَّهِ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ
 نَحْنُ أَنْصَارُ اللَّهِ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

When Jesus realized they [still] did not believe, he said, 'Who will help me in God's cause?' The disciples said, 'We will be God's helpers; we believe in God – witness our devotion to Him [52] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 52)

Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was keen to obviously declare the essence of faith and purpose of his Message from the very beginning: 'Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path'. (*Al-'Imran*: 51) Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) thus indisputably clarified the truth to his people: both you and I are servants of Allah, the One God, and I have no advantage over you except that He has chosen me to deliver the Message to you. With regards to worship, we are all equal before Him: Allah is my Lord and your Lord and the straight way is to worship Him alone, with no partners.

The phrase "the straight path" conveys the meaning of a road leading to an end. No road is made for its own sake; it must be meant to lead somewhere. When we hear the word "path," we instantly understand that there must be an end to be sought through this path. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'This is My path, leading straight, so follow it and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it'. This is what He commands you to do so that you may refrain from wrongdoing'. (*al-An'am*: 153)

One must first determine the end he wants to pursue so that he may find the right way that can take him there. Let us read again the words of 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), as Allah quotes him in the Quran: 'Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him...' (*Al-'Imran*: 51).

The concept of worship encompasses every deed by which a servant shows devotion to his Lord. It is not restricted to observance of rituals; it is not just about uttering the Testimony of Faith- “I testify that there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”. It is not just about performing salah (prayer), paying zakat (poor dues), and observing sawm (fasting) of *Ramadan* and performing *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) for whoever can afford the journey are the only practices connected to worship. These are the tenets of Islam on which it is based, but does a building constitute of pillars only? Likewise, one’s faith cannot be complete when he is disconnected from his Lord except for the limited time when he observes rituals. Rituals are mandatory for every Muslim; they are the source of spiritual energy that refuels faith and empowers the soul to struggle for the cause of Allah. Worship is not confined to rituals, but it includes every action one does to contribute to the welfare of humanity and prosperity of the world, while directing his intention to pleasing Allah. “The pillars of worship” is a term Islamic scholars of jurisprudence have developed to draw a distinction between the various sections of worship and their juristic rulings. However, it does not mean worship is confined to those pillars; rather, everything Allah commands is included under the name “worship”. So, worship is comprised of the acts one observes to be connected to his Lord and Creator and recharge his spiritual power, as well as the actions one does to contribute to the prosperity of the universe. We have previously said that the rituals Allah has enjoined on us usually require one to suspend a worldly occupation for a while to observe them. One is always busy earning or managing other affairs of his life. The clearest example of this is illustrated in the following verse: ‘Oh 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)

This command to observe the congregational prayer on Friday requires one to leave off trade temporarily and return to it after the prayer is done. “Trade” is particularly mentioned in the verse since it is the most obviously direct way of earning money and sustenance. This choice of the word “trade” represents one of the countless instances of miraculous precision in the wording of the Noble Quran. Allah did not say, for example, “Leave off manufacturing” or “Leave off farming”; rather, He mentions trade since it is the kind of

occupation that yields instant profits. Farming involves waiting for a long time for crops to grow and profits to be generated. Trade, on the other hand, is the kind of occupation where profits are instantly generated upon concluding a transaction. The divine command to leave off this instant profit to hasten for observing the Friday Prayer necessarily implies that every other occupation that can yield profits must be suspended and resumed after the prayer is done.

Precision of the expression used in the verse does not stop here. Even though the term is rendered in the English translation of the verse as “trade,” the Arabic word used literally means “selling.” Allah particularly addresses sellers, for one would sometimes buy something reluctantly, unlike a seller who is often eager to sell his commodities to gain profits. A man may be buying something for his household and when he hears the call to the Friday Prayer, he should hasten to answer the call and postpone his purchases; he should suspend his shopping once he hears the call to the Friday Prayer. This is normal in the case of a purchaser, for people do not love to pay money, but it would take a seller more effort to suspend his transactions to observe the prayer. By that command, Allah enjoins on us to leave off the tempting occupation of making instant profit by selling goods and receiving their prices.

What should we do when the Friday Prayer is over? ‘And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the Bounty of Allah and remember Allah often that you may succeed’. (*al- Jumu'a*: 10) After we observe the Friday Prayer, Allah commands us to return to our worldly affairs and seek out His Bounty. This implies that dispersing throughout the land to seek lawful provision is an act of worship, too.

In the aforementioned verse, a word is particularly worthy of reflecting on: ‘disperse within the land...’ (*al- Jumu'a*: 10). The Arabic word “*fantashiru*” (meaning “disperse”) denotes spreading over a wide range which implies a command from Allah that we should take care of all aspects of life and excel in all fields to fulfil our goal and responsibility of achieving prosperity and the wellbeing of humankind. Every act of goodness done for the pleasure of Allah is an act of worship and this is how we should understand the words of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) quoted in the Quran: ‘Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path’. (*Al- 'Imran*: 51)

After this, Allah says: 'But when 'Isa (Jesus) felt [persistence in] disbelief from them...' (*Al- 'Imran: 52*) He had already made a clear and decisive statement summing up the essence of faith when he declared, 'Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord...' (*Al- 'Imran: 51*) This implies a warning that the followers of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) may perhaps ascribe to 'Isa (Jesus) something more than that he is a servant of Allah, who is totally submissive to Him and ordered to obey and worship Him. He thus clarified to them the fundamentals of faith: '...That is the straight path'. (*Al- 'Imran: 51*)

Then, Allah says: 'But when 'Isa (Jesus) felt [persistence in] disbelief from them...' (*Al- 'Imran: 52*) Everyone with a mission and a goal must necessarily have vigilance and discretion. The bearer of a religious call must have sound judgment so he can take people out of the darkness and into the light. Someone may wonder why people tend to live in darkness and are not interested in coming into the light without resistance. The answer is: Some benefit from keeping most people in darkness. Such oppressors usurp the rights of others and spread corruption, so they fear and hate those who call people to the way of Allah. They hate to be advised against evil-doing or called to right guidance and logic. They cannot bear to listen to the voice of reason and the call to faith and hate as much those who undertake to spread them.

A caller to the way of Allah has to be wise and discreet. He should know that, while some accept his call and happily embrace the religion of Allah, others are enraged by his call. In every community, there are people who live in corruption; that is their religion. A caller to Allah has to be well aware of such feelings and attitudes so he can deal with them successfully. He has to employ all the senses Allah has granted him- eyesight, hearing, etc. - for this purpose. One who calls to Allah has to dedicate all the abilities Allah has endowed him with to distinguish between those who truly welcome his call and are sincerely ready to accept it, and those who reject it or try to bar people from the way to Allah. He must have judgment and understanding to tell a hypocrite from a true believer.

Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) declared the essence of faith and the ordinance of Allah. Then, he understood that some who were prone to misguidance and evil-doing did not want to accept faith. He was full of

vigilance and attentiveness. He knew he was sent with a Message from Allah to save people from deviation and teach them uprightness. When he felt their persistence in disbelief, he found it time to single out those who truly believed with him to aid him in the issue of his call to Allah: ‘...he said, “Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?”’ (*Al-'Imran: 52*)

Delivering the Message of Allah is like fighting an uphill battle: losses and sacrifices are inevitable. For this end, one may have to sacrifice wealth and even life; so Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) had to choose and urge forward those who believed themselves capable of undertaking such a mission. He did not call specific individuals; rather, he declared his purpose so that supporters who found in themselves the ability to carry the banner of the call would join him. He wanted their sacrifices to be offered voluntarily out of deep faith and true enthusiasm, not just as an answer to an obligation. ‘But when ‘Isa (Jesus) felt [persistence in] disbelief from them, he asked, “Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?”...’ (*Al-'Imran: 52*) What does “supporter” mean? It means a person who offers all the power he possesses to support your cause.

When Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) asked: ‘Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?’ (*Al-'Imran: 52*), he meant to single out those whose intentions were directed to pleasing Allah. He did not want those who sought any worldly gains, such as spoils of war, power, prestige, etc. He wanted to win to his side true supporters who had determination and sincerity so they would give their all to the cause of Allah alone.

This is similar to what happened between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the men of Medina who pledged allegiance to him at Aqabah. Muhammad, The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* told them: ‘I take allegiance from you that you will protect me from what you protect your women and children from’. Ad-Da’ ibn Ma’rur took his hand and said, ‘Yes, by the One Who has sent you with the Truth, we will protect you from what we protect our families’. They pledged allegiance to Prophet Muhammad on these terms. Then, Abu Al-Haytham ibn At-Tayhan stood up and said, ‘Oh Messenger of Allah, we have ties with the Jews and we will sever them. If we do so and Allah grants you victory, will you return to your people [in Mecca] and leave us?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

smiled and said, 'No, but I shall sacrifice my blood as you do [during war] and shall hold your property as inviolable and sacred as mine. I belong to you and you belong to me. I shall fight against whoever you fight and make peace with those with whom you make peace'.

Did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* promise them that they would defeat their enemies and rule the world? No; rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* told them: 'I belong to you and you belong to me'. Had he promised them victory, some of them might have been martyred before seeing it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* directed them to the ultimate goal which was not necessarily living to see victory. Rather, he said he belonged to them and they to him, which meant they were to be granted his company in paradise. That is the end worth seeking.

Likewise, when Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), asked, '...Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?' (*Al- 'Imran*: 52), he meant, 'Who will help me for the pleasure of Allah?' Why do we understand it in this way? I reflect on the meaning as much as the capacity of my mind allows; the words of Allah are forever rich in their meanings and implications. Therefore, someone else may well derive a different meaning from the verse that has not come to my thoughts. As I have said before, a "supporter" is someone who spares no effort and employs all the power he possesses to back a cause. Given this understanding, what does it mean to "support faith"? Allah answers this in the Noble Quran: 'Oh, you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet'. (*Muhammad*: 7)

Supporting the cause of Allah is committing ourselves to His religion: this is what He enjoins on us. Thus, a believer's "help/support" for the cause of Allah is to obey His ordinance. The result is that Allah supports the believers, too, and grants them victory. Accordingly, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* may have meant by his question, 'Who will support me so that Allah will include them in His support?'

We are before two forces here: the people of faith and the people of disbelief. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) asked: '...Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?' (*Al- 'Imran*: 52) In other words, he asked about those who were ready and able to join the cause and support it wholeheartedly for one goal:

pleasing Almighty Allah. We understand this meaning in light of what Allah says in the following verse: ‘Oh you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet’. (*Muhammad: 7*)

The believers are ordained to support the cause of Allah through obedience and when they do, Allah supports them by making them firm in faith and granting them victory. In this way, the question Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) asked his people, ‘...Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?’ (*Al-Imran: 52*) bears both senses together. Thus asked, some of the people of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) answered: ‘...We are supporters for [the cause of] Allah. We have believed in Allah and testify that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]’. (*Al-Imran: 52*) The disciples were a group of people in whose faces the sign of faith shone as though they were brilliantly illuminated. This “light” of the face does not mean white skin; rather, the light of a believer’s face is a reflection of the light of faith in his soul. Allah describes those who believed in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as: ‘...forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing and prostrating [in prayer], seeking bounty from Allah and [His] Pleasure. Their mark is on their faces from the trace of prostration...’ (*al-Fath: 29*).

Even if a believer is black-skinned, he has brilliance on his face. How is this and why? Because the human body consists of many systems and has been made of atoms, and every system in the human body has a fixed function. When all of these systems are directed to what Allah wishes, all of his body systems work in harmony. Consequently, the soul is at rest. When the functions of these systems are in conflict with one another, a person appears to be gloomy.

When ‘Isa (Jesus) said, ‘... Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?...’ (*Al-Imran: 52*), he heard the answer from the disciples who were people that enjoyed the brilliance caused by harmony between soul and faith. Perhaps they had good and commendable characteristics which cast brilliance on their faces.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* named some of his Companions "the disciples of the Messenger of Allah." They were the ones whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* accompanied all the time. When the disciples of Isa (Jesus) said, ‘We are supporters for [the cause

of] Allah...' (*Al-Imran: 52*), this meant that all of them wanted to be supporters for Allah's cause, and join in with the cause of supporting Allah's guidance. This required each one of them to know the guidance of Allah. We know that the basic element of supporting the cause of Allah is faith. What is faith? It is the heart's tranquillity with regards to something, and this is considered the general meaning of faith. If a person does not believe that the way he takes will lead him to the destination he seeks, he will not follow it.

For example, if a traveller from Cairo to Damietta does not believe that the road he takes is the right road, he will not take it. In addition, if a person does not believe that he will fail if he does not study his lessons, he will not study. So, everything in this world is based on faith. However, if the specific significance of faith is intended, then it refers to the heart's tranquillity towards the most important cause: belief in Allah. Therefore, the basic element of supporting the cause of Allah is the submission of all of a person's limbs to Allah. Therefore, the disciples said, '...We have believed in Allah and testify that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]'. (*Al-Imran: 52*)

Why did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bear witness upon them? Because a Messenger should convey Allah's Message to his people and bear witness upon them, as Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...and in this [Revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So, establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector and excellent is the helper'. (*al-Hajj: 78*)

We should note that Allah caused the disciples to mention the words denoting faith first because it is an unseen matter that settles in the heart. Then, they asked for witnessing that they submitted to Allah because submission to Allah involves submission to the obligations and rulings of faith. Their statement '...and testify that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]' (*Al-Imran: 52*) is also a request from them to 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), to inform them with all the prerequisites of submission to Allah, i.e., to tell them what they should do and what they should not do.

They said, '... we have believed...' and since they declared their belief in Allah, they believed in the Message conveyed by 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam

(Mary), who had to witness that they submitted to Allah. This testimony could not be fulfilled unless he informed them of all the rulings and he did, so they acted in accordance with these rulings and then said,

رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا بِمَا أُنزِلَتْ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

Lord, we believe in what You have revealed and we follow the messenger: record us among those who bear witness [to the Truth] [53] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 53)

Does their declaration of faith mean that they believed in the legislation of a previous Message? No; faith here means belief in the Message which 'Isa (Jesus) conveyed from Allah because every Messenger conveyed a certain Message from Allah, as this is the reason for sending a new Messenger. We know that creeds, historical reports, and stories do not change, but rulings change. This implies that the declaration of faith made by the disciples was a declaration of their belief in the former creeds that were sent before the mission of 'Isa (Jesus), as well as the rulings and legislations conveyed by him.

They said, 'Oh our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed...' The phrase '...what You revealed...' (*Al-'Imran*: 53) refers to the Message of guidance which was sent from a high status to a lower one and we receive legislation from a Sublime Entity. We said previously that when Allah calls those who believe in Him to follow the guidance of faith, He says, "come", i.e., rise to the level of receiving a Message from Allah, follow His Guidance and do not remain at the lowest level of faith. In addition, Allah orders the people not to follow the vain desires, opinions, and legislations of each other. Since a believer desires loftiness with regards to faith, he should adopt the Divine Law in his conduct on earth.

They said, 'Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and have followed the Messenger 'Isa (Jesus)...' (*Al-'Imran*: 53) A follower is usually convinced first by a person he follows so that the act of following originates willingly from the depth of one's heart, not compulsorily or coercively. If we find a person forcing another person to go along with him, we cannot say that a person being forced is "following" the other one. However, we can use the word "follow" when this act takes place willingly and voluntarily. If a person

accompanies another by force or compulsion, this act can be called “superficial” following. Accordingly, it is possible for a tyrant to hold a whip and force a weak person to follow him, an act which involves outward submission on the part of the weak person; but his heart has not submitted, as compulsion causes outward submission, but not inward submission.

‘Perhaps, [Oh Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers. If We willed, We could send down to them from the sky a sign for which their necks would remain humbled’. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4) Allah informs His Messenger that it is not difficult for the Creator to handle any person's affairs, as He is able to give life and death. If He wants to send down a miracle that may cause all His servants to submit humbly to Him, He will do so. However, Allah does not want to compel people, but He wants their hearts to submit to Him willingly. He also wants His Servant and Messenger to have faith, while not being able to compel them to belief. This shows the greatness of faith.

After they had declared their belief in the Message conveyed by 'Isa (Jesus), the disciples said: ‘...so register us among the witnesses [to the truth]’. (*Al-Imran*: 53) This is a request which denotes sublime and vigilant faith. They bore the responsibility of conveying the Message from their Prophet and they bore witness over their nations in the way the Messengers did. In addition, they asked Allah to count them among those who testify that the Messengers convey the Message of Allah which they would convey after them. Therefore, we said about the community of followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that it is the community that Allah has charged with the responsibility of conveying Muhammad's Message until the Day of Judgment. Why? The answer is Allah's saying: ‘And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you, in the religion, any difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Ibrahim (Abraham). Allah named you "Muslims" before [in former scriptures] and in this [Revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So, establish prayer and give *zakat* and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector and excellent is the helper’. (*al-Hajj*: 78) For this reason, no Prophets or Messengers will come after Muhammad *peace and*

blessings be upon him as Allah gave Muhammad's community of followers the responsibility of conveying His Message after his death.

Then, Allah says:

وَمَكْرُوهٌ وَمَكْرُ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَكْرِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

The [disbelievers] schemed but God also schemed; God is the Best of Schemers [54] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 54)

Things that can be perceived by the mind have names and are recognised first by the senses, as they help him conceive things. Then, we come to know the meanings of things when we grow up. The beginning is always with perceivable matters. Therefore, Allah describes religious Guidance as a straight path because we know the goal and the path that leads to it. The phrase "straight path" is a perceivable matter which people come to know by implementing the rules of this guidance.

The word "*makr*" (plan) in Arabic is derived from the context of trees. When a person sees a tree whose branches are not twisted around one another, it is possible for him to recognise the branch to which a certain leaf belongs. However, some kinds of trees have their branches wrapped around each other, so a person cannot recognise the branch to which a certain leaf belongs. Therefore, this word "*makr*" in this context refers to the person who deceives and cheats people. When a person tricks another in order to discover the truth, or uses artifice in order to expose the truth - provided that he intends no harm - this is called a "strategy." However, if harm is intended, this is called an evil *makr* (plot or plan). Therefore, Allah says: '...but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people. Then do they await except the way of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way of Allah any change and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration'. (*Fatir*: 43)

This means that there is harmless *makr* (plan) which is not intended to do harm to anyone: this is called a good *makr*. However, the *makr* (plan) that is intended to cause harm is called an evil *makr* (plot or plan). The question is: what drives a person to scheme? The one who schemes conceals his motives; he may show love when he actually has feelings of hatred. In addition, this

person may make an act appear pleasing in order to scheme against people. He may also try to take another person to a distant and uninhabited place in order to severely harm him, or perhaps to kill him.

So, one of the basics of scheming is plotting which requires craftiness and experience because the one who tries to plot may encounter a person who uncovers his plot by conjecture and guessing. As scheming requires plotting, this shows human weakness because the strong person does not scheme or deceive; rather, he confronts directly.

When a strong person catches a weak enemy, he may let him go because he is confident that his strength can harm this weak person. However, when the weak person captures a strong person, he considers this matter as an opportunity that may not come again. Regarding this, a poet said:

When a weak person finds an opportunity, he kills: Such is the power of the weak.

The weak person is the one who schemes and plots. The schemer may take into consideration that his foe has a more cunning plot and more wisdom and that he may harm him severely. Accordingly, the schemer conceals his *makr* (plan or plot). If the opponents of religious Guidance want to scheme, against whom do they scheme? The Messenger is not alone at this battle; Allah is with him. 'They [think to] deceive Allah and those who believe, but they deceive not except themselves and perceive [it] not'. (*al-Baqara*: 9) Allah knows what any person conceals; therefore, when He wants to reveal something and make it prominent, no one can resist His Will and Command. Hence, Allah's *makr* (good plan) is unmatched.

'And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners'. (*Al-Imran*: 54) When you find an attribute that seems inappropriate to describe Allah with, you should know that it has been mentioned for the purpose of showing similarity only, but it is not one of the Magnificent Names of Allah. The believers may say to the disbelievers, "If you desire to plot against us, Allah is able to turn the scheme against you". As for the Names and Attributes of Allah, they are *tawqifiyah* (bound by a religious text and not amenable to personal opinion) and were sent down by Jibril (Gabriel) to

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If an action is ascribed to Allah, it is not possible to derive an attribute from it and use it as a name for Allah. In this verse, 'And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners...' (*Al-'Imran*: 54), "plotter or schemer" cannot be considered among Allah's Magnificent Names and we should never say this because the Names and Attributes of Allah are *tawqifiyah* (bound by a religious text and not amenable to personal opinion). The Planning of Allah is mentioned in order to draw analogy with the people's planning and to show them that they cannot deceive Allah or scheme against Him. This is because if Allah wills to scheme against them, they will be unable to encounter His Scheme. Allah says: 'And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners...' (*Al-'Imran*: 54).

This means that there is a good *makr* (plan) and this indicates that some people use schemes for good purposes. Why does this verse come here? It came here because 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), engaged in a battle in which he did not fight with a sword to protect the creed. However, he was sent as an adviser to guide the people to faith. Victory is not only attained by a sword, but it can be attained by overwhelming evidence. We know that Allah did not ask any Messenger to fight in the cause of faith because He undertook the punishment of the disobedient.

'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 and among them were those whom We drowned. And Allah would not have wronged them, but it was they who were wronging themselves'. (*al-'Ankabut*: 40)

No fighting took place except when the children of Israel asked for it: 'Have you not considered the assembly of the children of Israel after (The time of] Musa (Moses) when they said to a Prophet of theirs, "Send to us a king and we will fight in the way of Allah"? He said, "Would you perhaps refrain from fighting if fighting was prescribed for you?" They said, "And why should we not fight in the cause of Allah when we have been driven out

from our homes and from our children?" But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers'. (*Al- 'Imran: 246*)

However, Allah has given the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* permission to fight in defence of themselves in order to punish those who attempt to prevent the true creed from reaching people. The sword is not intended to compel the people to accept the creed; rather, it is intended only to protect the choice of the creed made by the believers. Instead of leaving the people to be compelled to follow a false creed, the Muslims fight any tyrant that oppresses Allah's servants. Moreover, Allah's servants have the right to choose their own creed. Therefore, when the enemies of Islam say that Islam was spread by the sword, we reply: Allah caused Islam to begin in a weak state in order to refute this accusation and the earlier Muslims were weak and unable to defend themselves. Therefore, some of them immigrated to Abyssinia seeking protection. If Islam was spread by the sword, a question should be asked: who held the first sword to force the first person to believe? The Muslims chose Islam as a religion when they were extremely weak. Islam began, continued, and still exists by the power of faith.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came from an illiterate nation, a tribe marked by power and valour. However, Allah willed not to support His Religion by causing the powerful members of Quraysh first to embrace Islam; rather, it was initially the weak people who believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and who spent thirteen years in Mecca calling the people to Allah. Then, he migrated to Medina and all the Muslims were strongly united by faith. The sword was not used to impose a creed on the people; rather, it was used to protect a people's freedom to choose the true creed. If Islam was spread by the sword, how can we explain the presence of followers of other religions in Muslim lands? Islam gave every person the opportunity to choose his faith.

So, every Muslim represents an independent unity of faith and must be aware that Islam was spread by following good examples. In addition, as a believer in Allah and His Religion, every Muslim should know that Allah has chosen them

to put the instructions of faith into practice, and that Allah has caused Islam to be firmly established on the earth by good conduct and good habits.

Every Muslim's conduct should be free from shortcomings which may be exploited by the enemies of Islam. This is because the imbalance between the Muslim's conduct and Allah's Law is considered as a gap that is exploited by the enemies of Islam. Therefore, when the intellectuals of other religions review Islam, they become convinced of Islam because it is a True Religion. They examine it intellectually and are guided to it by their intuitive faith. As for those who wish to slander Islam, they consider the behaviour of some Muslims and find therein the shortcomings which they can use to accuse Islam. The honest thinkers always make a distinction between the creed and its followers. Therefore, most of the intellectuals who follow this approach embrace Islam and believe in it. However, as for those who judge Islam by its followers, if they find a devout Muslim, this calls them to believe in Islam, and vice versa. Therefore, the majority of populations in the modern Islamic countries are in countries that were not reached by the Islamic conquest; rather, devout Muslims who were good examples caused the spread of Islam. The pious life, upright behaviour, and tolerant, honest, and righteous ways of dealing with people represented by those devout Muslims appealed to the people of these countries and drew their attention to Islam. They asked these Muslims, "What makes you adopt this good behaviour?" And they replied, "Because we are Muslims".

The people in these communities wondered, "What is Islam?" Then, the Muslims began to explain it to them. Thus, what attracted the people to Islam was the upright and disciplined behaviour of one who abides by the instructions of the religion. Therefore, when Allah outlines the methodology of successful *da`wah* (the call to the worship of Allah), He says: 'And who is better in speech than he who [says], "My Lord is Allah (believes in His Oneness)," and then stands firm (acts upon His Order) and invites (men) to Allah's (Islamic Monotheism) and does righteous deeds and says, "I am one of the Muslims"?' (*Fussilat*: 33)

Da`wah (calling to the worship of Allah) should be carried out by speech and righteous conduct so that a believer proves that what he calls others to,

has been beneficial for him and so he has adhered to it. Righteous conduct proves the accord between word and deed. The Muslim should not merely be content with this; however, he should declare: '...I am one of the Muslims'. (*Fussilat*: 33) To whom should he say this? He should say this to whoever sees him adopting this good, upright, and tolerant conduct. This draws attention to his religion rather than his own self.

This explains how Islam was spread by means of a group of traders who travelled from one country to another, dealing with people using Islamic manners, earnestness and piety so that their devout conduct drew the people's attention. When the people asked them about the secret behind their righteous conduct, one of them said, "I have not invented such a conduct, but this is instructed in Allah's Religion, Islam, which I follow".

An example of this exemplary behaviour is the earlier Muslims from among the Companions of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. They *may Allah be pleased with them* feared for him from his opponents and so they guarded him in shifts in order to protect him against any danger. Allah *Glorified is He* willed that His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should migrate from Mecca to Medina in secret and 'Ali ibn Abu Talib *Allah be pleased with him* slept in Muhammad's place. 'Ali wanted to be Prophet Muhammad's guard and to protect him from any possible danger.

There is no doubt that he did that because he was sure that the survival of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was good for Islam even if he sacrificed himself for his sake. This is the case of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: all of them loved Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because taking the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad as an example and following Allah's Religion can only result in good in all aspects of life. If one of them died in the cause of protecting a person whom Allah sent as a Messenger to deliver His Call, they would attain martyrdom in Allah's Cause.

Consider Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* when he was in the cave with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Did he not tear pieces of his clothes to block the cracks he found? Did he not place his foot in a crack for fear that an insect might harm Prophet Muhammad *peace and*

peace and blessings be upon him? He wanted to protect Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even if it required the sacrifice of his own life. This is a testimony to the fact that the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* believed that the preservation of his life was better for them, their faith, and their souls than the preservation of their own lives. In this way, Allah wanted to give victory to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after his migration to Medina, when he fought the enemies of Islam who schemed –but Allah is the best of planners.

It is as though Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* were saying with this victory, "You will not be able to harm Muhammad, neither by confrontation nor by scheming". One of his followers, 'Umar, *Allah be pleased with him*, migrated in public, saying, 'Whoever wants his mother to be bereaved, his wife to be widowed, or his son to be orphaned, let him follow me behind this valley!' On the contrary, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* migrated secretly. Why? Because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is an example for the weak. The strong person was able to protect himself and emigrate openly; however, the weak person had to migrate secretly. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a good example for the weak. The enemies of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* schemed against him, but Allah schemed against them: 'And they had planned their plan, but with Allah is [recorded] their plan, even if their plan had been [sufficient] to do away with the mountains'. (*Ibrahim*: 46)

Despite the violence and severity of their planning - which had been sufficient to do away with the mountains - their plan failed when it faced Allah's plan which protects His Messengers and pious servants. The Children of Israel made a scheme about which Allah has revealed His saying, 'And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners'. (*Al-'Imran*: 54) This is because they wanted to get rid of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَٰعِيسَىٰ إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ
إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْلِفُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

**God said, ‘Jesus, I will take you back and raise you up to Me: I will purify you of the disbelievers. To the Day of Resurrection I will make those who follow you superior to those who disbelieved. Then you will all return to Me and I will judge between you regarding your differences [55]
(The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 55)**

Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned this wise saying after tackling the issue of their scheming. This indicates that 'Isa (Jesus) sensed disbelief on the part of the children of Israel, plotting and conspiring to murder him, so Allah reassured him about the end of the struggle: ‘Oh 'Isa (Jesus), indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection....’ (*Al-’Imran*: 55) This verse includes four situations that Allah *Glorified is He* willed for 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon him*.

Let us consider Allah’s saying ‘... I will take you....’ Generally, we understand words according to their common meanings, disregarding the other meanings so that the common meaning circulates and we understand the meaning of the word. We understand that the Arabic word "*Al-Tawafy*" means “death,” but here we must refer to the original root of the word. A particular meaning may generally be associated with a word, though the word actually encompasses several meanings; a person eventually uses it exclusively for one of these meanings. A person may understand the meaning of the Arabic word "*Al-Tawafy*" as death, but does Allah not say ‘... I will take you...’? (*Al-’Imran*: 55) He also says in the Noble Quran: ‘And it is He who takes your souls by night and knows what you have committed by day. Then He revives you therein that a specified term may be fulfilled. Then to Him will be your return; then He will inform you about what you used to do’. (*al-An‘am*: 60)

So, what does the Arabic word "*yatawaffakum*" mean here? It means "cause you to sleep." "Sleep" is another meaning of this word. Allah also says in His Book, '...I will take you....' (*al-An'am*: 60) Also: 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought' (*az-Zumar*: 42).

Allah also referred to the Arabic word "*Al-Nawm*" (meaning "sleep") as "death." This is one of the expressions of the Quran which clarifies that the word "*Al-Tawaffi*" does not only mean death; rather, it has other meanings, although the word is generally used to refer to one meaning. The common people consider that this is the only meaning of the word, so when it is used, they do not imagine any other meaning. Therefore, we say: We must be extremely precise when considering words and why they are used.

Someone may say, "Why does Allah choose words in this way?" The answer is: Because these matters which the mind has to scrutinize deeply do not affect rulings. Allah mentions them in a way that has many possible meanings so that no one exerts himself to scrutinize deeply a matter that does not require this. If someone believes that Allah raised 'Isa *peace be upon him* up to heaven, does this add any ruling to his religion? If someone does not believe that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was raised, does this diminish any ruling from his religion? This issue does not affect any religious rulings, but the mind may deeply consider it, and someone may say, "How was he raised to heaven?" Another may say, "Allah caused him to die". Any person can consider it in the way he likes because it does not affect the rulings required by the religion.

So, matters which do not affect the rulings enjoined on the people are mentioned by Allah in a way that can be understood in more than one way so that the mind does not get bogged down in issues that bring neither harm nor benefit. We know now that the Arabic word "*tawaffa*" which is derived from "*Al-Wafat*" means "sleep" from Allah's saying: 'And it is He who takes your souls by night and knows what you have committed by day. Then He revives you therein so that a specified term may be fulfilled. Then to Him will be your return; then He will inform you about what you used to do'. (*al-An'am*: 60)

And from His saying: 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought' (*az-Zumar*: 42).

Allah *Glorified is He* referred to the Arabic word "*Al-Nawm*" (sleep) as "death" because it is absence from life. The Arabic language clarifies this point: for example, when you lend a person some money and he asks you to waive some of it, you say, "No, I must *astawfy maly*" (receive my money in full). When he gives it all to you, you say, "*istawfayt maly*" (I have taken my money in full).

So, the Arabic word "*mutawaffika*" may mean "taking something in full". I say this point in order to clarify the difference between "death" and "killing" both of which meaning taking someone's life. This may occur by physical destruction, as when a person strikes another on his head and kills him. As for death, it is not always associated with physical destruction; Allah takes the soul and the body visibly remains as it is. Therefore, Allah has distinguished in His Wise Quran between "death" and "killing," although they share the meaning of "the ending of a life."

'Muhammad is not but a Messenger. [Other] Messengers have passed on before him. So, if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will never harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful'. (*Al-Imran*: 144)

Both death and killing result in the termination of life. Yet, only killing ends a life by destroying the body. Some people overpower others and kill them. However, no one says, "I want so-and-so to die" because death is that which Allah causes to His servants to end their lives by taking their souls. Human beings are able to kill the body, but the body is not entitled to cast the soul out. Rather, the soul gives life to the body it enters; and when Allah takes it from the body, it dies and becomes a corpse.

So, 'killing' is considered as a disturbance of the special attributes that Allah decreed for the existence of the soul in a body such as the soundness of the brain or heart. If one of these basic special attributes is disturbed, the soul does not stay in the body anymore.

When the soul is extracted, it is not because it wants to be extracted for any reason; rather, the body is not suitable anymore to accommodate it. We will give an example: If electricity has been installed in a house, you know that it is available because of the light which the lightbulb emits. The lightbulb is not the source of light because light does not appear except in a form that has these particular attributes. The evidence is that if the lightbulb is broken, electricity is still available, but light is not emitted. Such is the case with the soul with respect to the body.

The soul does not exist except in a body which has certain attributes, the most important of which is that the cells of the body are suitable. If the heart stops, it is possible to massage it and return to life before the lapse of eight seconds. If the brain cells are damaged, however, life ends because the attributes which are necessary for the soul to exist have been disturbed. Therefore, the soul only inhabits a body which has special attributes and killing is a basic way of destroying the body and ending life. Death, however, is the termination of life without the necessary destruction of the body and no one is capable of that except Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*.

However, Allah's creatures can harm the body because it is a physical substance. Therefore, the Arabic word "*famutawaffika*" means "to receive something in full such as money" and it also means "sleep." When Allah says: '... *inny mutawaffika*...' (*Al-'Imran*: 55), it means that Allah *Glorified is He* intends to say, "I will take you in full. My creatures are unable to harm your body; I will take you as a whole, because on earth you will be subject to the plots hatched by people. I will take you to a place where you will be devoted entirely to Me; I have taken you completely from people with the soul still remaining in the body with all its attributes. Therefore, those who are able to damage the body (physical substance) will not be able to do this." So, Allah's saying, '...raise you to Myself...' (*Al-'Imran*: 55) is in accordance with His previous saying: '... I will take you...' (*Al-'Imran*: 55)

Someone may say, "Why should we understand the Arabic word '*Al-Wafah*' according to this meaning?" We say the Omnipotent Allah is able to say, "I will raise you to me and then cause you to die". We also say that the Arabic letter "*Waw*," which means in English "and" does not suggest a particular

order of events? Does Allah not say, 'And how [severe] were My punishment and warning'. (*al-Qamar*: 16)

Does the punishment take place before or after the warnings? Surely, it takes place after the warnings. The Arabic letter "waw" means "and" in English. It simply refers only to the combination of two events. In addition, Allah says in His Book: 'And [mention, Oh Muhammad], when We took from the Prophets their covenant and from you and from Nuh (Noah) and Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary); and We took from them a solemn covenant'. (*al-Ahzab*: 7)

The Arabic letter "waw" which means "and" in English does not imply a particular order of events, so if the word "*mutawaffika*" (*Al- 'Imran*: 55) is considered to mean "I will cause you to die", no one can say that the Arabic letter "waw" implies a certain order of events, i.e., that Allah caused 'Isa (Jesus) to die and then raised him.

If someone says, "Then why has the word "*mutawaffika*" (*Al- 'Imran*: 55) been mentioned first?" the answer will be: Because some people may think that the act of raising means exempting 'Isa (Jesus) from death. However, 'Isa (Jesus) will definitely die, as death is inescapable and something that every human being will experience. This explanation is in regard to the Quranic text. If we consider the Hadith, we will find that Allah entrusted His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with explaining and clarifying matters. Allah says: '...And We revealed to you the Message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought'. (*an-Nahl*: 44)

The following Hadith was related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim: 'What will be your state when the son of Maryam (Mary) descends amongst you and there will be an Imam amongst you?' So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us that 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary) will descend again.

Let us scrutinize the matter in order to refute the rationalists who always try to tire the world out. The rationalists accept that 'Isa (Jesus) came into existence without a father and without the usual way of creation and birth. Now, if they accept that he was born in a miraculous manner that goes beyond all codes and laws, why do they question the end of his life, being

also a miraculous matter? The fact that they have accepted the first miracle should make it easy for them to accept the second.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 55)

Allah *Glorified is He* was telling 'Isa (Jesus) that He would take him in his entirety, safe from all mankind, and would purify him from the impurity of those disbelievers. He would also place those who followed him above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection. The word "follow" indicates that there is a "follower" who comes after the "followed," i.e. the "follower" is the one who comes after. Who came after 'Isa (Jesus) with guidance from the heavens? It is Muhammad *peace be upon him*, but what guidance would the people who followed 'Isa (Jesus) be upon? Would they be upon the guidance that they brought, or upon that which 'Isa (Jesus) delivered? The person who follows guidance other than that which 'Isa (Jesus) conveyed is not really considered a follower of him. However, a person who comes to rectify the situation according to True Guidance is a real follower.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to rectify the situation and to deliver Allah's Guidance in the way that Allah intends. ‘...and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 55) If we perceive the meaning in this way, we will understand that the follower of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one that has followed Allah's Guidance which all the Messengers, including 'Isa (Jesus), conveyed.

In addition, the followers of Muhammad have rectified many of the issues that the misguided people had perverted. The intended meaning here of the Arabic word "*fawq*" is not conquest and victory; rather, it means “clear proofs and rational evidence.” This can only occur in the presence of impartial and rational people who weigh matters according to their evidence and proofs. At the end, they will arrive only at the issue and creed of Islam.

Hence, the Arabic word "*fawq*" here refers to the emergence of proof and the strength of evidence. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘It is

He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it...' (*at-Tawba*: 33) In another Quranic verse, Allah confirms the manifestation of Islam over all other religions and that He bears witness to this: 'It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion. And sufficient is Allah's Witness.'" (*al-Fath*: 28)

This means that Allah has willed for Islam to prevail over all religions. Someone may say that there are many religions in the world, over which Islam has not prevailed. In addition, there are one billion Muslims in the world now, and double this number of people who follow other religions. We say that Allah has willed for Islam to prevail as a rational proof not only before this person, but also before the followers of other religions.

Let us consider the one who legislates a positive man-made legislation and ask: does any man-made legislation remain always the same? No, it is constantly amended. Why? That is because the one who introduced the first legislation did not have knowledge of the new consequences of matters that might arise in the future. Then, upon the arising of new matters in life- which were not taken into the first legislator's consideration- the people need to amend the law. Consider any amended man-made law relevant to any issue in the world: which direction does it take? It is always directed towards Islam; and if it does not arrive at Islam, it comes close to it.

When a furore occurred in Europe about divorce in Christianity, what happened? Divorce was legislated in Italy right under the nose of the Vatican. Have they legalised divorce because Islam allows it? No, they have legalised it because the circumstances of life have forced them to legalise it. They have been forced by life's circumstances to prove that the guidance of Islam which was revealed before this experience is correct. This is proved by the fact that Europe has resorted to legalising divorce, not to follow the Muslims, but to attain their life interests which cannot be attained without it. Is there a more manifest and overwhelming evidence than that which is provided by the opponent? This is the true proof. They have decided to legalise divorce despite their hatred for Islam, a decision which is considered as a proof of the truthfulness of the Islamic guidance.

Moreover, in the case of usury, which some people here want to legalise, we find Europe trying to get rid of it because they have found by experience that money does not perform its role in life unless interest rates are lowered to zero. They have realised that the cancellation of usury is necessary for money to perform its true role in life. They have resorted to this truth because usury is a cause of corruption in life, so they want to prohibit it. They have only now realized a fact which was proven by Islam fourteen centuries ago. Is there eminence or superiority for Allah's Religion greater than this? So, the opponents' understanding of that which will improve their life affairs has forced them to accept Islamic principles without even knowing it.

Let us continue our reflection on Allah's saying: '...and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al-'Imran*: 55). It means that Allah will make those who follow the original guidance which has been revealed by Allah superior to those who disbelieve. The people who improperly attribute godhood to 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), do not really follow him. The true follower of 'Isa (Jesus) is the one who follows Allah's Guidance. 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was sent as a Messenger to the children of Israel. Divine religions are not dedicated to certain races, tribes, or nations and so on; guidance results in unity. This is why Allah has stated the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah) in order to help us comprehend this point. Allah promised Prophet Nuh (Noah) that He would save his family. When he called his son to board the ark with him, his son refused. Then, Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* said to Allah: 'My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!' (*Hud*: 45) Does the word "family" refer to blood ties in the case of Prophets? No, because Allah says: 'He said, "Oh Nuh (Noah), indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge. Indeed, I advise you, lest you be among the ignorant.'" (*Hud*: 46) Why? This is because the real followers of Prophets are comprised of those who believe in them. Those who follow the guidance conveyed by 'Isa (Jesus) from Allah are not those who ascribe themselves to him, or those who call themselves Jews; these are only names. The true follower is the one who follows the guidance revealed by Allah. The legacy of

the Prophets is guidance and knowledge. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about Salman, the Persian, who did not share the Arab origin with Prophet Muhammad: 'Salman is one of us and belongs to our family'. Salman was ascribed to the Prophet's family by virtue of his faith and according to the text of the Hadith of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, '...and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al-'Imran: 55*) means that Allah renders superior those who follow His true Guidance. The one who corrected the Guidance of 'Isa (Jesus) was Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Is the concept of superiority relevant to the geographical area, as the area of land inhabited by non-Muslims is bigger than the area inhabited by Muslims? No, superiority is irrelevant to rational evidence.

Someone may say that evidence is not compelling, but we tell them that evidence is compelling, as we see those who do not believe in Islam still unintentionally prove that it is the True Religion. How do they prove that? They derive their man-made laws from the Divine Law. Since this verse contains the words "superior to" and "disbelieve", and tackles the matter of following, then there is an issue of enmity, truth, falsehood, guidance and delusion. There must be a final word in this matter. The final word comes when a person has no free will over himself, or over others.

Oppressors are able to act on the earth, but when they return to Allah, He will say, "I gave you dominion, yet you disobeyed Me in many ways, but there is a time when your dominion over the means will come to an end". So, the oppressors and those who commit falsehood may have power in this worldly life, for Allah has given us all free will and choice.

However, on the Day of Resurrection, there is no will except Allah's Will: 'The Day they come forth nothing concerning them will be concealed from Allah. To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing' (*Ghafir: 16*).

So, judgment will undoubtedly be given, as indicated by Allah's true saying, '[And they should consider that] when those who have been followed disassociate themselves from those who followed [them] and they [all] see the

punishment and cut off from them are the ties [of relationship], those who followed will say, "If only we had another turn [at worldly life] so we could disassociate ourselves from them as they have disassociated themselves from us". Thus will Allah show them their deeds as regrets upon them. And they are never to emerge from the Fire'. (*al-Baqara*: 166-167)

The one who follows a deviant person will find on the Day of Resurrection that the one he followed will absolve himself from him. These followers will ask Allah to let them return to the world so that they can take revenge on those who deceived them. This is in regard to the relationship between human beings. As for each body, we will find the skin, the tongue and the hands bearing witness for or against a person. He will be deprived of his will, and his limbs and senses which were subjugated to him, will stop serving him. If he was misguided, they will say that their owner had the power to command them to do what they did not want to do. But on the Day of Judgment, there will be neither power, nor force, nor subjugation because the dominion is entirely for Allah. Therefore, the tongues and skin will bear witness and so Allah says, '...Then to Me is your return and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ'. (*Al-'Imran*: 55)

Allah judges between them concerning that on which they used to differ. What is the outcome of this judgment? Are there any other obligations? No, but the outcome of the judgment is the recompense. No deeds will be accepted in the Hereafter and judgment therein is for the sake of recompense. As we have said, as long as there are followers and disbelievers -and one group is superior to another and their return is to Allah- we must see the judgment that will be made. Allah, The All-Wise, says:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَأُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

I will make the disbelievers suffer severely in this world and the next; no one will help them [56] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 56)

Why did not Allah mention the judgment on the believers first? That is because the believers entirely understand and believe in this fact. We must be aware here that the judgment includes torment not only in the Hereafter, but also in this worldly life. The worldly torment will occur before the judgment. It is as

though Allah were saying, "Do not imagine that the torment which I will inflict on them in this world will excuse them from the torment they will find in the Hereafter because torment in this world alone could even afflict the believers."

As for those who disbelieve in Me, I will torment them in this world and in the Hereafter. I will not delay the torment of the disbelievers until the Hereafter; rather, My torment will be inflicted on them both in this world and the Hereafter". Allah says about this torment that it will be severe because when a punishment (torment) occurs, it should reflect the power of the One Who inflicts it (Allah).

Let us give an example (and Allah gives the best descriptions): A child may break something within the limits of his power and a young man may break something in the manner that suits his power. So, we must consider events in accordance with the one who carries them out. If the doer is Allah, will anyone be able to tolerate His Torment? This is unimaginable. None of these people will have any helper because the one whom Allah debases and torments will not be helped.

Afterwards, Allah sheds light on the other group of people, saying,

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

**God will pay those who believe and do good deeds
their reward in full; God does not love evildoers [57]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 57)**

This means that just as those who disbelieve will receive severe torment from Allah, those who believe will receive permanent delight, by Allah's Leave.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted* is He says:

ذَٰلِكَ نَتْلُوهُ عَلَيْكَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ وَالذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿٥٨﴾

**We relate to you [Muhammad] this revelation, a decisive
statement [58] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 58)**

The Arabic word "*dhalika*" (meaning "this") refers to the events that have been previously mentioned concerning the wife of 'Imran, Maryam (Mary)

and Zakaryya (Zechariah), Yahya (John) and 'Isa (Jesus). Each one of these people experienced a miraculous event which went beyond the laws of the universe and was full of wondrous signs. These wondrous events were conveyed to us by those who witnessed them. The certain accounts of these wonders are mentioned in the Quran which cannot include any falsehood and is the true Book that is described by Allah as '...the precise [and wise] Message'. (*Al-'Imran*: 58) The believers should be assured concerning the accounts they receive by means of the Quran, as they are true and cannot be tainted by falsehood. The accounts that were mentioned concerning these signs is the actual truth of the matter which the people lived through and of which they spoke.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* presents the case of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* which we must be completely aware of. We will also outline the viewpoint of those who place him in other than the place that Allah intends as well as recognise the viewpoint of those who do place him in the place that Allah intended. It is not a matter of gaining victory in this world over a group who says such-and-such. Rather, it is an issue which has an outcome in the Hereafter for which Allah *Glorified is He* will hold us to account. Therefore, it is extremely important that we clarify it in a manner that reveals the truth so that no one wrongs himself.

'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* lived during the era in which Judaism was prevailing and we know that Judaism was perverted by the Jews in a manner that made it exclusively focused on material concerns without the slightest regard for spiritual matters and belief in the unseen. They were materialists in a manner that was reflected by what they said to Musa *peace be upon him* and what the Quran relates: 'And [recall] when you said, "Oh Musa (Moses), we will never believe you until we see Allah outright"; so the thunderbolt took you, while you were looking on' (*al-Baqara*: 55).

They did not pay attention to the fact that part of Allah's Perfection and Majesty is considered unseen; for if it were possible to be seen and perceived, it would be limited and encompassed. Since it was limited and encompassed in their imagination, they imagined that Allah *Glorified is He* could be present in one place and not in another. However, Allah *Glorified is He* is too Exalted to be in one place only because He is omnipresent in the existence as a whole

and we do not see Him with the eye; rather, we see the effects of His Actions and the beauty of His creation inherent in the universe. So, the fact that Allah is unseen reveals His Majesty and Perfection.

The Jews, however, considered everything tangible, even the matter of their sustenance. Allah wanted their provisions to come from a place unseen in order to relieve them of worry in the desert. Therefore, He sent down to them manna and quails as provisions from the unseen that they did not plant, purchase, or understand. They did not work to obtain it; it was provision from the unseen. However, they insolently rejected this provision that was sent down to them from the unseen and said as Allah informed us: 'And [recall] when you said, "Oh Musa (Moses), we can never endure one [kind of] food. So, call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions". [Moses] said, "Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go into [any] settlement and indeed, you will have what you have asked". And they were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the Prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing'. (*al-Baqara*: 61)

They wanted to have the food they were accustomed to and to see this food as a tangible matter. Therefore, they were suspicious of the provision of the unseen, the manna, and quails, saying that the manna and quails may not be sent again. They had no trust in the provisions granted to them from the unseen because they handled all their affairs with absolute materialism. Since all their affairs were materialistic, they were in need of a great shock to shake this materialism and take them to a spiritual meaning by which they could believe in the unseen.

We know that this materialistic thought considers life as a matter of cause and effect. So, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wanted to rid the Jews of this materialistic thought process. Therefore, He brought 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* into existence in a way contrary to the natural way through which people come into existence. Hence, He willed that 'Isa (Jesus) should be birthed by a mother only-without a father-in order to shake the Jews' materialistic laws and

beliefs. However, temptation afflicted his people who called him the Son of Allah though He is utterly too Exalted to have a son. What was the obscurity that caused them to claim that Jesus is the son of Allah?

They said that since he had a mother but no father, the obscurity came from Allah's breathing His spirit into him. Therefore, they considered Allah as the father of 'Isa (Jesus), and we seek refuge in Allah from this belief. If the matter were so, it would be more appropriate for you to be tempted by the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* rather than the creation of 'Isa (Jesus) because there is a mother in the creation of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* but there is neither a mother nor a father in the creation of Adam. If they say that Allah says that He breathed His Spirit into him, then they should be aware of Allah's saying about Adam *peace be upon him*: 'And [mention, Oh Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud. And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration'. (*at-Tawba*: 28-29)

So, Adam was also breathed into with the Spirit of Allah, so why have they been silent about this story from the time of Adam until the time of 'Isa (Jesus)? In this way, this argument has been refuted. Then, the next issue is concerned with Allah's taking 'Isa up and his death, and we will clarify both issues. When we ask why they have been tempted concerning this matter, they say that 'Isa (Jesus) brought the dead to life. Have they not considered the incident in which Allah says to Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: 'And [mention] when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead". [Allah] said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied". [Allah] said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise". (*al-Baqara*: 260)

So, the scope of temptation in the case of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is also wide. Likewise, did Musa (Mosus) *peace be upon him* not bring his staff as a sign? He did not bring a dead object that was previously alive; Allah caused life to be created by his hand in an object which had never been alive. So, the staff – a lifeless object – became a snake, moving quickly. Why,

then, were they not tempted with the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to worship him as a son of Allah? In this way, we see that it is not right for anyone to be tempted by the miracles associated with 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* or in his giving life to the dead by Allah's Leave. The followers of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* agree with us that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is Unseen, but they differ with us on this point: They say that Allah wanted to comfort mankind by appearing in the form of a human for them, so he brought 'Isa *peace be upon him* in order to provide them with comfort.

We will examine this issue without any sensitivity or prejudice but in a rational manner. We ask: did Allah create 'Isa (Jesus) in order for Him to appear in a certain form? 'Isa (Jesus) was an infant, then he grew up, so at which phase of growth did 'Isa (Jesus) represent Allah? If it is the phase of childhood or maturity did Allah come in the form of a child or a middle-aged person? Allah has one form which we neither see nor comprehend, as '...there is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura: 11*) Which form represents Allah, as claimed? If all these forms represent Allah, this means that He undergoes changes; yet He *Glorified is He* is too Exalted to undergo changes. If He has one form, we say that Allah *Glorified is He* is stable and never changes. They also say that Allah wanted to take the form of a human in order to comfort the people, so He took the form of 'Isa (Jesus).

But there is a question: how long did 'Isa (Jesus) live on earth? The answer is thirty years or slightly more. This means that the span of the people's knowledge of the Divine Form would be limited to these thirty years, according to your conception. There is an inevitable question: what is the entire duration of the human race? It amounts to millions of years. Did Allah leave His earlier creatures without revealing His Figure to them? Then, did He leave the creatures who lived after the end of 'Isa's (Jesus) mission and ascension without showing them His Figure? This is a conception of a tyrannical god; yet He *Glorified and Exalted is He* is too Exalted to be tyrannical. It does not make sense that He would take a human form for only thirty years and then withhold it. This statement is unacceptable to any intellect that trusts Allah's infinite justice.

These people also say that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was crucified and they are excused for this saying, as Allah has excused them for this and has

related a true and fair account, saying: 'And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah". And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain'. (*an-Nisa'*: 157)

Allah has excused them for saying that 'Isa (Jesus) was killed or crucified because another was made to resemble him to them. It would make sense to them to seek a solution from Islam for this problem because Islam came to say that another was made to resemble him to them for they neither killed him, nor crucified him. If the crucified person was a god, or the son of a god, he would have power surpassing that of the one who crucified him. How could any person conceive that a god or the son of a god could be overpowered by a creature? Islam says that 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was not crucified, as Allah has honoured him. In this way, you see that Islam came to purify all beliefs from the defects of perversion committed by the followers of these religions.

After this issue, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* presents to us an issue of debate that occurred during the era of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is in order that all people – Muslims, Jews and Christians – could come out of this confusion to a state of cordiality, for they all believe in worshipping one Deity. A delegation of the Christians of Najran came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina and met with him. These people had a dispute with the Jews and with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* just as the Jews and the Christians together had a dispute with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The origin of the dispute between the Jews and the Christians was that they had conflicting views about one another, which are stated by Allah: 'The Jews say, "The Christians have nothing [true] to stand on," and the Christians say, "The Jews have nothing to stand on," although they [both] recite the Heavenly Books. Thus, the polytheists speak the same as their words. But Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ" (*al-Baqara*: 113).

The Jews said that Ibrahim (Abraham) was a Jew and the Christians rejected this saying that he was a Christian. The cause of the dispute that took place

between the Christians and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was that they wanted to speak about the issue of 'Isa (Jesus) and Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wanted to finally clarify the matter in order for it not to remain a pending matter that is circulated by people and made a source of sedition. The Christians of Najran assembled under the banner of their leaders, including a person named Sayyid and another named Al- 'Aqib, a giver of advice and a priest. Prophet Muhammad asked, 'What do you say about 'Isa (Jesus) ?' They said, 'He is the son of Allah'. Prophet Muhammad said that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, 'I am a Servant of Allah', and he was His Servant, His Messenger and His Word that He bestowed on the Blessed Virgin Maryam (Mary)'. They became angry and said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Have you ever seen a person without a father? If you have seen that, then tell us!' Then, the verse was revealed:

إِنَّمَا مَثَلُ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ
 مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

**In God's eyes Jesus is just like Adam: He created
 him from dust, said to him, 'Be', and he was [59]
 (The Quran, Al-'Imran: 59)**

The final word came with a compelling proof: for if 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* came without a father, then they should remember that Adam *peace be upon him* came without a mother or a father. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'You know that I am the Messenger of Allah and the Prophet of this people'. They said, 'Give us respite until tomorrow and we will discuss this matter'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called them to believe, but they said, 'No'.

When Allah *Glorified is He* presents the struggle between truth and falsehood, He says: '...And indeed, we or you are either upon guidance or in clear error'. (*Saba'*: 24) This means that one group of us is guided and the other group is in error. Why? It is because the two issues are contradictory and mutually exclusive. Messenger Muhammad called them to meet him in an open place, to invite their women and children and to ask Allah to send His Curse upon the liars. In this regard, the following saying of Allah was revealed:

الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾ فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَكَ مِنَ
الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءَنَا وَأَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَنِسَاءَنَا وَنِسَاءَكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنْفُسَكُمْ
ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَلْ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

This is the truth from your Lord, so do not be one of those who doubt [60] If anyone disputes this with you now that you have been given this knowledge, say, ‘Come, let us gather our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, and let us pray earnestly and invoke God’s rejection on those of us who are lying [61] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 60 - 61)

The clear truth and final word have come from Allah to his Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so there is no room for doubt or argument. Whoever wants to resort to anyone’s authority let them resort to the authority of Allah, the Just Who never judges falsely, for He *Glorified is He* is the Absolute Truth.

Then, the following saying is mentioned: ‘...Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then supplicate earnestly [together] and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars [among us]’. (*Al-'Imran*: 61)

The two groups are invited to summon their women and children; so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is invited to summon his women and children and whoever he is responsible for and to attend in person, in order for them to beseech Allah. A question may be raised: why should the women and children be summoned? The answer is that women and children are the close relatives that every person cares about whether he is a Messenger or not, for they are part of his own self and his family. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was commanded to ask them to bring their beloved ones, including women and children being the closest members and the dearest to the heart, to implore Allah. Imploring here means supplicating Allah to curse the liar.

When the two groups say, ‘Oh Lord, may Your Curse descend upon the liar from among us’, this supplication implies absolute justice; for the only

God that is able to send down a curse is Allah. He will send His Curse upon whoever associates partners with Him; if curses could be sent by multiple gods, they would descend upon the followers of One Allah.

This is the reason for calling the people to supplicate Allah to send His Curse on the liar. This represents earnest invocation to the Overwhelming Force which will dispose with the matter to end the dispute. Then, the intended meaning of invocation is clarified here. When we say, "Let us invoke Allah," this means "Let us supplicate to Allah".

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them with a command enjoined by Allah, the Absolute Truth, to summon their people, including their children and women, but they said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Give us a respite until tomorrow and we will come to you'. In the morning, they sent someone to see what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had done and whether he was really ready for this matter, or it was only an empty threat. Their emissary found that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had come, accompanied by Al-Hasan, Al-Hussain, Fatimah Az-Zahra' and 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. Therefore, they said, 'We cannot meet to supplicate Allah to send down this curse. By Allah, no people have held the meeting in order to invoke Allah to send down curse except that they were destroyed'. They tried to please the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: 'We will continue to follow our religion and Muhammad and his followers will follow his religion'. They thought that the call to perform invocation was only a threat and would not be carried out. However, the Messenger who had sincere faith came with his family ready for this meeting and invocation. This step cannot be taken except by a person who has deep faith and certainty. However, a person who has no certainty will never accept such an action; rather, he will back down.

They backed down, saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'Let us agree that you will not raid us or scare us and we will send you *jiziah* (a poll tax required from non-Muslims living in an established Islamic state) in the months of *Rajab* and *Safar*, paid in horses and other things'. They fled from the invocation because they knew that they were doubtful about their stance. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he was

certain about that which Allah had revealed to him. When the Arabs went to war, they used to take their women with them so that men would be ashamed to flee and leave their children and women to be disgraced if they died; if they were killed, they would be killed along with them.

If we wish to end the dispute about the issue of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* we should heed the saying of Allah, *Glorified and Exalted is He*: '...Indeed, the example of 'Isa (Jesus) to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was. The truth is from your Lord, so do not be among the doubters'. (*Al-'Imran*: 59-60) This is the truth from the Lord; therefore, do not be among those who doubt this issue. We will settle any argument contrary to that which comes from Allah by saying, '...Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then supplicate earnestly (Together] and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars [among us]'. (*Al-'Imran*: 61) None of them will dare to do so. Why? It is due to the fact that those who came before them fled from this invocation and because Allah wants the believers to have more faith in and contentment with the fact that the Message He has revealed to His Messenger is the truth.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says,

إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَبَّ اللَّهُ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٢﴾

This is the truth of the matter: there is no god but God; God is the Exalted, the Decider [62] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 62)

Allah's saying: 'Indeed, this is the true narration...' (*Al-'Imran*: 62) draws our attention to the fact that what He relates here is the absolute truth, not only a tale or a story. It is also not a mixture of fiction and fact, as occurs in the modern age, when the word "story" has been adopted by modern literary language from the western civilisation. Fiction plays a significant role in the popular modern form of the concept of a story. However, if we realise that the literary meaning of the word "story" in Arabic is derived from "narrating an incident", educated people would search for another word than "story" when writing their novels and fictions. In reality, the actual literary meaning of "story" is an account of what actually happened without any alteration or fiction.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted* is He says, 'Indeed, this is the true narration. And there is no deity except Allah'. (*Al- 'Imran: 62*) If a narration comes from the Only Lord, we should be confident that there is no other god to come with a different narration because Allah, the One, is '...*the Exalted in Might*' (*Al- 'Imran: 62*), i.e., in the control of His Dominion. Therefore, He is also Wise with regards to His Actions. However, did those who disputed take heed? No, they did not. Allah says,

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**If they turn away, [know that] God is well aware of anyone
who causes corruption [63] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran: 63*)**

This verse indicates that Allah knew previously that they would not accept the meeting for invocation thus judging themselves as spreaders of corruption. So, Allah is truthful in His saying: 'But if they turn away, then indeed - Allah is Knowing of the corrupters'. (*Al- 'Imran: 63*)

However, Allah commanded His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to call them to the complete religion as they believed in Allah and His Book; so Allah says:

قُلْ يَتَاهَل الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا
اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ
تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**Say, 'People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is
common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner
to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords.' If they
turn away, say, 'Witness our devotion to Him' [64]
(The Quran, *Al- 'Imran: 64*)**

This is a call to an equitable word that includes no perversion: '... that we will not worship except Allah...' (*Al- 'Imran: 64*), which is an undisputed matter. Then, Allah says, '...and not associate anything with Him...' (*Al- 'Imran: 64*), i.e., we will not include with Him anything which is not able to match the

majesty of His Perfection. Sound intellects reject the idea of associating anything with Allah in divinity.

The question is: Do some people associate partners with Allah in divinity with regards to the creation of the universe? Actually, any creature which they associated with Allah in divinity came into existence after Allah created the universe. Do they associate partners with Allah with regards to managing the affairs of this universe? If this is the case, it is not a worthy cause of associating partners with Allah because Allah *Glorified is He* is able to control the universe and has revealed Guidance that will cause the universe to be in harmony if followed by people. So, there is no need for associating partners with Allah.

If He had had a partner (and we seek refuge with Allah from this belief) and some sort of deity had enjoyed special powers, these powers would detract from the powers of the second deity. This is regarded as incapacity on the part of these deities. Allah settles this matter by saying, 'Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him]'. (*al-Mu'minun*: 91) So, the issue of the partners is unacceptable.

Then, Allah says: '... and not take one another as lords instead of Allah...' (*Al-'Imran*: 64) i.e. we will not take from amongst ourselves people who act like middle-men between God and men, determining the permissible and impermissible matters for us. Allah is the Only One Who is entitled to permit and prohibit matters.

Then, Allah says: '...But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]"'. (*Al-'Imran*: 64) This means those who do not accept the worship of Allah- the One Who has no associates, nor other lords that permit and prohibit want deities and partners. This means that their hearts are not ready to accept the matter of faith which is based on the existence of only one entity that has Omnipotent Power. Faith is also based on the existence of a source of all actions: the One and the Unique so that no contradiction in natural laws occurs in the universe.

Allah gives the believers certain commands and prohibitions which they should follow; if there had been another deity, there would have been contradiction

in natural laws in the universe. This would mean that these deities would be temporal beings with capricious desires.

Allah *Glorified is He* refutes this matter, saying, 'But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined. Rather, We have brought them their Message, but they are turning away from their Message'. (*al-Mu'minun: 71*)

The following is the approach of the call to Allah as adopted by His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Say, "Oh people of the Book, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah". But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]"'. (*Al-'Imran: 64*) This verse encompasses an equitable call free from any irregularities as Allah is the Only One Who should be worshipped and Allah is the only Source of commands and prohibitions and no one should be associated in worship with Him. In addition, no one should take another as a source that permits and prohibits matters. If the people being called refuse this call, the believers should say, '...Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]'. (*Al-'Imran: 64*) It means that there is only one Allah, and He has no partners and we do not take one another as lords. This is a testimony that Islam came with an equitable call that includes no irregularities and that commands that we follow its instructions. Then, Allah says:

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّوْنَ فِيْ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَمَا اُنْزِلَتْ
التَّوْرَةُ وَالْاِنْجِيْلُ اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖۙ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾

People of the Book, why do you argue about Abraham when the Torah and the Gospels were not revealed until after his time? Do you not understand? [65] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran: 65*)

Allah asks the people of the Book, about the reason they argued about Ibrahim (Abraham), the chosen one of Allah. The Jews among them ascribe themselves to Musa (Moses) and the Christians to 'Isa (Jesus). It is not possible that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a Jew, as the Jews claim for

Judaism came after the time of Ibrahim (Abraham). Similarly, the Christians cannot claim that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a Christian because Christianity came after his time. Why, then, do they argue? The Torah and the Gospel were revealed after Ibrahim (Abraham), so how could he be a follower of the either the Torah or the Gospel?

Then, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

هَاتَانْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِيمَا
لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

You argue about some things of which you have some knowledge, but why do you argue about things of which you know nothing? God knows and you do not [66]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 66)

They argued concerning the part of the Torah that still remained in their possession and they wished to argue about everything; yet they do not know what the All-Merciful Creator knows, for He knows all hidden matters.

Allah clarifies this matter, saying:

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ
حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was upright and devoted to God, never an idolater [67] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 67)

The verse confirms that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was not a Jew because Judaism was revealed after his time. He was not also a Christian because Christianity was revealed after his time. Rather, he was the chosen one of Allah and ‘...he was one inclining towards truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah]’. (*Al-'Imran*: 67) We know that that the literal meaning of the Arabic word "*hanifa*" is “the Pure Religion” which was revealed by Allah. The word is derived from the Arabic word "*hanaf*" which refers to the bend of

the bottom part of the legs, or means "crooked." Then, the word was used for everything that is not straight.

Here, a person may ask: Did Ibrahim *peace be upon him* follow a crooked or upright way? How could he be called "*hanifa*" (meaning the Pure Religion), while this word means "crooked"? We say that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* followed an upright way, but he rose at a time of idolatry and extreme delusion, and he came to guide and get the people out of this crookedness and delusion. Since he deviated from this crookedness and delusion, he was upright because the Messengers were sent only at a time of religious corruption and tyrannical legislation.

When Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* sends down His Guidance, He places some faith in every soul. This faith sometimes becomes strong, causing a person to adhere to the instructions of his religion; and sometimes, this faith fades, and so a person deviates. Then after deviation, sometimes a person observes the instructions of his religion, and so is the status of the self-reproaching soul which reproaches a person when he commits a sin. It also draws a person's attention to Allah's prohibitions. The person then returns to Allah's Guidance, repenting and seeking forgiveness. If a person does not have the self-reproaching spirit, then he has a soul that incites him towards evil which always turns to deviation. There are many other souls around the evil soul, trying to resist its evil and rectify its crookedness and delusion. These are the souls of some people from the surrounding environment and society.

Sometimes rectitude and the return to righteousness after sinfulness are urged by a person himself, i.e., from his self-reproaching soul. On other occasions, a person has no self-reproaching soul; rather, he incites towards evil, but the society around this person is not bereft of some goodness which guides to rectitude. However, if all the members of the society have souls that incite towards evil, who will rectify and reform it?

In this case, it is inevitable that Allah brings a new Messenger because a person lacks deterrence and the seed of faith on the part of his own self. In addition, he lacks deterrence on the part of the society because it is also empty of these good members. In this way, darkness spreads, and so Allah sends a Messenger to reignite faith in these souls. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has

guaranteed for the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that no Prophet will come after him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, goodness will necessarily remain within the community of Muslims. If a person is heedless, his self-reproaching soul will reform his attitude, and if a person has a soul that incites towards evil, there are many people who certainly will guide the evil soul to rectitude.

In this way, the followers of Muhammad will not be bereft of goodness at any time. As for the other previous nations, the matter is different, for Allah sent Messengers to them when the spark of goodness had been extinguished from the souls and tyranny and corruption had spread. At that moment, Allah intervened in order to reform and rectify crookedness and delusion.

So, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was declared *hanifa* because he deviated from the delusion that spread at his time. Since he deviated from delusion, he was upright; so tolerant *hanifah* means uprightness. In this way, we can understand Allah's saying, 'Ibrahim (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was one inclining towards truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah]. And he was not of the polytheists'. (*Al-'Imran: 67*)

Ibrahim (Abraham) is the father of the Prophets and if Judaism and Christianity had not been corrupted and distorted, it would be acceptable to say that the Jews and the Christians followed his religion. This is because Abrahamic religions do not differ in their fundamentals; they differ in some of their legislations in the manner that makes them appropriate to the times. For this reason, Ibrahim (Abraham) could not have been a Jew that follows the instructions of Judaism due to its distortion of Judaism. Likewise, he could not have been a Christian for the same reasons. Rather, he was '...one inclining towards truth, a Muslim [submitting to Allah]...' (*Al-'Imran: 67*) This means that he deviated from delusion.

A person may ask, "Why did Allah not say that Ibrahim (Abraham) was "upright," instead of using a word that means crookedness? We say that if He had said "upright," some people might have thought he adopted the line of his contemporaries who were crooked and misguided. Therefore, Allah describes Ibrahim (Abraham) saying, '...but he was one inclining towards truth, a Muslim...' (*Al-'Imran: 67*) The word "Muslim" here indicates submitting to Allah and believing in His Guidance. When Ibrahim (Abraham) submitted to

Allah, he submitted to every command and prohibition. If we apply the same idea to all the Prophets and Messengers, we will find that Adam, Nuh (Noah) and all the Prophets who came before Messenger Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon them all*, submitted to Allah, i.e., were Muslims.

Every Prophet and Messenger submitted completely to one Supreme Being: Allah. They followed the Guidance that He sent down. Therefore, the Prophets and believers who preceded Islam were described as Muslims, i.e., submitting to Allah. Then, the perfect guidance which sealed the heavenly Messages was revealed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* including commands and prohibitions. Nothing new will be revealed and no one can bring about any Message other than that which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The goal of submitting to Allah was perfected by sending down the perfect guidance. Islam became a firm and pure creed, to which the Islamic community, the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is attributed. It will not be followed by any other community because it has surrendered to Allah in everything that was revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, Allah says,

إِنَّ أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِإِبْرَاهِيمَ لَلَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُ وَهَذَا
النَّبِيُّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

And the people who are closest to him are those who truly follow his ways, this Prophet, and [true] believers – God is close to [true] believers [68] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 68)

We should notice that all of the Messengers sent before Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* were only sent to specific nations: Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was sent to the children of Israel, as was 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Allah said, '...And [make him] a Messenger to the children of Israel...' (*Al-'Imran*: 49), i.e., a Messenger who submitted to the implementation of the Guidance that was revealed to him and to these Messengers. Then, some of the legislation was changed and the Message of faith was perfected by the final Message - the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which is general for all humanity.

Some of the people of the Book believed in his Message, just as those amongst whom he was sent, and belief in the final religion continued until it reached us. In this way, the community of followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* became the final community that has submitted to Allah because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the seal of the Prophets and Messengers.

Abu Hurayrah *may Allah be pleased with him* related that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The likeness of me to the Prophets before me is as that of a man who built a house well and beautifully except for the place of one brick in one of its corners. People began to tour the house marvelling at it, saying, "If only this brick were in its place!" I am that brick and I am the seal of the Prophets'.

Some people say that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a Jew or a Christian because he was the father of the Prophets. They want to ascribe the origin of faith to themselves as if it was transferred from one generation to another until it reached them. Faith is not related to race, nation, blood ties, or anything other than to Allah's Guidance. Accordingly, the people who have the best claim to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* are not his descendants; rather, they are those who follow him. Our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* certainly followed Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Therefore, Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) descendants have no claim to him, as they distorted the guidance that was conveyed by him and did not persevere in faith. Allah gives the final word in this issue regarding Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) when He *Glorified is He* says:

'And [mention, Oh Muhammad], when Ibrahim (Abraham) was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them. [Allah] said, "Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people". [Ibrahim (Abraham)] said, "And of my descendants?" [Allah] said, "My covenant does not include the wrongdoers"'. (*al-Baqara*: 124)

Allah tried Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) with commands and prohibitions and he *peace be upon him* fulfilled them in the most rigorous manner. It was not merely an outward, superficial fulfilment; rather, it was concerned with both form and content. An example of adherence to commands and prohibitions only superficially is a person who responds to Allah's Command to offer the five

obligatory prayers by offering them without the heart being submissively attuned to the prayers. Another person, however, offers these five prayers in the manner they should be offered - he fulfils the divine commands in a way that pleases Allah.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was tried by Allah's Commands that represent obligations, and he fulfilled them in the best way possible. Was Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* content merely with carrying out Allah's Command to raise the foundations of the Ka'bah as high as his hands could reach? Had he done so, he would have carried out the command, but he *peace be upon him* wanted to fulfil the command to build the foundations of the *Ka'ba* in the best possible way. Therefore, he built it as high as his hands could do using every possible means; he brought a stone to stand on it so that the wall of the *Ka'ba* would be raised insomuch as the height of that stone. At that time, there were neither scaffolds nor the other tools that allow people to scale as high as they want today.

If Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him* had only raised the foundations of the *Ka'ba* as high as his hands could reach, he would have carried out Allah's Command. However, he wanted to fulfil the task with his personal abilities as well as the innovative means he used, so he brought the stone to stand upon it in order to raise the height of the *Ka'ba's* wall. The place in which Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) stood, while building the *Ka'ba* is known as "*Maqam Ibrahim*." When he fulfilled Allah's Command in such a perfect manner, Allah *Glorified is He* said to him, '...Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people...' (*al-Baqara*: 124)

This means that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) deserved to be a leader of the people with regards to religion because he fulfilled the commands and prohibitions thoroughly and perfectly. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had deep concern for his Lord's Guidance, as he did not want it to be limited to his lifetime only; rather, he asked Allah to pass the guidance and leadership to his progeny. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* stated what Ibrahim (Abraham) said when he requested leadership to be entrusted to his descendants, "...And of my descendants...." (*al-Baqara*: 124)?

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was full of deep concern for the course of faith and he feared for it even after his death. But Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* informs all mankind through Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) that His ‘...Covenant does not include the wrongdoers...’ (*al-Baqara*: 124) This means that the transfer of faith and leadership is not a matter of inheritance because there were amongst his descendants those who wronged themselves, and amended the course of faith in a manner that suits their interests. Therefore, they were not fit for leadership. Allah informs us with the rules of inheritance of Prophethood which entail that Prophethood is only inherited by those who are able to implement the instructions of faith completely, without distortion.

As an example: Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified this point when he said about Salman, the Persian: "Salman is one of us, from our family". The Master of mankind, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not tell Salman that he was one of the Arabs, but he ascribed him to the Prophetic family, i.e., to the inheritors of Prophethood which require perfect implementation of the instructions of faith. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew what Allah *Glorified is He* had taught Prophet Ibrahim about the inheritance of Prophethood, as it is not a matter of blood ties, but it is associated with the thorough and precise implementation of the instructions of faith. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also learned this from the incident relevant to Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* which Allah revealed to him.

When Allah promised Prophet Nuh (Noah) to save him and his family from the flood, and he saw that his son was about to be drown, he wondered about the fact that Allah promised him to save his family, so he called his Lord, as the Noble Quran states, ‘And Noah called to his Lord and said, "My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!"’ (*Hud*: 45) Then, Allah said in response to Nuh's request to save his son: ‘He said, "Oh Nuh (Noah), indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge. Indeed, I advise you, lest you be among the ignorant”’ (*Hud*: 46).

The reason why the son of Prophet Nuh (Noah) should not be considered as part of Nuh's family according to the Quranic explanation is that ‘...he is

[one whose] work was other than righteous...' (*Hud*: 46) Allah did not say that he is not an impious person, as a person himself is not the subject of concern because Allah judges according to deeds.

Faith is not concerned with lineage, a particular country, or tribe. It is concerned with one's deeds; whoever acts according to the Guidance conveyed by any Messenger is considered as one of that Messenger's kin. Ascription to Prophets is not concerned with a person who is descended from a certain Prophet's lineage; rather, it is concerned with the deeds that this person does.

In another verse, Allah states a situation relevant to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* indicating the Creator's Mercy for all of His Creatures, both those who believe and those who disbelieve. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* asked for provision for his family, whom he ordered to live in Mecca, as Allah says: 'And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits - whoever of them believes in Allah..."' (*al-Baqara*: 126)

Allah did not answer Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication by giving provisions only to whomever believed in Him from among the people of Mecca, but He provided for both the believers and the disbelievers. He also informs Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) of this fact, when He says to him: 'And whoever disbelieves - I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire and wretched is the destination' (*al-Baqara*: 126).

Material sustenance is provided by Allah to all humanity, both the believers and disbelievers because He is the One Who has brought both a believer and a disbeliever into existence. However, the provision given due to following Allah's Guidance is a different matter, for following Guidance necessitates submission to its content as a whole without any alteration. None but a few of those who came after Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* followed this guidance, as very few people also believed in the Message of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* without any distortion.

Then, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* conveyed to the children of Israel a Message that was supposed to take them away from pure materialism to belief in the unseen. However, the Message of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was also distorted. Accordingly, the people who have the best claim to

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* are the followers of the final Guidance of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that includes the essence of all the preceding Messages. Allah is the Guardian of the believers who believe thoroughly and completely in the Message of Ibrahim (Abraham), the chosen one of Allah *peace be upon him* as well as the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَدَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يُضِلُّوكُمْ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ
إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

**Some of the People of the Book would dearly love to lead you
[believers] astray, but they only lead themselves astray,
though they do not realize it [69] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 69)**

The meaning of the Arabic word "*waddat*" is "would love to" or "wish to." Why does this faction of the people of the Book wish to lead the believers astray? Because when the deviant person sees the upright person, he realises his failure to abide by the religious obligations with its commands and prohibitions. However, the practising believer has been able to control himself. When the non-practising person sees a practising person, he despises himself and feels jealous of the believer because he is able to control himself.

The deviant person tries to cause the upright person to deviate and when he becomes unable to do so, he mocks and scorns him and tries to scheme against him to cause him to deviate.

Allah says, 'Indeed, those who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they would exchange derisive glances. And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting. And when they saw them, they would say, "Indeed, those are truly lost". But they had not been sent as guardians over them"'. (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-33)

This is what occurs nowadays: when the deviant people see an upright believer, they mock him with sardonic comments, or they attempt to belittle his faith. When they return to their companions, they jokingly tell them of how they mocked the believers, as though they make their companions happy by these tales. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* reassures the believers that they

will have a day in which they will laugh at those disbelievers. ‘So, today those who believed are laughing at the disbelievers, on adorned couches, observing’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-35). Allah will ask the believers, ‘Have the disbelievers [not] been rewarded [this Day] for what they used to do?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36) This verse means that Allah asks the believers if they have known the reward of the disbelievers.

Therefore, the people with the best claim to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) are the believers in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Some of the disbelievers are still trying to attract the believers to misguidance. They wish and aspire for this, but their wish will not be fulfilled. Allah *Glorified is He* refers to this matter, saying, ‘A faction of the people of the Book wish they could mislead you. But they do not mislead except themselves and they perceive [it] not’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 69). An example of this is what some of the Jews did when they went to Mu’adh ibn Jabal, Hudhayfa and ‘Ammar, the great Companions, in an attempt to delude them, but they were unable to do so.

We should know that the Arabic word "*Al-Dalal*" has many meanings; it may mean “loss and extinction”, as in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘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). The polytheists wondered if they will be recreated after the decay of their bodies and the loss of the basic elements of their bodies within the earth. "*Al-Dalal*" may also mean “a person’s misguidance”, as Allah says, describing His Messenger Muhammad *peace be upon him* when he refused to worship idols and remained in search of the true guidance: ‘And He found you lost and guided [you]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 7). This verse means that Muhammad was not pleased with Quraysh’s act of worshipping idols and he remained in search of the True Guidance until Allah guided him and revealed to him this upright religion. Prophet Muhammad was lost, searching for guidance, then Allah sent down to him the perfect grace.

Another meaning of "*Al-Dalal*" is that a person realises the true guidance, but he deviates from it and he goes astray. An example of this meaning is the saying of Allah, ‘A faction of the people of the Book wish they could mislead you. But they do not mislead except themselves...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 69). The

question is: how can a person go astray? The deviant person who knows the true guidance but denies it commits a sin which aggravates the situation when he attempts to lead others astray. He is not content with his misguidance; rather, he aggravates his sin by attempting to lead others astray. This verse clarifies to us the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another. And if a heavily laden soul calls [another] to [carry some of] its load, nothing of it will be carried, even if he should be a close relative...’ (*Fatir*: 18). It also clarifies the saying of Allah *the Exalted*, ‘That they may bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear’ (*an-Nahl*: 25).

Therefore, the burden in the former verse mentioned in the chapter of *Fatir* refers to the burden of going astray, while the burden in the verse mentioned in the chapter of *an-Nahl* refers to misleading others. These misguided people are not merely satisfied with their own misguidance, but they increase the burdens of their misguidance by leading others astray. Therefore, they aggravate their misguidance. ‘...But they do not mislead except themselves and they perceive [it] not’ (*Al-'Imran*: 69). They do not perceive the tragic outcome of this aggravated misguidance, for which they will be chastised. If they had only reflected a little on the matter of faith, they would have ceased to mislead others and to go astray. Then, Allah says,

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنْتُمْ تَشْهَدُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾

**People of the Book, why do you deny God's revelations when
you can see they are true? [70] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 70)**

Allah asks them through the words of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for the reason why they disbelieve in the miraculous verses of Allah, while they witness to their truth. A person may ask: Did the people of the Book witness the miraculous verses during the time of the Prophet Muhammad? The answer is: When the Jews prayed for victory against those who fought them, they asked Allah “by the illiterate Prophet,” whom He has promised them to send at the end of time, to give them victory over their enemies. Then, they gained victory; however, when Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they disbelieved in him out of transgression and jealousy. Allah says: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them - 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)

They disbelieved for the sake of temporal power, for they wanted rule and authority. 'Abdullah ibn Sallam, who had been a Jew before he embraced Islam, said about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'I recognised him when I saw him in the manner I recognise my son, but my knowledge of Muhammad is deeper'.

So, they knew the attributes and characteristics of Prophet Muhammad from the Torah and they witnessed the clear verses, but they denied them out of greed for temporal power. They even distorted their religion and used it in gaining corrupt temporal power. An example of this is those who sold the contracts of forgiveness. Therefore, Allah says about those who distort His guidance: 'So, woe to those who write the "Book" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn'. (*al-Baqara*: 79) Torment is the destiny of those who distorted Allah's saying and Guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَلْبِسُوۡنَ الْحَقَّ بِالْبٰطِلِ وَتَكُنُّمُوۡنَ الْحَقَّ وَآنتُمْ تَعْلَمُوۡنَ ﴿٧١﴾

People of the Book, why do you mix truth with falsehood?

Why do you hide the truth when you recognize [it]? [71]

(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 71)

The literary meaning of the Arabic word "*talabbus*" is to place something inside another thing. When a person wears his clothes, he places his body into the clothes; and in this way, the "wearer" is distinct from the "clothes worn." In the sphere of *da`wah* (calling people to Allah), we do not always find the truth confronting falsehood, and some people mix truth with falsehood. This verse outlines the attempt of some of the people of the Book to confuse the

truth with falsehood. This occurred when they distorted the Torah and the Gospel and placed within them statements which neither Musa (Moses) nor 'Isa (Jesus) conveyed. This was one of the attempts to confuse the truth with falsehood. Then, the most considerable attempt to confuse the truth with falsehood was their denial of the glad tiding of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* despite the fact that it was mentioned in their Holy Books.

They announced their belief in Prophet Musa (Moses) and Prophet 'Isa (Jesus), but did they not believe in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so they denied the tidings carried by Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) about the final Message of Muhammad. This was the greatest confusion between the truth and falsehood because they announced their faith in two Messengers and refused to believe in the final Prophet, as they knew that Islam which was conveyed by Prophet Muhammad, was the True Religion. However, when they were alone together, they confessed this fact, but publicly, they rejected it. 'And they rejected them, while their [inner] selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness....' (*an-Naml*: 14) In addition, they tried to find a scheme by which they could drive the people away from this final Message, persisting in disbelief. Allah says on this occasion,

وَقَالَتْ طَآئِفَةٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ ءَامَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا وَجَهَ النَّهَارَ وَكَفَرُوا ءَاخِرَهُ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Some of the People of the Book say, 'At the beginning of the day, believe in what has been revealed to these believers [the Muslims], then at the end of the day reject it, so that they too may turn back [72] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 72)

Some of the people of the Book wanted to cause the Muslims to doubt their religion, so they devised this scheme. The believers from among the Arabs and Quraysh at that time were illiterate and they knew that the people of the Book were knowledgeable about religious matters and the Quran had not yet been revealed in its entirety to Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*. If some of them believed in the Message of Prophet Muhammad during the day and denied it at the end of the day, this would confuse the truth with falsehood, an act which involves deceiving the believers.

It is worth mentioning that the intended meaning of the Arabic words "*wajh al-nahar*" is the hours of morning up to the noon because the *wajh* (beginning) is the first thing to be encountered in any matter. For example, when we say about a fruit seller, "*Sana' wajh lilfakihah*", this means that he has placed the freshest fruits at the front of the cart and has hidden the rotten fruits behind the fresh ones. When a tradesman does something like this, his intention is to cheat and deceive because if a person buys an amount of these fruits, he will find that a quarter of what he has bought is fresh and the rest is rotten.

In the same way, some of the people of the Book attempted to deceive the believers by professing faith at the beginning of the day, then announcing their disbelief at the end of the day. Certainly, the goal was to make believers suspicious and dubious about this religion, as some of the illiterate people may say that the people of the Book who were knowledgeable about the Divine Messages reviewed this new religion and found it not conforming to the Divine Messages.

This verse may have been revealed regarding the issue of changing the direction of *Qiblah* (towards the *Ka'ba*, the direction faced in Prayer). When Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to change the direction of *Qiblah* from Jerusalem to the *Ka'ba* in Mecca, the disbelievers from among the people of the Book wanted to disobey it. Therefore, they thought of obeying Muhammad and praying towards the direction of the *Ka'ba* at the beginning of the day and then praying towards the direction of Jerusalem at the end of the day.

Allah wants to reveal that all the methods used by the disbelievers stem from a complete lack of shrewdness and thorough reflection on matters. They wanted to launch a psychological war against the Muslims in order that some of them might be dubious about the new religion. However, they did not notice that they had disgraced themselves and unintentionally admitted that those who believed in the Quran were the true believers, while they disbelieved. Allah *Glorified is He* says about them that they '...believe in that which was revealed to the believers at the beginning of the day and reject it at its end that perhaps they will abandon their religion...' (*Al-Imran*: 72) They were content with their disbelief.

Those who tried to make the believers uncertain about their religion announced their belief in Islam in order that the people would know this about them. As they belonged to the people of the Book, they were able to judge it so that when they would reject Islam after getting to know it, they would say that the reason for their rejection of Islam was not ignorance or prejudice; rather, they reviewed this religion and found it inappropriate and inconsistent with the Message revealed to their Messenger. This is one of the methods of psychological warfare. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* unveiled the cunningness and deceit of those who tried to conceal their plot by which they intended to spread doubt and deceit. Allah sends down to His Messenger this following truth when he says:

وَلَا تُؤْمِنُوا إِلَّا لِمَن تَبِعَ دِينَكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ أَن يُؤْتَىٰ
 أَحَدٌ مِّثْلَ مَا أُوتِيتُمْ أَوْ يُحَاجُّوكُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّكُمْ قُلْ إِنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ
 اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

But do not sincerely believe in anyone unless he follows your own religion’– [Prophet], tell them, ‘True guidance is the guidance of God’– [they say], ‘Do not believe that anyone else could be given a revelation similar to what you were given, or that they could use it to argue against you in your Lord’s presence.’ [Prophet], tell them, ‘All grace is in God’s hands: He grants it to whoever He will – He is all embracing, all knowing [73] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 73)

Allah *Glorified is He* disclosed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the illiterate believers the plot devised by some of the people of the Book, as they pretended to believe in Islam at the beginning of the day and disbelieved at its end. Those plotters agreed to keep this matter secret so that the scheme would not lose its goal: confusing the illiterate Muslims. Therefore, they said to one another, ‘And do not trust except those who follow your religion...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 73). This means “do not reveal the scheme except to those who follow our religion.” However, Allah disclosed the whole matter by sending down this verse to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who conveyed it to the believers. In this manner, the planned confusion failed

and the psychological warfare reverted to those who launched it. Then, Allah completed unveiling the scheme of some of the people of the Book with the following verse: ‘...Say, "Indeed, the [true] guidance is the guidance of Allah. [Do you fear] lest someone be given [knowledge] like you were given or that they would [thereby] argue with you before your Lord?"...' (Al- ‘Imran: 73)

Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the plot of this cunning faction of the people of the Book who wanted to profess faith at the beginning of the day as a kind of guidance, but actually this was a means of misguidance. This is because Allah’s Guidance leads mankind to the goal that Allah wills, while this faction of the people of the Book desired, by means of scheming, to make Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bereft of believers in Islam. This faction of the people of the Book advised one another to conceal their agreement to pretend to be believers at the beginning of the day and to be disbelievers at its end. They also agreed to unveil this plot only to those who followed their religion so that the plot would not lose its goal: confusing the Muslims.

They were consumed with fear because if the people accepted the religion of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they would have knowledge of Allah’s Guidance and the Guidance that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed is the final Guidance. This cunning faction from among the people of the Book wanted to prevent people from faith. Perhaps they feared that the Muslims would enter into debate with them concerning faith. This indicates a lack of wisdom that may amount to foolishness. This is because they imagined that Allah did not know their hidden intentions and the action they did in public; they forgot that Allah knows the treachery of the eyes and all that the hearts conceal.

This is in accordance with their ancestors’ previous action, when they left Egypt and went into the wilderness, while travelling through the desert. They claimed that Allah said to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* “Mark your houses, Oh Israelites, for I will descend and smite the land entirely”. It is as if they believed that had they not placed marks on their houses, Allah would not have known which of them were believers. This statement indicates misguidance and failure. Allah says to His Messenger, Muhammad: ‘...Say,

"Indeed, [all] bounty is in the Hand of Allah - He grants it to whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Wise' (*Al-'Imran: 73*).

All bounty is in Allah's Hand, and the people who plot against the Muslims will not be able to misguide and deceive them because when Allah gives His bounty to those who believe in Him, none can remove it except Him. Schemes cannot remove the bounty of belief in Allah because He has granted it. Allah is All-Encompassing, i.e. He can grant His bounty to all creatures and this would decrease nothing from His Bounty. Allah *Glorified is He* knows those who deserve this bounty because their hearts are preoccupied with their Lord. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

يَخْنُصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

**And He singles out for His mercy whoever He will.
His grace is infinite [74] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran: 74*)**

No one has any right over Allah, for every moment of life is a bounty from Him and He *Glorified and Exalted is He* grants His Mercy in the form of belief in His Guidance to whom He wills and He is the Owner of absolute bounty. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَمِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنُوا بِقِنطَارٍ يُودِّهِ إِلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَنْ إِنْ تَأْمَنُوا بِدِينَارٍ لَا يُودِّهِ إِلَيْكَ إِلَّا مَا دُمَّتْ عَلَيْهِ قَائِمًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيَّتِنِ سَبِيلٌ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

There are People of the Book who, if you [Prophet] entrust them with a heap of gold, will return it to you intact, but there are others of them who, if you entrust them with a single dinar, will not return it to you unless you keep standing over them, because they say, 'We are under no obligation towards the gentiles.' They tell a lie against God and they know it [75] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran: 75*)

This verse indicates absolute divine equity: just because Allah revealed to the Messenger some of the cunningness of the people of the Book, this does not mean that there is a campaign against the people of the Book, as though

they were all evil. Rather, some of them are marked with trustworthiness. This saying confirms the justice of Allah, the Just Deity.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* addresses all people, whom He knows, as He knows that the da`wah (calling to Allah) of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came as a mercy to all people. He addresses the whole world including the people of the Book who know the signs of the coming of the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Some of them attached great care to the da`wah (calling to Allah) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to study and believe in it. If Allah had waged a campaign against all of the people of the Book, those who considered believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have said that they were thinking of believing and they wanted to follow Allah's Commands, but Muhammad waged a campaign against all of the people of the Book.

When Allah says that some of the people of the Book are marked with trustworthiness, those who are considering embracing Islam will say that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only conveys what his Lord wills to reveal. If the Quran had applied a general judgment on all of them, those who were considering believing in the Message of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have asked: "Why does this judgment apply to us all when we are thinking of belief?"

Therefore, Allah says the final word stating that some of the people of the Book are considering faith: 'They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Book is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer]'. (*Al-Imran*: 113) This verse reassures those who preoccupied themselves with studying this religion and considered believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If the Quran had cursed them all, those who were considering believing would have said that Muhammad came to curse them and they did not deserve to be cursed. Therefore, the verse that reads, 'And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth], he will return it to you...' (*Al-Imran*: 75) represents absolute justice and equity.

Some of the exegetes said that in this verse, the Quran refers to the Christians because among them are those who are conscientious of Allah. We

know that the "people of the Book" refer to the Jews and Christians. This explanation does justice to the Christians, as Allah does not deny their good attributes; rather, He confirms them in the Quran which will be recited until the Day of Judgment. This is also in order for the people of the Book to trust the verses of the Quran with regards to any bad matter because the Quran is absolutely truthful. Since it mentions their good attributes, it must be honest when it mentions their bad attributes.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth]...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 75), Allah uses the Arabic word "*qintar*" here as a hyperbole that indicates a large quantity of money. When the Arabic word "*amanah*" is mentioned in the Noble Quran, we find that sometimes it is followed by the Arabic preposition "*ba*", as in this verse, "*Man in ta'manahu biqintar*" which means ‘...if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth]....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 75) But sometimes it (*amanah*) is followed by the Arabic preposition “*ala*”, meaning “over”, as in the verse: ‘They said, "Oh our father, why do you not entrust us with Joseph, while indeed, we are to him sincere counsellors?"’ (*Yusuf*: 11)

Allah also says, ‘He [Ya’qub or Jacob] said, "Should I entrust you with him [Yusuf or Joseph] except [under coercion] as I entrusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian and He is the most merciful of the merciful”’. (*Yusuf*: 64)

Therefore, the Arabic word "*amanah*" is sometimes followed by the Arabic preposition “*ba*” and sometimes by the Arabic preposition “*ala*”. Both of these prepositions are mentioned for a certain reason, as the speaker is Allah.

The Arabic word "*amanah*" means “an object which is entrusted to someone without any guarantee except the conscience of the person entrusted.” If the relationship between them is governed by a receipt, contract, or witnesses, this is not considered a trust because a trust is the object entrusted to a person who may take care of it or not.

We said before that a true believer must be cautious of trusts because there will be a time when a trust may be assumed and a time when it may need to be returned when its owner requests it. An example of assuming a trust is if a person gives another a sum of money and tells him to keep this money as a

trust, and the latter agrees to do so and takes the money. This action is considered an assumption of trust. When the owner of this money asks for it and the other person returns it, this is called giving back the trust. Everyone is confident of himself when he assumes trust and he may have good intentions to keep the trust. However, the true believer cannot guarantee safety from the life circumstances of other people. Perhaps when the owner of the money requests his money back, the person entrusted with the money may betray the trust, being forced by his life circumstances or his soul may incite him to take possession of the trust and tell him that nothing will happen if he betrays the trust. The true believer cannot be sure of himself when the time comes to return the trust though he may be sure of himself when he assumes it.

Therefore, we must be aware of the two words that are associated with trust: assumption and redemption. Those who assume trusts, while having the intention of redeeming them are confident of themselves at the time of assuming it, but they cannot be confident of themselves at the time of returning the trust. Therefore, the cautious believer does not want to subject himself to this situation for fear that he may fail to give it back. Hence, he apologizes to the owner of the object which will be entrusted clarifying that he cannot take on this trust. He fears of not being able to redeem it and this occurred at the time of offering the trust to heavens and the earth, about which Allah *Glorified is He* says, "Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains and they declined to bear it and feared it; but Man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant...." (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

The heavens, the earth, and the mountains requested not to have free will and to remain under compulsion because they were not confident of themselves about the time of Allah's redeeming the trust. However, as the human being is unjust and ignorant, he has claimed that he is intelligent and can arrange for this matter. The human being is unjust to himself and ignorant because he does not know what he will do at the time of redeeming the trust.

Accordingly, we understand Allah's saying, 'And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth]....' (*Al-'Imran*: 75) We find that the Arabic word "*amanah*" (trust) is followed by the Arabic preposition "*ba*" which linguistically means "adherence and joining". This

means that wealth is closely associated with trust. At the moment of redeeming the trust, one should not be tempted by the treasure of gold, and betray the trust because considering the treasure without the trust is the real failure.

When the Arabic preposition "*ala*" is used with the Arabic word "*amanah*," it means "superiority." This means that the trust should be considered superior to the treasure. Therefore, when a person thinks of taking the treasure because it will positively affect his life and will cause him to live in luxury, he will remember the superiority of the trust.

Accordingly, we find that some of the scholars have given a legal opinion to the effect that a thief's hand should be cut off for stealing a quarter of a dinar; but they made the compensation for cutting off an innocent person's hand five hundred dinars. Some people wondered, saying,

A hand is compensated with five hundred gold pieces, so why is it cut off for stealing a quarter of a *dinar*? A scholar answered a person objecting to this, saying: The rank of trust is superior and the disgrace of betrayal is mean; so understand the wisdom of the Creator!

Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth]....' (*Al-'Imran*: 75) In these words of Allah, the Arabic preposition "*ba*" follows the Arabic word "*amanah*" (trust) in order to link the trust firmly to the one who is entrusted. If "*amanah*" is separated from the wealth, a person entrusted may think of taking hold of the wealth, and disregard the trust. Likewise, when the Arabic word "*amanah*" is followed by the Arabic preposition "*ala*" (over), the trust becomes superior to the object that is entrusted; the trust must be held superior to the object entrusted, no matter how valuable it is.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth], he will return it to you. And among them is he who, if you entrust him with a [single] silver coin, he will not return it to you unless you are constantly standing over him [demanding it]'. (*Al-'Imran*: 75) This means that the owner of the silver coin which is entrusted should demand it constantly.

Then, Allah says, ‘...That is because they say, "There is no blame upon us concerning the unlearned....”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 75) Some of the children of Israel deceived some of the illiterate Arab believers and denied their rights at the time of Prophet Muhammad, may *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Arabic word "*Al-Umiyyin*" here refers the believers who did not belong to the people of the Book. It may also mean those who are ascribed to their mothers, as Allah says: ‘And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful’. (*al-Nahl*: 78) It also may refer to the illiterate people of Mecca who were given this name because they were ascribed to *Umm Al-Qura* (Mecca).

How did the people of the Book know this double-faced way of dealing with people? Who devised this approach which involves deceiving the illiterate believers? Do merits and manners differ from dealing with one person to another? Do good morals involve taking the trust owned by an illiterate person then denying it, while returning the trust if it is owned by a Jew? Is it right that a person lends money with interest to the non-Jews and lends the Jews money without interest? These dealings are biased and double-faced. The rule should be fair, fixed, and suitable to be applied on every person at every time.

How did they bring this saying, while they are the people of the Book? This is contrary to the teachings of the Divine Book which was sent by Allah. They deceived themselves and added to Allah’s Law new matters, as the Divine Book that was sent down to them did not divide people into two groups: The people of the Book (who are to be treated in a special manner) and the illiterate people (who are to be treated differently). It was incumbent upon them to learn from the just and fair conduct of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in their dealings.

Their history is truthfully and justly recorded in an honourable saying, which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and which we tackle in this book "*Al-Khawater*" (Thoughts). This verse records the history of the Jews with Islam, about whom Allah has not made a single judgment applicable to all of them. Rather, He has treated the truthful and just Jews fairly. Accordingly, the truthful and just persons among them had a firm

belief that Islam has come with the whole truth. Had Islam issued only one general judgment against all of the Jews, whether those who opposed the *da`wah* (calling to Allah) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the truthful and just among them who were considering embracing Islam, the fair Jews would have said that they were thinking of believing in Islam, so why did the Quran attack them in this way? However, Allah is Just and gives everyone his due right.

Allah said about those people, 'And among the People of the Book is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount [of wealth], he will return it to you....' (*Al-'Imran: 75*) This is a testimony of the true belief of those people. As for the ones who have been overwhelmed by materialism, they are described in this Noble saying: '...And among them is he who, if you entrust him with a [single] silver coin, he will not return it to you unless you are constantly standing over him [demanding it]'. (*Al-'Imran: 75*) This is a true statement about those who were so overwhelmed by materialism that a person would not return the object entrusted to him except after being followed and asked constantly to return it. In this way, the Quran chronicles their conduct truthfully.

The reason why those entrusted with a treasure return it is that they abide by the teachings of their religion, taking into consideration that their Lord is called "the Absolute Truth" and wants His servants to face all the situations of their lives with truthfulness. I repeat again that when the Arabic word "*amanah*" is mentioned in the Noble Quran, it is sometimes followed by the Arabic preposition "*ba*" and sometimes followed by the Arabic preposition "*ala*"(over) because "*ba*" linguistically means close attachment between two objects. Therefore, it means that if something is entrusted to a Muslim, he should return it. When the Word "*amanah*" (trust) is followed by the Arabic preposition "*ala*", it means that a believer should treat the object entrusted to him as something sublime which should not be stolen or abused.

For example, if a person is entrusted with one hundred pounds, he should not consider the material benefit he will get if he takes this sum for himself; rather, you must rise above this benefit. Oh believer, beware of dishonesty and being deceived by the benefit and preciousness of that which you misappropriate

from the trust; rather, compare that thing with the weight of the trust and you will find that the trust is outbalancing.

The people of the Book who permitted the betrayal of trust did not pay heed to the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was famous for his trustworthiness, both before and after the Message was sent down to him. They disregarded the fact that the True Religion does not differentiate between people with regards to the returning of trust. In addition, the True Religion encompasses a Law from Allah Who has created all the people. Therefore, we find that the law that differentiates between people with regards to the returning of trust was created by them and was not sent by Allah, He Who takes charge of the affairs of all His Creatures. Moreover, Allah refutes the reason for which they decided to deal with the illiterate people differently from the way they dealt with the people of the Book.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...And they speak untruth about Allah, while they know’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 78) They know that they tell lies, for they know the true ruling, yet they deviate from it. In addition, they did not say that this ruling was created by them, but they ascribed it to the teachings of their religion, which are revealed by Allah. Accordingly, they invent a lie against Allah, and we seek refuge with Allah from such things, by saying that He has created mankind and divided them into two groups: The first one should have their trusts returned and the second one may not have their trusts returned. Therefore, they fabricated a lie about Allah, while being aware of that. Although they also knew the punishment awaiting the one who lies about Allah, they committed this act.

Allah did not mention the direct object in this verse as He did not say, "They are well-aware of such-and-such". When Allah omits the direct object, He intends to generalise the meaning and the action. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to inform us that those people knew that they were lying and the punishment of lying, as well. When an issue is negated and followed by the Arabic word "*bala*" ("but yes"), this implies that the issue preceding it is disproved. This means that the opposite is affirmed. They said, ‘... "There is no blame upon us concerning the unlearned"...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 75) This Arabic saying is negated by the word "*laysa*" ("no"). Allah says in the next verse:

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ وَاتَّقَىٰ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

No indeed! God loves those who keep their pledges and are mindful of Him [76] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 76)

As Allah says the Arabic word "*bala*" ("but yes") at the beginning of this verse, He intends to disprove the previous claim of the people of the Book. It is as though Allah says, "Yes, there is blame upon you with regards to the unlearned people because the legislator is Allah to whom all people are equal. Then, Allah states a general issue: '... whoever fulfils his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him'. (*Al-'Imran*: 76)

Which commitment is referred to here? This is the commitment to faith which we have accepted, as we believe in Allah. When a person believes in Allah, he accepts every ruling issued by Him *Glorified is He* and he tries his best to adhere to everything enjoined by Him. If he does not adhere to Allah's Commands, his faith has no value because the benefit of faith is obtained by adherence. Therefore, we said that when Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* wants to legislate a ruling for those who believe in Him, He first enjoins certain commands on the believers. He *Glorified is He* does not enjoin the commands on all people; He only enjoins them on the believers. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* says, "Oh you who believe in Me as Allah: obey the command that I enjoin on you. I do not ask those who have not believed in me to obey the command".

Allah says, '...whoever fulfils his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him'. (*Al-'Imran*: 76) Some people may understand that whoever is committed to faith and fears Allah in the manner that his actions are in line with His Commands and Prohibitions, is loved by Allah. This is the meaning that may be understood at first glance, but Allah did not say this. "Love" is not related to a person; rather, it is related to one's deeds. Allah says '...indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him' (*Al-'Imran*: 76).

A person may commit a mistake and think that because Allah loves him, he can commit whatever mistakes he wants. We remind this person with the fact that Allah loves the good deeds that a person does sincerely for Allah. Therefore, He says, '... whoever fulfils his commitment and fears Allah - then indeed, Allah loves those who fear Him' (*Al-'Imran*: 76).

Those who fulfil their commitments and fear Allah, He will love the attribute of piety ascribed to them. Therefore, every believer should work hard to ensure that he is always characterized by this attribute so that Allah will always love him.

Hence, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* has clarified that individuals are reproduced by other individuals, all of whom are derived from one origin. It is not a matter of race; only good deeds matter. An example was previously given when Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* promised Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* to save him and his family from drowning, then Nuh (Noah) was surprised that his son was amongst those who drowned. Allah *Glorified is He* says about this incident, '[But] he said, "I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water"'. [Nuh (Noah)] said, "There is no protector today from the decree of Allah, except for whom He gives mercy". And the waves came between them and he was among the drowned' (*Hud: 43*).

What did Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* do? He called to his Lord, asking Him to rescue his son and said, 'My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!' (*Hud: 45*) Allah informs us, through His reply to Nuh (Noah), that the families of the Prophets are not their descendants; rather, they are those who follow their guidance, so Allah said to Nuh (Noah) about his son, '..."Oh Nuh (Noah), indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous..."' (*Hud: 46*)

Why should Nuh's (Noah's) son not be considered of his family? That is because the families of Prophets are those who follow the Prophets' guidance. Therefore, Allah did not say to Nuh (Noah) about his son, "He is not a good-doer"; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* said about Nuh's (Noah) son, '... he is [one whose] work was other than righteous....' (*Hud: 46*) Allah ascribes the matter to a person's deeds.

Therefore, the intended objective is that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* clarifies by His Quranic style that He loves a person's deeds and attributes. He did not say, "Those who fulfil their commitment with Him are loved by Allah." This clearly reveals that Allah loves the deeds of a person. Therefore if a person seeks Allah's Love, he must constantly adhere to Allah's Guidance. Then, Allah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَشْتَرُونَ بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ وَأَيْمَانِهِمْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَٰئِكَ لَا
خَلَاقَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَا يُكَلِّمُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَلَا يُزَكِّيهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾

But those who sell out God's covenant and their own oaths for a small price will have no share in the life to come. God will neither speak to them nor look at them on the Day of Resurrection – He will not cleanse them [of their sins] – agonizing torment awaits them [77] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 77)

When we hear the words "selling" and "buying", we must reflect on their meanings in order to precisely understand them. In the countryside, barter and exchange of items have an immediate benefit; for example, when one person exchanges wheat for cloth with another person, both walk away with what they needed. In the case of exchanging commodities, there is neither a buyer nor a seller because both parties have bought and sold. So, the question is: when does it become a matter of buying and selling?

Buying and selling occur when we exchange a direct source of provision with an indirect one; for example, when a person buys a loaf of bread for five dollars. This transaction is regarded as buying and selling because the five dollars are not a source of provision that have a direct benefit, as money cannot satisfy hunger or thirst nor provide shelter. Bread is a source of provision with a direct benefit because it satisfies one's hunger. When a person wants to buy something, the sum of money he pays is called the "price." So, how can the price be bought?

Allah clarifies that prices are never bought, but they are paid in return for buying things. Accordingly, the first failure concerning the deal is that those who sell commitment to Allah for a trifling price have bought the price which cannot be bought, as the objects that can be bought are commodities. Even the price that they bought was very low and worthless. The prohibition of usurious interest stems from this point, as the usurer gives a person 100 hundred pounds and wants to receive back 110. In this way, the usurer has treated money as a commodity, so the deal becomes a failure from the outset. Therefore, the first failure faced by those who exchange guidance with misguidance is

that they will suffer a loss: 'Those are the ones who have purchased error [in exchange] for guidance, so their transaction has brought no profit, nor were they guided' (*al-Baqara*: 16).

Allah *Glorified is He* says here, 'Indeed, those who exchange the covenant of Allah and their [own] oaths for a small price....' (*Al- 'Imran*: 77) We know that the Arabic preposition "*ba*" is usually attached to the object that is discarded, so they have discarded the Covenant of Allah and the oaths they made that they would believe and support the Messenger if he came to them in need. They exchanged all this for a trifling price. How did this happen? Although this matter refers to an actual event, it has a general meaning which is not limited to a certain event. Therefore, no one should say that this verse was revealed about such-and-such and it has nothing to do with anybody else. Rather, this verse applies to everyone who exchanges Allah's signs for a small price.

The actual event for which this verse was revealed was when a group of people came to Ka'b ibn Al- Ashraf, a Jew, seeking food and clothing during a time of drought and famine. He said to them, 'Do you know that this person is the Messenger of Allah?' They said, 'Yes'. He said, 'I was going to feed and clothe you, but Allah has prevented you from great blessings'. They asked, 'Why has Allah prevented us from great blessings?' He answered them saying, 'You have declared your belief in Muhammad'. When they found themselves in this situation, they said to Ka'b ibn Al- Ashraf, 'Leave us for a while, for perhaps a doubtful matter has overcome us and we will consider the matter'. After a period of time, they preferred food and clothing to faith and said to Ka'b ibn Al- Ashraf, 'We have read our books and found that we are mistaken; Muhammad is not a Messenger'. Then, Ka'b gave them food and clothing.

These are the people who exchanged Allah's signs for a small price: food and clothes. Everyone who exchanges Allah's signs for a small price veils one of Allah's rulings for the sake of appearing to be modern before people, following the line adopted by people during his time, or urging those in authority to do something that does not please Allah. Therefore, whoever does these actions exchanges Allah's signs and Messages for a small price and this verse applies to anyone who makes Allah's signs subject to sale in return for a price. 'Indeed, those who exchange the Covenant of Allah and their [own]

oaths for a small price...' (*Al-Imran: 77*) The meaning of "the Covenant of Allah" here is either a covenant which Allah causes people to adhere to by nature, or the covenant that He took from the people of the Book, which states that if they lived to see Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they would declare their belief in him. This covenant is stated in Allah's saying, 'And [recall, Oh People of the Book], when Allah took the covenant of the Prophets [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Book and wisdom and then there comes to you a Messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him". [Allah] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My Commitment?" They said, "We have acknowledged it". He said, "Then bear witness and I am with you among the witnesses"' (*Al-Imran: 81*).

When they denied their faith after declaring it in return for food and clothes, they experienced great loss, as they exchanged Allah's signs for a small price. Therefore, Allah says about them, '... will have no share in the Hereafter and Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and they will have a painful punishment'. (*Al-Imran: 77*) The Arabic conjunction "*ula'ika*" indicates linkage between '...those who exchange the covenant of Allah and their [own] oaths for a small price...' (*Al-Imran: 77*) and anyone who is characterised by these attributes. This shows that all of them will have the same destiny. Although this verse was revealed in connection with those who bought food and clothes in return for abandoning their belief in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it also includes anyone who is characterised by these attributes in any time, whatever his religion is. Allah *Glorified is He* describes them saying: '...Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al-Imran: 77*)

The Arabic words "*khalaq*", "*khuluq*", "*khaliqah*", and "*khalq*" have similar meanings. As they all have the same root letters of "*kh*", "*lam*" and "*qaf*". This word "*khuluq*" refers to an attribute which becomes deep-rooted in a person's character. Sometimes a person is characterised by truthfulness or generosity, and this means that truthfulness and generosity have become deep-rooted in this person's character, so he does not find it tiresome to be truthful or generous. This deep-rooted attribute is relevant to intangible matters, which is parallel to

spontaneity and skills in the tangible realm because we know that every action requires training for a person to be expert in performing it.

For example, the one who weaves with a tool requires practice in manoeuvring the spool of thread and must learn how to do so between the threads of the weave, and then to take the threads together for them to latch onto the second movement of the spool when it returns. By these means, the textile is weaved. A person needs training and practice for a long period of time to become proficient. At the beginning, the action is difficult. Then, after receiving thorough training, the weaver is able to sit in front of the loom with his hands manipulating the spool skilfully and spontaneously. The matter has become a spontaneous action for the experienced weaver.

I previously gave an example of a person learning how to drive a car. The instructor teaches him how to turn the key, wait for the engine to warm up, release the handbrake, manoeuvre the gear stick and balance pushing between the accelerator and the clutch, then balance the speed of the car and slow it down by a gentle push on the brake. At the beginning, a person may make mistakes and be confused, but after receiving thorough training, he acts spontaneously without deep thinking. I also previously gave an example of a young person learning how to stitch clothing. He will take some time to get the thread into the eye of the needle and will make some mistakes in judging the distance between the stitches, but after training, he will get used to doing these actions that were difficult at first and will perform them skilfully. Spontaneous action in the tangible realm is the equivalent of a deep-rooted trait in intangible matters. It may be said that "So-and-so is characterized by honesty" which means that it is not tiresome for him to be honest but it has become second nature for him after many opportunities to choose between deceit and honesty.

When we teach our children grammar, for example, we tell them that the subject of a sentence is in the nominative case and the object is in the accusative. When the child reads a sentence, he tries to apply the rules, but he may forget them or stammer when speaking, and when he remembers them, he reads the words correctly. After practicing the rule, the child reads properly without making mistakes and grammar becomes easy and smooth for him.

Such is also the case with morals which are deep-rooted attributes that result in doing relevant actions easily and smoothly. It may be said that honesty, generosity, and bravery are morals which result in doing their relevant action easily and smoothly if a person is attributed with them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... will have no share in the Hereafter and Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al-'Imran: 77*). Some exegetes have explained this verse saying that those people will have no share of morals because morals are deep-rooted in a person's character.

Allah has specified the time saying, "in the Hereafter" when nothing can be rectified; it is the time of sound and final appraisal. A person may not have any share of upright conduct, so he rectifies his behaviour until he gains this upright conduct in the worldly life; but in the Hereafter, there is no way to make any rectification which is a tremendous loss. In the worldly life, a person may perform an action and receive no reward, or we may not see the reward that Allah gives him, but Allah will compensate him in the Hereafter for the action for which he received no reward in the worldly life. As for the one who has no share in the hereafter, it is impossible for them to be compensated. Allah adds, '...and Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and they will have a painful punishment' (*Al-'Imran: 77*)

Allah says in another verse in the Noble Quran about the disbelievers, 'He will say, "Remain despised therein and do not speak to Me"' (*al-Mu'minun: 108*) Why does Allah say to them at one time, 'Remain despised therein and do not speak to Me' (*al-Mu'minun: 108*) and in this verse, '...and Allah will not speak to them...'? The answer is: Allah will not speak to them in a manner that will benefit them or He *Glorified and Exalted is He* will speak to them by means of the angels. But how will Allah not look at them?

Whenever we find that an attribute that is relevant to people has a counterpart that He ascribes to Himself *Glorified and Exalted is He*, we must consider it in the light of '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura: 11*) In our human realm, we may say, "So-and-so is not looking at so-and-so" which means that his eyes are not directed at him and the pupils of his eyes are turned away from him. It is not possible, however, to compare this to Allah because He

is far above any comparison. In our human realm, we find that a person loves his friend and directs his face and his eyes at him. In addition, the Arabic phrase "*fata Huwa qaid Al-`ayn*" means that when the eye looks at him, it is attracted to him so that it cannot be turned away from him, perhaps, for example because this young man has fine qualities which prevent the eye from turning away from him. In this way, we consider that the eyes look at something as a sign of taking interest in it. This matter applies to the human realm.

However, when it comes to Allah, we must consider it in light of '...there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura: 11*) In this way, we understand that when Allah does not look at '...those who exchange the covenant of Allah and their [own] oaths for a small price...' (*Al-'Imran: 77*), this means that He will disregard them, will not be concerned with them and will not be merciful to them. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is far above any comparison.

In addition, we must understand the matter of not looking at them in the light of '... there is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura: 11*) When a person of authority amongst human beings desires to punish one of his subjects, he does not look at him and ignores him, so what about Allah's disregard for His servants? It means distancing them from His Mercy and Pleasure.

Allah *Glorified is He* adds: '...nor will He purify them; and they will have a painful punishment'. (*Al-'Imran: 77*) The Arabic word "*tazkiyah*" means "purification, praise, or blessed growth." The Arabic phrase "*fulan zakka fulan*" means that a person praised another, or purified him. Therefore, the word "*zakat*" means purification and blessed growth. When Allah *Glorified is He* informs us that He will not speak to those people, nor look at them, nor purify them from their sins, this introduces what He has prepared for them, as He says: '... and they will have a painful punishment'.

We must consider the power of an action according to the one who performs it. In our worldly life, when we hear that a child has hit a man, we naturally understand that a child's blow differs in strength from that of a young man which differs in turn from that of a boxing champion. Therefore, actions differ in accordance with the strength and weakness of a person who performs them upon the object of the action. If the one who torments is Allah, it will no doubt be grievous with limitless pain- may Allah save us all from it.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَإِنَّ مِنْهُمْ لَفَرِيقًا يَلْوُنَ أَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالْكِتَابِ لِتَحْسَبُوهُ مِنَ
الْكِتَابِ وَمَا هُوَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَقُولُونَ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
وَمَا هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَيَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾

**There are some who twist the Scripture with their tongues to
make you [people] think that what they say is part of the
Scripture when it is not; they say it is from God when it is
not; they attribute lies to God and they know it [78]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 78)**

This means that they distort Allah's Words with their tongues in order to alter their meanings, or that they distort their meanings with their tongues when they want to express them. The Arabic word "*layy*" here means "to twist"; a rope is twisted by coiling two lengths of cord together in order to make the rope strong because the cords have limited strength. However, when they are twisted, we increase their strength by coiling them. Therefore, the aim of twisting is to strengthen an object. In this way, they twisted their tongues altering Allah's Words and claiming that it was revealed by Allah, although it was not. They did this to strengthen their position, belittle Islam's position and slander Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They had said before "*Ra'ina*", (an insult in Hebrew which means "listen to us" in Arabic), so Allah said to the believers, 'Oh you who have believed, say not [to Allah's Messenger], "*Ra'ina*" but say, "*Unzhurna*" and listen. And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment'. (*al-Baqara*: 104)

Allah clarifies to us that we should not give them an opportunity to change His Words, as He *Glorified is He* says, 'Among the Jews are those who distort words from their [proper] usages and say, "We hear and disobey" and "hear but be not heard" and "*Ra'ina*" twisting their tongues and defaming the religion. And if they had said [instead], "We hear and obey" and "Wait for us [to understand]", it would have been better for them and more suitable. But Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so they believe not, except for a few....' (*an-Nisa*': 46)

Allah *Glorified is He* has disgraced them because they distorted words from their proper usage. He says in this regard that what the Messenger Muhammad hears will not harm him, and He has recorded for them that they said, "We hear and disobey" and that they altered and distorted words and said, "Hear but be not heard". (*an-Nisa'*: 46) In addition, they changed Allah's saying, '*Qulu hittah*' '...and say, "Relieve us of our burdens"....' (*al-A'raf*: 161) and said instead, "*Qulu hintah*" (a meaningless phrase based on the similarity of the spelling of the words in Arabic). This they did so the people would imagine that this distorted saying was actually from the Divine Book although it is not. In other words, they twisted some of the meanings that can be derived from the words so that the believers would imagine that these incorrect meanings were actually the intended meanings. They ascribed to the Guidance which Allah revealed things which were not actually revealed by Allah.

Therefore, He *Glorified is He* says: '...And they say, "This is from Allah", but it is not from Allah'. (*Al-Imran*: 46) They twisted their tongues and distorted the Words of Allah with the aim to deceive and defraud the believers in order for them to believe that they are from the Book revealed by Allah to their Messenger Musa (Moses). Had they only done that, it would have been possible for them to repent and return to their Lord, regretting what they did.

Their saying, "This is from Allah" indicates that they added something to the Book and insisted on it. They intended to absolve themselves from suspicion that they had distorted the Book. If they had not distorted the Book, would they have thought of saying this? Their action is in accordance with the saying, "When a person feels guilty, he is about to say to those who suspect him, 'I am guilty' out of fear". With this saying, they attempted to conceal what they had done.

Allah *Glorified is He* emphasises that they were actually treacherous saying, '...but it is not from Allah...' (*Al-Imran*: 78) This noble verse disgraces them and unveils their alteration of Allah's Book. He *Glorified is He* says: '...And they speak untruth about Allah, while they know'. (*Al-Imran*: 78) They knew that what they were telling was a lie. It is known that a lie is a saying that is not in line with reality. Sayings ascribed to incidents appear in three types: Actual reality, mental thought concerning the incident, or a saying uttered about the incident.

If we know a person named Mohamed who is actually hard working, this is considered as actual reality. If it occurs to us to tell a friend of Mohamed that he is hard working, this refers to a mental thought. The moment that we tell a friend about this fact, it becomes a saying uttered concerning this person. Truthfulness is defined as conformity between the speech and the actual reality. For example, when a person says, "Mohamed is hard-working" and this man named Mohamed who is actually hard working, the one who says that Mohamed is hard working is a truthful person. However, if this particular Mohamed is not hard working, the saying is not in conformity with the reality, so it becomes a lie. Scholars differentiate between truthfulness and lying by this standard. Therefore, truthfulness means conformity between speech and reality and lying is the deviation of speech from reality.

Some of those who like spreading doubt tried to question the chapter of *al-Munafiqun* in which Allah says, 'When the hypocrites come to you, [Oh 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 said, "We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah" and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is indeed the Messenger of Allah and Allah says, '... And Allah knows that you are His Messenger...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). Is their knowledge like Allah's Knowledge? No, because Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... And Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). Why does Allah describe them as liars although they testified to the same thing that He testified to?

Allah does not belie them with regards to the fact that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, as this is true; rather, He *Glorified is He* belied their saying, '...we testify...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) because it means that their speech is in conformity with their belief; yet their saying is not actually in conformity with their belief. Therefore, they are considered liars.

Hence, Allah's saying, '...And they speak untruth about Allah, while they know' (*Al-'Imran*: 7-8). This means that they utter speech that does not conform to reality, while realising that it is a lie. It cannot be said that they uttered it in ignorance, as they lied intentionally knowing that they were telling a lie.

Precision requires differentiating between a true statement and a truthful speaker. A true statement is the one that agrees with reality. Sometimes a speaker may be honest, but the speech itself is untrue. When someone says, "So-and-so spent all night studying" because he saw that the light in a person's room was turned on all night and that he opened a book, but in reality, he was only absorbed in reading a novel, the speaker here is honest, but the speech is untrue. In terms of this verse, however, we find that they were deliberately lying, as the tongue is a means of revealing what is in the heart: What is intended to say lies in the heart; the tongue is only a guide to the heart. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

مَا كَانَ لِبَشَرٍ أَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُ اللَّهُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوءَ ثُمَّ
يَقُولَ لِلنَّاسِ كُونُوا عِبَادًا لِي مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنْ كُونُوا رَبَّيْنَ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ وَبِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْرُسُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

No person to whom God had given the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood would ever say to people, 'Be my servants, not God's.' [He would say], 'You should be devoted to God because you have taught the Scripture and studied it closely' [79]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 79)

It is known that when Allah willed to reveal His Guidance, He sent it down as a book and this required that He *Glorified is He* chose a person to receive the Message. This means that the Messenger brings the guidance, applies it to himself and passes it on to mankind. A Messenger is chosen by Allah and his mission differs from that of a Prophet. The Prophet is also chosen to follow the Guidance so that people do not only hear the Message in words; rather, they see it implemented. Therefore, the Messenger is a means of delivering the Message and he also sets an example with regards to behaviour, while a Prophet is not a means of delivering a Message, but he only sets an example with regards to behaviour.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* sends Prophets and Messengers and so He says: 'And We did not send before you any Messenger or Prophet except that when he spoke [or recited], Satan threw into it [some misunderstanding]. But

Allah abolishes that which Satan throws in; then Allah makes precise His verses. And Allah is Knowing and Wise'. (*al-Hajj*: 52)

Accordingly, we know that both Messengers and Prophets were sent by Allah, but the Messenger was sent to deliver Allah's Message and set a good example for people, while the Prophet was sent solely to set a good example for people because during some eras the Divine Message was present, but the motive needed to put it into practice was lacking - just like what happens in our present times. The Divine Guidance is present and all people know the permissible and impermissible matters, but the failure existing in this era stems from the fact that the people are not able to urge themselves to follow it. Therefore, they are in need of a good example to be copied in terms of behaviour. This is the explanation of "the Book" and "Prophethood." What is "sound judgement," then?

Allah has used the term "sound judgement" here to show that wisdom that is based on faith is not necessarily found in only Messengers and Prophets; rather, it may be granted to any person from amongst the believers who has genuine faith, and so he speaks according to this wisdom. Allah has told us Luqman's advice to his son because this advice represents religious Guidance. Accordingly, it is possible that a person who is neither a Prophet nor a Messenger will follow and admonish people with religious Guidance when he has strong and genuine faith. This is a clear Message from Allah that any person can follow religious Guidance and pass it on to people when he is convinced of it.

We must emphasise that whoever Allah grants wisdom with regards to calling to and following His Guidance does not add anything to it. By virtue of his sincerity to Allah, he will not claim that he is sent by Allah to mankind; he only calls people to worship Allah, and sets them a good example for people.

Why was this verse revealed? It was revealed after the debate that took place between the Christians of Najran and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina during which a group of Jews joined them and asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* "In what do you believe and what do you command the people to do?" Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed them of the commands and prohibitions of the Message and the fundamentals of worship. As this group belonged to

the people of the Book who included some Christians of Najran and some Jews of Medina that invented commands of worship which were not sent by Allah and wanted the people to obey them, they did not recognise the difference between the guidance of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with its commandments, and the commandments they had invented. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called people to worship Allah in the light of the guidance that He *Glorified is He* sent down to him. However, they asked people to obey commandments that they had invented themselves.

It is well established in all Abrahamic religions that Allah is the only One Who should be obeyed. If a person brings a commandment that has not been revealed by Allah and asks people to obey him, this means that a person asks the people to worship him -and we seek refuge with Allah from this- because obeying a person's commands which have not been sent by Allah commandments is a form of *shirk* (associating others with Allah in His Divinity or worship). Therefore, the position was unclear to some of these people of the Book who imagined that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was calling them to obey his own commandments in the way they did after they had altered the religion, so they said, "Do you want us to worship you and take you as a god?"

They did not understand the difference between the Messenger, who treated Allah's Guidance in a trustworthy manner and their own leaders, who had gone against the rulings and replaced them with other rulings. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not ask them to obey him in person; he asked them to obey the guidance he conveyed and followed as a Messenger. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* disapproved of what they said.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* sent down His true saying, 'It is not for a human [Prophet] that Allah should give him the Book and authority and Prophethood and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than to Allah'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 79) They reached such a level of heedlessness and idolatry that they thought that Allah did not choose a Messenger who was loyal with regards to the conveyance of the religion and they thought badly of Allah, or they imagined that the Messenger would alter the religion, just as they had done, turning from the worship of Allah to the worship of the one He sent as a Messenger.

Therefore, the final saying was revealed in this regard, 'It is not for a human [Prophet] that Allah should give him the Book and authority and Prophethood and then he would say to the people, "Be servants to me rather than Allah"'. (*Al-'Imran*: 79) The meaning may also include the fact that some of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* revered him and it is known that every believer should revere and glorify Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Due to the Companions' great love for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* some of the people of the Book said to him, "Should we greet you just as we greet one another or prostrate to you?"

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not ask anyone to prostrate to him. Allah *Glorified is He* enjoined on His believing servants to honour His Messenger, saying: 'Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So, let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest *fitnah* (temptation) strike them or a painful punishment...' (*an-Nur*: 63) What is required is to revere Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but not to do with him the same acts that should be devoted solely to Allah.

The reverence that should be shown by Muslims to Prophet Muhammad is represented in calling him in a way different from the way Muslims call each other. Allah says in this verse which is relevant to the topic we are handling, '...but [instead, he would say], "Be pious scholars of the Lord because of what you have taught of the Book and because of what you have studied"'. (*Al-'Imran*: 79) The Arabic word "*lakin*" (meaning "however") is used here as a disjunctive and, as we said before, the Arabic word "*bala*" negates the statement preceding it and affirms the contrary statement that follows it. Allah here sets right the matter for us to understand that no one has the right to say, "Worship me" after Allah has given him Revelation, sound judgment and Prophethood. The statement that is affirmed here and for which the preceding sentence is negated is "*kunu Rabaniyyin*" (or "Be pious scholars of the Lord"). The Arabic words "*Rabbany*," "*Rab*", "*Rabbiyun*" and "*Rabban*" include the Arabic letters "*Ra*" and "*Ba*" which indicate raising, guardianship, parenting and other meanings within the same scope. The "*Rabban*" (captain)

of the ship is the one who controls it, is he not? The Arabic word "*Rab*" means the one who undertakes guardianship and raising. Then, what is the meaning of the word "*Rabbany*"? When a person puts the word "*Rab*" in the possessive case, he says, "*Rabby*." If he wants to put the word "*Rab*" in the intense form, he will add the Arabic letters "*alif*" and "*nun*," so it becomes "*Rabbany*." In the modern Arabic expressions, we find other similar terms. For example, when a person wants to ascribe something to the Arabic word "*ilm*" (meaning "knowledge"), he says, "*almany*" which is an intense form of ascription to the word "*ilm*". The difference between the words "*ilmy*" (scientific) and "*almany*" (secular) is that the later refers to a person who claims that all of his affairs proceed in accordance with knowledge apart from religious beliefs. The word in Arabic has the same two letters added to it.

A person may say, "Why should the ascription to Allah be emphasised 'by the word "*Rabbany*"?" The answer is: Because the word is derived from the Arabic word for "*Rab*"(Lord) which indicates several meanings. Everything concerned with the Message must be revealed by the Lord, as the Messenger did not make any additions to this Message; this means that the source of his Message is only the Lord. Therefore, he has become "*Rabbany*" (the pious scholar of the Lord). This word also has another meaning: The Messenger adopted the morals enjoined by the Lord Who refines the people's morals in order that they achieve the objective intended they are asked to accomplish. Therefore, when he passes the religious teachings to mankind, he becomes a "*murabby*" (instructor), managing affairs for the sake of success and righteousness.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...because of what you have taught of the Book and because of what you have studied'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 79) The word "*ilm*" in the Arabic text means the acquisition of religious texts. The word "*tadrisun*" (study) in the Arabic text is intellectual examination of the religious text. Therefore, the people say in the countryside "*nadris Al-qamh*" (thrash the grain) meaning that they thrash it with a sharp tool like a thrasher so that the seeds of grain separate from the hay. Then, this thrashing will result in extracting the useful part of the grain.

Therefore, there is a difference between the Arabic word "*tu'allimun*," which means "teaching others Allah's Guidance (which should be revealed by

Allah)" and "*ma kuntum tadrusun*" meaning "that which you have studied", or teaching your own thoughts concerning the understanding of the texts.

Understanding the text requires interactive study. The Arabic verb "*darasahu*" means a person studying with another. In addition, the Arabic word "*tadarasna*" means exchanging what has been studied and understood in order to deduce a ruling from the text. The text may have only one meaning or it may encompass more than one meaning. Because a person has learned and studied the text, he must be able to recognise the texts that have only one meaning. Since a person has exchanged learning with people of discernment, he must have understood that the texts that encompass different meanings should be explained clearly and in accordance with Allah's Guidance. Therefore, a person must be "*Rabbany*" (a pious scholar of the Lord) in both matters. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَلَا يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تَتَّخِذُوا الْمَلَائِكَةَ وَالنَّبِيِّنَ أَرْبَابًا
 أَيَأْمُرُكُمْ بِالْكَفْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

He would never command you to take angels and prophets as lords. How could he command you to be disbelievers after you had devoted yourselves to God? [80] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 80)

This means that no person whom Allah has granted the Book, authority and prophethood is entitled to order people to take the angels and the prophets as lords. It is not acceptable for a person who has been given knowledge, a Book and prophethood from Allah to ask the people to worship him, the angels, or the prophets because Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Would he order you to disbelief after you had been Muslims?' (*Al-'Imran*: 80)

Allah's saying, '...after you had been Muslims' (*Al-'Imran*: 80) indicates that the incident behind the issue that is under explanation took place with Muslims. It seems that when they intended to revere Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they said that they wanted to declare and glorify him in a manner that had not been shown to anyone else and wanted to prostrate to him, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified to them that they should not prostrate to anyone but Allah.

Therefore, those who asked them to prostrate to him were Muslims who intended to honour Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If Messenger Muhammad had agreed with them, this would have meant taking them out of the fold of Islam. No one can imagine that this act could be done by our beloved Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or by any other Prophet. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِءَ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

God took a pledge from the prophets, saying, ‘If, after I have bestowed Scripture and wisdom upon you, a messenger comes con- firming what you have been given, you must believe in him and support him. Do you affirm this and accept My pledge as binding on you?’ They said, ‘We do.’ He said, ‘Then bear witness and I too will bear witness’ [81]
(The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 81)

This verse clarifies the reasons why Allah sent the Messengers. It is well known that Allah sent down to Adam *peace be upon him* the first Guidance which contained everything that causes life to proceed in harmony. Then, Adam *peace be upon him* passed this guidance on to his children just as he taught them things relevant to their life affairs, exactly in the manner that a father teaches his children those matters that will help them in their lives and the teachings of their religion. Then, the children taught them to their children and the Message was passed down from generation to generation so that the religion could reach the progeny. However, with the passing of time, some of the prerequisites of religion were forgotten.

This is a sign that people have become heedless of the religion; and we see that negligence of the religion occurs in different forms. After the religion is conveyed to humans, we find one person who is heedless of a single part of the religion and he reproaches himself for losing that part. We term such a person as a possessor of a self-reproaching soul; he sins, but then his soul

wakes up and returns to Allah's Religion because he is in possession of immune faith cells. Another person enjoys going against the religion and his soul urges him to do so. He is a possessor of an evil-inciting soul; he always finds an excuse for himself to commit sins and such a person needs someone else to lead him back to good.

Then what happens to a community if all its members have become possessors of an evil-inciting soul? This means that corruption has become total and so a Messenger must surely come because the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* is to guide mankind. Allah has created us and He is in possession of all Attributes of Perfection. Our creation has added nothing to Him. In this regard we quote a Qudsi Hadith (a holy saying whose meaning is only revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) narrated by Abu Dharr, *Allah be pleased with him*, who says: 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrates that Allah *Glorified and exalted*, says: "Oh My servants! I have forbidden oppression for Myself and I have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another. Oh My servants, all of you are astray except those whom I have guided, so seek guidance from Me and I shall guide you. Oh My servants, all of you are hungry except those whom I have fed, so seek food from Me and I shall feed you. Oh My servants, all of you are naked except those whom I have clothed, so seek clothing from Me and I shall clothe you. Oh My servants, you commit sins by day and by night and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness from Me and I shall forgive you. Oh My servants, you will not attain harming Me so as to harm Me and you will not attain benefiting Me so as to benefit Me. Oh My servants, if the first of you and the last of you and the humans of you and the jinn of you were all as pious as the most pious heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not increase My Kingdom an iota. Oh My servants, if the first of you and the last of you and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as wicked as the most wicked heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not decrease My Kingdom an iota. Oh My servants, if the first of you and the last of you and the humans of you and the jinn of you were all to stand together in one place and ask of Me and I were to give everyone what he requested, then that would not decrease what I possess except what is

decreased of the ocean when a needle is dipped into it. Oh My servants, it is but your deeds that I account for you and then recompense you for. So, he who finds good, let him praise Allah and he who finds other than that, let him blame no one but himself”.

Allah has created us, having the full eternal Attributes of Perfection forever and ever, and this creation has added nothing to Him. He, *Glorified and Exalted*, says in this context: ‘I want no provision from them, nor do I want them to feed Me— Allah is the Provider, the Lord of power, the Ever Mighty’. (*adh-Dhariyat*: 57-58)

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* legislates something for us, He does it for our benefit; He *Glorified is He* wants His handiwork to attain happiness through the Religion with its “do and not do” commands. Hence, He sent down the Religion. When this Religion orders people to “do and not do” things, it does not want to restrict man's freedom of movement except in a way that protects him: It limits one freedom here to protect another there. When Allah prohibits stealing, for example, the matter is all-inclusive for all humanity, so no one is allowed to steal from anyone else, while Allah *Glorified is He* prevents one person from stealing; He prevents other millions from stealing things from that one person. This provides protection for all humanity against stealing and represents a source of gain for everyone.

So, when you look at Divine Legislation, do not look at it as just something required from you, but look at it as something required for you as well. Another example: Religion prohibits a male believer from casting his eyes on a woman that is not his *mahram*. This prohibition is not directed towards only one person; it is directed towards every believing person. As a single person, you are ordered to lower your gaze away from others, while, for your sake, millions of other eyes are forbidden from looking upon you.

So, every believer enjoys a tranquil life through the Divine Legislation and all sacred laws have come for the benefit of us all. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* has been merciful to us as shown in the procession of Messengers He sent us, from Adam *peace be upon him* until Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the teachings of all these Messengers never contradict as they all represent a

source of benefit for mankind. Thus, it is far from being possible that the march of one Messenger goes against the march of another.

What, then, is the cause of contradiction that exists among the religions although the Legislator is One and all people are dependent on Him? We absolve the Messengers of bringing any contradiction eventhough some people have attempted to depict a picture full of contradictions. We must know that those followers of the Messengers do want to have a temporal power for themselves by which they can rule on earth. Those who had a temporal power in a religion such as Judaism or Christianity were responsible for that. When Christianity came to the Jews, the rabbis said: "We do not want Christianity." Why? Because the temporal power was in their hands and if those rabbis had adhered to what Allah had sent down to them, they would have kissed the hands of any new Messenger. Being grateful for his coming, they would have verily said to him: "Help us to have a deep understanding of Allah's Religion." So, differences do not occur except when caprices are in control of temporal powers.

Since Man was first created, the procession of Divine Messages has been marked by harmony, not disagreement. When a Messenger comes upon people who do not believe in any god, the job becomes quite easy as he will guide them to One Allah and to the Religion that Allah wants. But the problem is much bigger with that group of people who actually have a Messenger and a Divine Message. When a Messenger from Allah *Glorified is He* comes to them, he comes at a time when these people have established a temporal power through their claimed attribution to a former Messenger, just as happened with the Jews and the Christians. They stuck to the religion that they already had ignoring the fact that their leaders had corrupted the religion to gain a temporal power.

The procession of Messengers continued as Allah wanted to protect humanity from corruption. Allah *Glorified is He* has selected the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lead humanity since Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed the preservation of good in this community. When you see people who have gone to extremes in their atheism, trust that there are others whom Allah *Glorified is He* has provided with more power so that there can be a sort of balance. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Be an ummah [community of

Muslims] that calls for what is good, urges what is right and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 104)

In another place in the Glorious Quran, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'You are the best *ummah* [community of Muslims] singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them. For although some of them do believe, most of them are defiantly disobedient'. (*Al- 'Imran*: 110) Then, once a member of Muhammad's *ummah* (community of followers) loses the conscience of his self-reproaching soul, other faithful Muslims will help him return to the right path. Allah *Glorified is He* does not make people faultless. He, *Glorified and Exalted*, says: 'By time, Man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds, advise one another to be truthful and advise one another to be steadfast'. (*al- 'Asr*: 1-3) Allah *Glorified is He* states the phrase "advise one another" and does not say just "advise others" to show us that advice is a mutual practice among community members. When a person has a moment of weakness in relation to the religion, another person should be strong enough to give him some good advice. This point also applies to the one who gives advice, for he might also experience a moment of weakness and then he will surely find someone to advise him. So, we see that there are no special people entrusted with advising, while others are charged with receiving the advice. Rather, it is an exchange of role-playing, or what we may call solidarity of faith. Once a person becomes weak concerning a certain point, he finds another believing brother to advise him: "Get rid of this weakness". This act is alternately done to resist the vicissitudes of the human soul as these vicissitudes do not stabilize Man's life. So, if we see a person who is too weak to adhere to a commitment, we must advise him as well as advising one another to be truthful and patient. You, too, will find people from your brethren in faith to advise you when you are weak.

This is the picture of the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* As for the former peoples, they used to not prevent one another from wrongdoing. So, Allah intervened and brought a new Messenger with a new miracle to forcibly alert people's minds to the fact that there are certain things that miracles can bring which are contrary to natural law. This was a signal from Allah *Glorified is He* to make people aware of the spheres of His Omnipotence.

Allah took the covenant of the prophets that they would pass the following message on to their people: Be alert in looking for Messengers sent by Allah *Glorified is He* and when a Messenger comes to convey Allah's Religion, stand by him and support him. The Messengers, *peace be upon all of them*, were ordered to state in the religion and the crux of it, that when Allah intervenes and sends a new Messenger, all of their people must follow him and not be bigoted. They must welcome him and submit with him to Allah. This is because a Messenger only comes to help people find the True Guidance. However, the followers who are fond of possessing a temporal power distort facts on purpose and in order that Allah *Glorified is He* protects His creation from this plague, He takes the covenant that He wants from the Prophets, saying: 'And [recall, Oh People of the Book] when Allah took a pledge from the Prophets, saying, "If, after I have bestowed Scripture and wisdom upon you, a Messenger comes [with a scripture] confirming what you have been given, you must believe in him and support him ..."''. (*Al-Imran*: 81) Someone might say that this statement makes sense when a messenger comes at a time, while another messenger is already present. An example of this is when Shu'aib ('Jethro'), *peace be upon him*, lived at the same time of Musa ('Moses') *peace be upon him*, while another one is when Lut ('Lot') *peace be upon him*, was a contemporary of Ibrahim ('Abraham') *peace be upon him*. We would say that this occurs too, when messengers are not contemporaries of one another, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants every messenger to convey a clear message to his people. If two messengers are contemporaries of one another, the first messenger still has to provide his people with the means to protect themselves against bigotry. As the people are believers and followers of the first messenger, they must cordially welcome the messenger who comes after him. Every messenger must convey the following message to his people: 'Be prepared for Allah's intervention at any moment. When He *Glorified is He* intervenes at any time and sends a messenger to confirm what is with you, beware of doing harm to him or showing him enmity. Instead, you must support him.' This is an explicit statement with no ambiguity. 'And [recall, O People of the Book] when Allah [God] took a pledge from the prophets, saying, 'If, after I have bestowed Scripture and wisdom upon you, a messenger comes [with a scripture] confirming what you have been given....' (*Al-Imran*: 81).

Here we are going to explain the phrase ‘...a messenger comes confirming what you have been given...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 81). The religion raises some issues that are generally accepted since doctrines, chronicles and stories are the same. The difference lies in legislative rulings that might be appropriate for one time and inappropriate for another. When a messenger ‘comes with a scripture confirming what you have been given...’ in the sphere of doctrines, chronicles, or stories, you must then believe in him. The Jews, however, did not do so when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to newly guide the group that believed in the messengers and had a god. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came with a religion of clear doctrine, as well as incorruptible chronicles and stories that supported it; likewise, he introduced legislation appropriate to the time. The coming of the last Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was a great shock to those who enjoyed temporal power. Some of them insisted on solely following their own messenger and their corrupt religion and refused to follow Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Others believed in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. A third group believed in another messenger. Failure is an inevitable result of bigotry. So, the Call of Islam aims to purify the doctrines and ask every follower of a former message to study and contemplate if the last Religion has come with something different from the doctrines of the former religions or has it come to confirm them?

The last Religion comes to confirm doctrines, chronicles, and stories that preceded it. However, it differs in legislation, which may be appropriate to one era, yet inappropriate to another. We can say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to protect humanity from thoughtless and blind bigotry that results from following a particular messenger, while refusing to accept another. When Allah *Glorified is He* sends a messenger and prophet, He gives him the chronicles and facts, while taking a pledge from him and his believers that they will be prepared to believe in every contemporary or upcoming messenger; they must confirm what he brings, and the prophet must advise his followers of the necessity of this belief.

Why? This is due to the fact that the True Lord *Glorified He* wants the processions of messengers of the faith not to be enemies of one another. They

must instead face the enemies of the religion, united. What has made atheism widespread nowadays is that the followers of the divine religions are in disagreement. The enmity that exists amongst them is perhaps greater than the enmity between them and the atheists who deny Allah altogether. This disagreement allows the atheists to say, 'If these religions were true, their followers would agree and not disagree. Then, what does it mean when the followers of every messenger say that they follow a messenger sent by Allah?'

The disagreement among the followers of the Divine religions gives atheists an opportunity to sow the seeds of atheism amongst people. Basically, some atheists do not find any unity or power of faith among those who believe in Allah and His Religion. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'And [recall, O, People of the Book] when Allah took a pledge from the prophets...' (*Al-'Imran*: 81). This means that Allah *Glorified is He* took a pledge from every prophet He had sent and had given the Scripture and wisdom, that if a messenger came to his people confirming this Scripture and wisdom, they would believe in him. It is not enough for the first prophet and his people to announce their belief; they must also support the new messenger. We may say that if the followers of every prophet had acted in accordance with this pledge, atheists, in general, would not have had any argument. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* then says: "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My Bond?" They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness and I too will bear witness." (*Al-'Imran*: 81). Acknowledgment is one of the best forms of evidence as said. Bond means a strong vow. We say, 'the bond of love', i.e. a strong, firm connection. When addressing Allah, the procession of prophets say, 'We have acknowledged it', and then The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Then bear witness.' Witnessing always requires a witness, a person(s) involved in witnessing, and what is being witnessed.

Since the True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who says to the prophets to give Him the true covenant and pledge by saying, 'Then bear witness', so they are the witnesses here. Then, who are the people involved in witnessing? And what is the content of witnessing? Do the prophets bear witness in relation to themselves or does every prophet bear witness concerning the other prophets? Or is it that he bears witness that he has delivered the Divine Decree to his people?

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bears witness concerning his *ummah* (followers), whereas the prophets testify for each other. Thus, the witness could be a prophet, and the person involved in witnessing could be another prophet, while what is being witnessed might be that the believers must believe in and support the new messenger. Once again, the witness could be a prophet, while the people involved in witnessing could be his followers. What is being witnessed is that he has informed them of the necessity of believing in the coming messenger and his Divine Religion. Since the people of a given community believe in a messenger, they must support him and the messenger coming after him so that the procession of Faith would not disappear behind the falsehood of atheism: ‘...you must believe in him and support him. [Allah] said, “Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My Bond?” They said, “We have acknowledged it.” He said, “Then bear witness and I too will bear witness.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 81).

Let us put the testimonies mentioned in this Glorious verse in order: The prophets bear witness concerning one another; the prophets bear witness concerning their followers; then Allah testifies for the prophets.

Confirming this point, we should note that if we find the followers of a previous religion being intolerant towards a new religion especially after the latter has brought a miracle that proves the veracity of what the new messenger brings from Allah, and then it becomes clear that those followers have betrayed the religion. Allah wants to keep the Call of Faith in total harmony so that no messenger may be intolerated for his own self, his race or his homeland. The same thing applies to the followers who must not be blindly following for their doctrine or creed because they all deliver the Message of one God and have one religion. So, the religion must remain coherent, with no intolerance for other prophets or creeds. The aspired goal is to have a cohesive and unified procession of messages. Thus, there are no grounds for any prophet or a follower of his to oppose the call of any new messenger, as long as he confirms the truth that comes before him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that He has demonstrated the testimonies of the prophets concerning each other, the testimonies of the prophets concerning their followers, and Allah's own Testimony for all, which

is the most faithful and trustworthy of all testimonies. Hence, the procession of faith becomes so clear and unified that we can hardly find a believer in a divine message oppose one of another divine message. Let us leave opposition to those who do not believe in the Divine Messages. When the followers of the Divine Messages join forces, they can stand against atheists. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

فَمَنْ تَوَلَّى بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**Those who turn away after this are the ones who
break pledges [82] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 82)**

The words 'Turn away' here are the opposite of 'approach'. 'Approach' means 'come face to face'. 'Turn away' means 'keep away from', or state a well-known expression, 'He turned his back on me.' This means that he does not care about me nor does he approach me. So the goal of taking pledges is to make people approach that religion. Allah threatens those who turn away and give their backs to the new Faith by saying: 'Those who turn away after this are the ones who are defiantly disobedient.' (*Al-'Imran*: 82) What does 'after this' in the glorious verse mean? The verse refers to turning away after taking the pledge and covenant from the prophets, along with the testimonies of the communities concerning each other and Allah's Testimony for everyone. So, there is no excuse for anyone. What will be Allah's Punishment for those who turn their backs on the new prophet, 'Muhammad' *peace and blessings be upon him*?

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* describes them: '...those... are the ones who are defiantly disobedient', i.e. the punishment prepared for them by Allah is similar to that of the defiantly disobedient. Disobedience, as we may know, means straying from the confines of Allah's Obedience. It is well known that words take their meanings from tangible things. Tangible things are the first to be established within the human conscience, then what follows are abstract concepts that depend on tangible things themselves. In Arabic, the word *fisq* (defiant obedience) is derived from the extraction of a ripe date out of its skin. When a date ripens, it becomes small and moves away from its skin. When a date becomes small in size, the skin becomes so loose that the fruit can easily come out of it.

We say in Arabic that a date *fasaqat* (in the past form) which means that it came out of its skin. The Quran borrows this expression to describe those who leave Allah's Religion. It is as though Allah's Religion surrounds man in all his actions. Thus, when man abandons Allah's Religion, he is like a date that comes out of its skin.

We have discussed major disobedience, but there is minor disobedience as well. Now, let us ask this question: Is disobedience here representing just a violation of the Religion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* that must be obeyed? Such a violation may be committed by all sinners who still believe in the religion, but they partially stray from the straight path. We say that the sinner 'has strayed from the right course', i.e. he believes in the religion, but he ignores some of its legislations. Meanwhile, the disobedience that the True Lord *Glorified is He* is referring to, is the gravest one because it is abandonment of the procession of faith in its entirety. Since Allah has taken the pledge, and the prophets have borne witness concerning their communities, and the communities have borne witness concerning each other, and Allah *Glorified is He* has testified for all, could there be any excuse after this for a person to turn away and reject the Guidance? Why then does this person turn away and reject the Guidance? He does so because he wants another religion, which is other than that sent down by Allah. Had he been convinced of Allah's religion, he would have turned to this religion. What religion do you want, O you who are not satisfied with this testimony and this confirmation? You surely know that there is no true religion except this one and that there is no other god who can send other religions.

Thus, we realize that the alternative to Allah's Religion is a religion created by humans for each other. We should ask those who follow a religion other than Allah's 'Who has put a certain person in a position that qualifies him to be followed by others?' Followers have to select the one they follow, and this person must be superior to them. It is wrong for a man to follow another who has created a religion of his own. This is a grave disobedience of Allah's Religion, as equals must not follow each other at all. It is from Allah's Grace that He has given His Own Religion to all people so that they will not follow one another. Why did He do that? The purpose is to prevent the mind

of a certain person to control the destiny of another person, while the True Lord *Glorified is He* has no caprices.

Man must direct his mind to be in accordance with the Will of Allah who has created all humanity.

Since there is no god except Allah, what is then the religion with which man can be pleased? If man does not follow Allah's religion, he will certainly be satisfied with man made religions which are always based on whims. When whims exist, we find that every human lawmaker works on his own; and this leads to the corruption of the universe. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*, says:

‘But if the Truth [i.e. Allah] had followed their desires, the heavens, the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined. Rather, We have brought them their Message, but they, from their Message, are turning away.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

If they are not satisfied with Allah's religion, what disobedience do they commit? It is truly a most grave disobedience because Allah *Glorified is He* has taken their pledge, as well as the pledge of their prophets, and has confirmed these pledges. So is it other than Allah *Glorified is He* they desire? Yes, they want other than Allah *Glorified is He*. But who is this other? Is it another god? No, for there is no god but Allah. Rather, they have put created beings in place of the Creator. So Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا وَإِلَيْهِ يُرْجَعُونَ

Do they seek anything other than submission to God?

**Everyone in the heavens and earth submits to Him,
willingly or unwillingly; they will all be returned to Him [83]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 83)**

Not believing in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, whom Allah sent as a prophet and messenger, reveals their desire for a religion other than Allah's. But nothing is available to them except the religions of humans which rely on whims and inevitably lead to misguidance. Allah *Glorified is He* wants His human creatures to think logically. Allah *Glorified is He*

has clarified His religion as if to tell us that we have been made successors upon earth, and we are the masters of all, who are served by the entire universe. Look at all the species in existence, and you will find that they are at your disposal; animals are less intelligent than you are. Plants are inferior to animals regarding the senses, while inanimate objects are inferior to plants.

So, all the species of the universe including animals, plants, and inanimate objects conform to your will, O man. Plants serve animals, and animals serve you, O man, while inanimate objects serve all. The various things that we humans take from inanimate objects also benefit plants and animals. Then, you can see with your own eyes that every species in existence serves the species that has superiority over it. Inanimate objects serve plants. Inanimate objects and plants serve animals. Inanimate objects, plants, and animals serve man. Yet, who do you serve, O man? You must have thought, O man, of the One to whom you are related in a way, matching your superiority over the other species. You must have searched for the one who has given you mastery over the other species. Have you, O man, subdued these species by means of your power and might? No, for you possess no inherent power that would allow you to do as such. Has it not occurred to you to think about the power that has enabled you to subject what you have no control over and make it serve you when you have no power, and even serve you, while you are sleeping? Has that thought never occurred to you?

You, O man, must be honest with yourself and search for a master who matches your mastery over others. You have no master in this tangible universe. But if someone tells you that there is a god unseen to you who orders you to serve Him, you must say: 'This is a logical statement in view of my understanding of the universe.' Afterwards, look at the universe; for you are not alone in it; there are other species, and every species has its own laws and mission. Animals have a mission, plants have a mission, and inanimate objects have a mission. Have you ever found species rebelling against its mission? No.

For example, you easily mount a horse that has a saddle of silk and leather and a bridle of silver. On another occasion, you use this horse as a means or a mount to willingly carry fertilizer made of animal dung. Thus, it serves you as a mount and as a carrier, and it never rebels against you. Every species duly

performs its mission, and thus, matters go smoothly. Why do matters go in such a smooth way? Allah is the One Who has created these species and subdued them (to man) as if to say to them to 'serve people whether they are believers or non-believers.' This is the Divine Justice; so these species do not delay or rebel in their service of humankind.

Have any of you ever seen the sun saying, 'Man no longer pleases me; so I will not rise for him anymore, and, in fact, I will disappear today?!' Has the air ever rebelled by saying, 'No, mankind no longer deserves to breathe air; so I will not allow them to benefit from me?' Have we ever seen rain refuse to come down? Has man ever planted crops in good soil and then have it disobey him? No, everything in existence humbly and dutifully fulfils its mission. In this context, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*, says: 'And made them [grazing livestock] obedient so that some can be used for riding, some for food, some for other benefits, and some for drink? Will they not give thanks?' (*Ya Sin*: 72-73).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* sets some animals free, so they are neither subjected to the will of man nor tamed by him. The purpose here is to know, O man, that the camel, for instance, is not tamed by your own power. If you had absolute power over the universe, would you tame some of the snakes of this world? Or tame the lion?

O man, you see many runaway, untamed creatures in this universe such as snakes and wild animals. The True Lord *Glorified is He* shows us through this exception that you cannot subdue such creatures to serve you with your own power unless Allah subjects them for you. This subjection and taming of these creatures is a grant and a grace from Allah *Glorified is He* to you, O man, who is still a weak and impotent creature.

We can hardly find anything beneficial in the universe that has disobeyed man because all the creatures are subjected by Allah to serve mankind, both the believers and the disbelievers. This is the Divine Sustenance that encompasses all creatures. The Most Generous Creator is the Lord of all humanity Who gives provision. Hence, the other species obey man whether he is a believer or a disbeliever. If a disbeliever conducts his life well, he will be successful (in this world), in contrast to a believer who fails if he does not work hard or

conduct his life well. Again, this is the Divine Sustenance that is extended to all people. As for the Divine Bestowal, it is related to commandments and prohibitions 'do and not to do'. It is extended to the believers alone.

So this is the image of the universe. It performs its mission in an optimal way and experiences wonderful total harmony. Here, we may ask ourselves from where has the imbalance in the universe come from? The imbalance has come from you, O man. Hence, whenever you find corruption in the universe, be sure that man has a part in it. But when man does not intervene, corruption never occurs.

Have you ever seen anyone complaining that the air has been insufficient? No.

This is because man has nothing to do with this matter. However, we intervene in the air issue via polluting it with exhaust and waste. It is a fact that the True Lord *Glorified is He* generously grants man discoveries that could lessen this corruption; but when mankind gets involved afterwards, things are corrupted. Does this mean that we should not get involved at all? Should we stand aside with no actions? No, we must be involved in the universe, but according to Allah's Guidance.

If you get involved in the universe according to Allah's Guidance, everything will run through subjection and taming. Just as the sun performs its mission, inanimate objects perform theirs; and animals perform theirs. You, O man, are required to perform your mission which is to obey Allah *Glorified is He* by 'doing so and so and not doing so and so'. If you adhere to the Guidance of 'do and not to do', verily you will be in harmony with the universe.

Allah concludes this issue with a deeply moving and touching question for the believers: 'So is it other than the Religion of Allah they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?' (*Al-Imran*: 83)

Everything in the heavens and earth has submitted to Allah, willingly or by compulsion. One may ask what the meaning of 'willingly' is. 'Willingly' refers to obedience stemming from subservience, as the heavens and earth said in the wise text of the Quran: 'Then He turned to the heaven, which was smoke—He said to it and the earth, "Come [into being], willingly or by compulsion," and they said, "We come willingly."' (*Fussilat*: 11)

Everything that has not been given the freedom of choice comes in obedience and subservience to Allah *Glorified is He*. Then what is the meaning of 'by compulsion'? Some scholars say that 'willingly' denotes that the species of angels, inanimate objects, plants, and animals fulfil their missions in submission. None of them objects or even has the capability to disobey. As for the phrase of 'by compulsion', some scholars have understood that it refers to those people who serve others by force, such as slaves. In reference to scholars who say this, we may say that it is not correct or sound to give the opponents of Islam a chance to claim that Islam forces a man to serve another unwillingly because the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'There is no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The true Guidance has become distinct from error. So whoever rejects *taghut* [false gods] and believes in Allah has grasped the firmest handhold, one that will never break. Allah is All-Hearing and All Knowing.' (*Taghut* is an Arabic word that means false objects of worship such as idols, heavenly bodies, spirits, human beings, etc.) (*Al-'Imran*: 256)

Since Allah does not force anyone to believe in Him, how does He force a person to serve another one?! So we must understand 'by compulsion' according to its real meaning. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has informed us that the whole universe is subservient to Him because He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created it, and there is no god but He. This is a fact beyond doubt. The entire universe is possessed by Allah, and He is the Arranger and Subjugator of it. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Allah [God] has never had a child. Nor has there ever been any god beside Him. [If there had been,] then each god would have taken his creation aside and sought to overcome the others. 'Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him]'' (*Al-'Imran*: 91).

Since He is the One and the Creator, no one can rebel against His Will. It is necessary for man to understand his mission as being the only creature that Allah has given him the freedom of choice and made him responsible for his own actions, while other species have no choice and are not held responsible before Allah *Glorified is He* concerning 'do and not to do' commands. Responsibility is verily the result of free will. The religion asks you to 'do and

not to do so and so' because the One Who has sent it down and created you knows well that you are capable of doing what He commands you to do and not doing what He commands you not to do.

Consider this example. Man's hand is created to move as he wills. This is quite true because when the nerves that connect this part of the body to the brain are severed, this part is paralysed. Furthermore, if the afflicted person wants to lift his hand, he cannot [we seek Allah's refuge from such a bad thing]. The hand, then, is under the control of man and when your will, O man, is in accordance with Allah's Guidance, you will direct it in the course of His 'do and not to do commands'. When you are told, for instance, 'Do not use your hand to strike anyone,' this means that the hand is capable of striking. When you are asked to take the hand of the one who may stumble', then your hand is able to take the hand of the one who may stumble. So, you have been created in such a way that your body organs willingly respond to your will. Religion comes to order you to do the following: 'Go with the will for so and so, and do not go with the will for so and so'.

When man follows the religion, he is in perfect accord with the subservient things and does everything in the best manner. But man loses this accord when he does not adhere to the religion and breaks away from the unity of the universe. Let us read what Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Do you realize [Muhammad] that to Allah prostrates [submits] whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many others the punishment is well deserved. Anyone disgraced by Allah will have no one to honour him. Indeed, Allah does whatever He wills.' (*al-Hajj*: 18)

All the species lie prostrate to Allah: the sun, the moon, the stars, and the mountains. All of these inanimate objects prostrate. The trees and plants, too, prostrate to Allah *Glorified is He* and so do the animals and the moving creatures. So many people also prostrate. However, in contrast to the so many humans who do prostrate, we find that there are many who do not, and so the punishment has been justified upon them. If man had only adhered to Allah's Guidance, he would have been like all the other species; but he has chosen to be different by saying: 'I

undertake to bear the Trust (Commands of Allah) because I am learned and wise.' For example, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* tells us: 'Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, yet they declined to undertake it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he has always been unjust and ignorant.' (*al-'Ahzab*: 72).

If man accepts the Guidance of Allah in accordance with the 'do and not to do' commands, he will be in harmony with all the created beings, and thus no violations will occur on his part or the part of the other species. When this does occur, the universe will be in perfect harmony. We know that when man is occupied with some of his scientific ambitions, he intends to do good, but he is aware of some aspects and ignorant of others. If man learned from Allah, the Knower of all things, the world would be in harmony.

The inventors who designed engines that run on petrol have made human transportation much easier, but the exhaust and waste produced by petrol harm the universe. This is why scientists are making great efforts to find ways to combat environmental pollution. When firewood was the only fuel available, there was no environmental pollution. Why? Because every element was fulfilling its mission: as a part of the burned wood became charcoal, another part turned into gases; thus, everything took a natural course.

This shows us that man has approached modern inventions with only half his knowledge. Man has planned to make movement easier, transport heavy loads and shorten journeys, but he has not considered the consequences that affect the environment and cause pollution. Hence, we have encountered waste materials that corrupt the environment. If man had comprehensive knowledge, he would have, when inventing these engines, searched for a way to avoid these waste materials.

Let us contemplate the Greatness of the True Lord *Glorified is He*. He lets the human intellect develop, but the human intellect is limited and does not apprehend factors which certainly result in harm. Those who have invented insecticides thought that they had made a major breakthrough in the universe, but the Will of the True Lord *Glorified is He* decreed that the very people who invented these insecticides were the ones to ban them because they found them

to be harmful. In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Say, [O, Muhammad], “Shall we inform you [believers] of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose efforts are lost in this worldly life, while they think that they are doing good work.” It is those who disbelieve in their Lord’s Verses and Signs and deny that they will meet Him’, so their deeds become worthless; and on the Day of Resurrection We will not assign to them any weight [i.e., importance]’ (*al-Kahf*: 103-105).

If you want to perfect your product, search for the best one in the light of Allah's Guidance. The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us the clearest of examples.

We know that the waste products of our inventions are harmful, like the waste of factories, vehicles, etc. On the other hand, the waste excretions of the creatures of Allah *Glorified is He* like animals, for example, are beneficial. Man takes animal droppings and manufactures fertilizers out of them to increase soil's fertility. It is not strange that animal dung that fertilizes land is not repulsive to us, nor does it have the same stench that human waste has. Why is this? This is because animals eat according to their need. They might find before them many different kinds of food, yet they will eat dry grass only. When an animal is full, it stops eating, and so its waste is not foul-smelling. The human being, on the contrary, eats many different kinds of food, eats beyond his need and does not control his desires and appetites. An animal has no free will and is ruled by instinct. It finds before it what can be eaten and what cannot be eaten, and it, instinctively, chooses the appropriate food. When its belly is full, it stops eating because it is governed by instinct and subjugation. Meanwhile, man enjoys free will which corrupts him, distances him from Allah's Guidance and causes him to cross the boundaries of satiation since he has the power to do so. Thus, we clearly see that the entire universe willingly submits to Allah *Glorified is He* by way of subjugation.

Never think that Islam could exist by force and compulsion. Some scholars have missed this point and thus have given those who oppose Islam a chance to argue and say, ‘Your religion spread by the sword.’ We may say to them that nobody can accept Islam by compulsion. The sword was only raised for one cause: the protection for the freedom of choice. The sword was raised to

prevent compulsion and eliminate the hegemony of some people who forced others to accept their beliefs; so the sword addressed them saying, 'Know your limits and let people choose what they believe.' The proof of this is that the lands that Islam conquered still contain non-Muslims. If they had been conquered by the sword, we would not have found any religions there other than Islam. We would have also found the opponents of Islam further emphatically saying, 'You (Muslims) impose *jizyah* or 'protection fee' (a tax taken from non-Muslims living in a Muslim state to protect them).

We could say to them, refuting their argument that we do not impose *jizyah* on the believers, but only on the disbelievers whom we freely leave to disbelieve. A disbeliever pays *jizyah* so that the believers can defend him if the homeland is attacked.

Then, how should we understand Allah's Statement that man sometimes submits by compulsion? We can understand this by the following statement: Man does not understand matters well. Some matters fall under his control, whereas he has no control over other matters which happen to him against his will and choice. A person chooses his own actions, but he does not choose the things that happen to him or around him. For example, none of us chooses the day he is born, the day he dies or the day he becomes ill. A wise man is the one who recognises this fact by saying to the one who does not know or ignores it, 'O man! Get rid of such foolishness. You are compelled to unwillingly surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* during some times in your life. You submit to Allah *Glorified is He* against your will concerning many matters that happen to you and that cannot be prevented. So why not fulfill yourself by submitting to Islam with its freedom of choice?'

All creatures surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* and so does man since he is incapable of repelling the things that happen to him or around him. Here man, like other beings, is forced to surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* Who has the upper hand over these areas of submission, in which you, O man, play no part, or have no control. Then, must you not surrender in all aspects of your life? Is it possible for a disbeliever to prevent some parts of his body from surrendering [to Allah's Will] and performing their functions?

Let us see what would happen to this disbeliever if he thinks he can do so: he must stop breathing because breathing occurs whether he likes it or not; and his heart must stop beating because it beats without him ordering it. Since there are people who enjoy disbelieving, let them make all their body parts disbelieve; yet they cannot, for they will find that they want certain things that do not come to them and that they dislike things that happen to them. No one can avoid surrendering to Allah because Allah *Glorified is He* has predestined for every person the day he is born and the day he dies. Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed that man cannot resist the things that happen to him, thus becoming submissive against his will. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘..., while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 83).

So, let us understand ‘willingly’ to mean beings other than man, as well as the believers who carry out the Teachings of Allah's religion, whereas ‘by compulsion’ refers to all the undesirable matters that happen to man, for which he has no control over. He is unable to prevent them because the one who causes them to happen is the Creator Who does what He wills. Since there are some aspects of your life, O man, in which you are drawn, why have you rebelled concerning the matters of free will? It is incumbent upon the disbelievers to accept this point and say ‘no’ to disbelief and turn to faith. A believer is actually aware of this point, saying, ‘I want to be in harmony with the entire universe so that no (natural) endowment may supersede another, and no will may dominate another. This represents Allah's *Glorified is He* Mercy with the creation.’

When man surrenders himself to Allah *Glorified is He* he does what the religion requires and abstains from what the religion forbids. We could say to whoever refrains from following Allah's Commands of ‘do and not to do’: If you do what Allah wants, what will be the benefit for Him? Nothing will benefit Him, so you must consider this matter carefully, for a command may be rejected or rebelled against if the one who gives the commands seeks to benefit from them. There is no benefit for the True Lord *Glorified is He* behind what He wants from the creation except what is in the best interest of the creation itself.

Then the Guidance of the True Lord *Glorified is He* is for the benefit of mankind. The one who refuses Allah's Guidance only harms himself and loses harmony with the creation. If someone does not want to surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* let him try not to surrender (to Allah) concerning those things on which he has no control. This is impossible.

Let us carefully contemplate what the Quran says after the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about the covenant, pledge and testimonies: 'So is it other than the Religion of Allah they desire, while to Him have submitted [all] those within the heavens and earth, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they will be returned?' (*Al-'Imran*: 83). The one who desires a religion other than Allah's religion is not being logical, or honest, with himself or with the universe because the entire universe belongs to Allah *Glorified is He*. Included are the heavens and the earth with all they contain, both animate and inanimate objects, as well as the people who accept Allah's Guidance, and even the disbelievers who submit to Allah *Glorified is He* concerning the things on which they have no control.

The word 'submitted' in this Glorious Quranic context means surrendered, and we are subjected and forced to obey. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions that the heaven and the earth '... said, "We come willingly."' (*Fussilat*: 11). Naturally, the heavens and the earth submit to Allah's Commands, but when 'They said, "We come willingly."', they actively submit to Allah *Glorified is He*. All must return to Allah *Glorified is He*. Mankind, both the believers and the disbelievers, will most assuredly return to Allah *Glorified is He*.

The verb 'return' at the end of the verse can be found in other places in the Quran; sometimes it comes in the passive form 'they will be returned', which means that they are compelled to return to Allah *Glorified is He*; and sometimes it is in the active form 'they will return', which means that they will rush forward to return to Allah *Glorified is He*. In this verse, we understand that those who desire religions other than Allah's religion do not wish to return to Allah *Glorified is He* and so they will be compelled to return, as Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says in the passive form in another chapter of the Quran: 'On that Day they will be violently thrust into the Fire of Hell' (*at-Tur*: 13).

After this, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

قُلْ ءَامَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ
وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ
مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

Say [Muhammad], ‘We [Muslims] believe in God and in what has been sent down to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes. We believe in what has been given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We do not make a distinction between any of the [prophets]. It is to Him that we devote ourselves’ [84] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 84)

When we examine this verse, we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* groups Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* together with those who believe in him and the former messengers regarding the belief in Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* talks about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers as one faithful entity. The True Lord’s word ‘Say’ is directed (in the Arabic imperative singular form) to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the statement ‘We [Muslims] believe...’ is evidence of the unity between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the *Ummah* (followers) that believes in him. It is as though the Muslim *Ummah* is included in ‘Say’, and as though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is included in ‘We [Muslims] believe...’. Thus, complete harmony, or unity, is achieved between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who believe in him. So when the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses them, He addresses a single faithful unity that has no divisions.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses this form of discourse to clarify for us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come in order to gain ascendancy over his *ummah*; rather, he came to carry the burdens of this *ummah*. As we have said before, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had two forms of faith: he had faith in Allah *Glorified is He* and he was faithful to the believers. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* will intercede on our behalf (on the Day of Resurrection) because he had made so

many great efforts to intercede for his entire *ummah*. He delivered the Message in the best manner and assumed responsibility for the benefit of his entire *ummah*. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Say: “We [Muslims] believe...”’ Some may argue that it would be more obvious in this context to say, ‘I [Muhammad] believe,’ or to say, ‘Say (all of you): We [Muslims] believe....’ Be certain that True Lord *Glorified is He* in His Glorious Quran puts every word in its proper place, in such a way that there is cohesion between the word and its meaning. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Say: “We [Muslims] believe...”’ in order that we know that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a messenger who is inextricably mixed with his Ummah, and that the Muslim *ummah* willingly obeys her Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus the commands come to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, from the True Lord *Glorified is He* and all are required to obey these commands. This shows or proves to the opponents (of Islam) that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has a strong, faithful following. If Allah *Glorified is He* had said, ‘Say: I [Muhammad] believe....,’ this would have meant that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* possesses nothing more than his own personal belief. But the fact is that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was believed to be a prophet by his *ummah*, as well as many others, which includes those who embraced Islam at the Fath (Conquest) of Mecca, as the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘When the Victory of Allah comes and He opens up your way [Prophet], when you see people embracing Allah's [God's] Religion in Crowds...’ (*an-Nasr*: 1-2).

When we read the True Lord's words: ‘Say, “We [Muslims] believe in Allah [God] and in what was sent down upon us...”’ (*Al-'Imran*: 84), we should note, as we have said before, that scholars discuss the issue of Revelation (*Inzaal* or *Nuzul* in Arabic). Sometimes the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘...And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O, Muhammad], and what was revealed before you, those who have firm faith in the Hereafter.’ (*al-Baqara*: 4)

Other times, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘And We have not sent down upon you the Book “the Quran”, [O Muhammad], except for you to

make clear to them that wherein they have differed and as guidance and mercy to those who believe.’ (*an-Nahl*: 64)

So, when the concept of Revelation is expressed, we sometimes find that the verb ‘reveal’ is used, followed by the proposition ‘to’ (*‘ila’* in Arabic); and sometimes the phrasal verb ‘send down’ is used, followed by the proposition ‘upon’ (*‘ala’* in Arabic). Other scholars say that when speech is directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘sent down upon you’, it is as though these scholars make –unintentionally– a distinction between Allah's revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and His revelation to his *ummah*. They do not keep in mind that the goal of sending down the religion upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the guidance of the *ummah*.

We should say that we must not consider the matter in a superficial manner because according to the direct usage of the language, there is a subtle usage of it here. Namely, both ‘to’ and ‘upon’ imply that the religion has been sent down to the *ummah* together with her Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* sometimes uses *‘ila’* (to), which combines with the verb ‘reveal’, when the statement is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as in: ‘And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognised of the Truth. They say, “Our Lord, we have believed, so count us among the witnesses.”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 83)

On another occasion, the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses *‘ala’* (upon), which combines with the phrasal verb ‘send down’, when the statement is also addressed to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* as in: ‘And We have not sent down upon you the Book ” the Quran”, [O Muhammad], except for you to make clear to them that wherein they have differed and as guidance and mercy to those who believe.’ (*an-Nahl*: 64)

Yet another time, the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about ‘coming down’ (*Inzaal* or *Nuzul* in Arabic) when addressing the believers themselves: ‘And it has already come down upon you in the Book [the Quran] that if you hear people denying and ridiculing Allah's Revelation so do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will become

like them. Indeed, Allah will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in Hell all together.' (*an-Nisa*': 140).

This Supreme Book came down from heaven for the benefit of the *ummah*. So the use of '*ala*' (upon) implies loftiness that matches this supreme Ummah and puts the religion in a high status for the believers since it came for their interest. According to Arabic, coming down, or sending down of, (the revelation) requires loftiness which is shown in the proposition 'upon'. This coming down also requires having a goal which is conveyed in the proposition 'to' when used with 'reveal'. So, this religion comes from the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'upon' and 'to' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who delivered to the believers for their own benefit. Thus, we say that if a (religious) ruling seems to limit an individual's freedom, we should not misunderstand that Allah *Glorified is He* wants to actually limit this freedom; rather, this limitation limits millions of people for the sake of the freedom of this individual. An example of this is the religion's prohibition of stealing: this is a command for every one among the millions of people in existence, which strives to benefit every person. The Quran is revealed for your benefit, as well as the benefit of all the believers.

When we read the words of the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*: 'Say [Muhammad], "We [Muslims] believe in Allah and in what was sent down upon us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and *Al-Asbaat* [the Tribes representing the twelve children of Prophet Jacob]. We also believe in what was given to Moses, Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We do not make a distinction between any of the [prophets]. It is to Him that we devote ourselves [as Muslims]."' (*Al- 'Imran*: 84), we find that this statement clarifies that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came only with a religion that contains the most truthful doctrines, stories and chronicles in accordance with the procession of messengers from the day that Allah created the earth and sent the first messenger. Allah *Glorified is He* took a pledge from the prophets and their followers that whenever a messenger comes, confirming what is with them, they must believe in him. Allah *Glorified is He* also took a pledge from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he must believe in the former messengers because he did not come to destroy the

religions, yet rather to perfect them. So we find the Glorious Quran say: ‘...This day I have perfected for you your Religion and completed My Blessing upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3)

The previous religions with all their correct doctrines, stories, and chronicles are similar to Islam; moreover, Islam comes with legislation that is appropriate to every time and place. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* addresses us in his noble Hadith, saying: ‘The likeness of me to the prophets before me is as that of a man who built a house well and beautifully, except for the place of one brick in one of its corners. People began to tour the house, saying: “We would not have seen finer than this, if only for the place of this brick!” I am that final brick.’⁽¹⁾

So, the religion perfected itself with the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since Allah *Glorified is He* took a pledge from the other messengers that they would believe in him when he came. Meanwhile, he trusted and believed in the prophets who preceded him. No one came afterwards asking Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his followers to believe in him. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* ends this Glorious verse saying: ‘... “It is to Him that we devote ourselves [as Muslims].”’ (*Al-Imran*: 84)

This means that none of the followers of any previous messengers has anything that would grant them a temporal power. Rather, everything starts with Allah, *Glorified is He*, and ends with Him. This is the final word in the procession of messages. Islam means man’s submission to Allah *Glorified is He* to be in harmony with himself as well as with the universe that contains animals, plants, inanimate objects and others. Thus, the whole universe, including believing people who surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* becomes subjected to Him, or His Will. When the universe and mankind have become subdued to Allah *Glorified is He* no action will be in conflict with another because the One Who has this authority is the One Who makes laws to govern man’s daily life and protect him from clashing with other beings. We find that people have

(1) Narrated by Muslim: Traceable to Prophet Muhammad’s Hadith

managed to set standards for themselves which can prevent that which may result in disasters and crises.

For instance, let us look at railways. There is one who is called 'track controller' whose job is to change tracks for trains so that one train coming from a particular direction can change its course so as to avoid colliding with another train coming on the same line. This is the action of mankind in relation to his inventions of trains and forms of transport: he has designed ways to prevent these vehicles from hitting each other. So, what about the True Lord *Glorified is He* to whom belongs the noblest descriptions and Who has created man himself? He *Glorified is He* has granted us the Guidance so that no movement, or action, in the universe may clash with another.

Let us compare the sphere of subjugation with that of the free will. Have we ever heard of two camels walking along opposite paths and hitting each other? This has never happened because a camel keeps itself, and what it carries away from other camels and what they carry. Yet, we have heard about vehicles crashing into each other since a vehicle does not drive itself; it is driven by a person who has the will of choice and who can make it collide with other things and cause disasters due to his carelessness.

So, clashes between movements occur only in the matters which are governed by free will, e.g. a person who is heedless of his job, as is the case of the track controller when directing trains. Meanwhile, the clash of a movement in the universe with another is impossible because the matter is in the hands of *the Most High*, the Overseer Who controls the earth and the heavens. He *Glorified is He* keeps the universe in complete harmony and teaches us His Attributes, as when He says: 'Allah – there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of [all] existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). This means that He has the means to sustain your life and arrange your affairs. He neither sleeps, nor slumbers, and nor does He become heedless; so we can sleep, for He has subdued the entire universe for us.

Since this is the nature of Islam and due to the fact that the universe is self-harmonising, why do you deviate from all existence, O man? And why do you deviate from your own intrinsic, innate nature? Why are you not in

harmony or in unison with the universe? If you are in harmony or in unison with yourself and the universe, you will be a happy person.

Today, we see that the world has materially developed in such an incredible way that, for example, if something happens in America, we see it immediately on television, and that a person can board a spaceship and travel to outer space. However, does the world feel comfortable or at peace now? No, it has faced more hardships, as though it has racked its brains and burdened scientists in their labs to invent things that inevitably caused it to be more disturbed, unsettled, divided, and conflicted. Thus the world is always witnessing real and cold wars.

All of this is the result of managing the world's affairs through human caprices, or whims. We do not all return to a single source of guidance which commands us, and thus we obey, and which forbids us, and thus we refrain. Rather, every person follows his own desires, and this is why we see worries, conflicts, disasters, and screams of terror everywhere. One of today's afflictions is drugs. A drug addict is a person who is unhappy with his life and does not want to face his problems. Instead, he tries to escape his reality by means of addiction. To such a person, we may advise him that this is not a solution to any crisis because when a person faces a problem, he needs an intellect other than his own in order to tackle it. You, addict, squander your own intellect through this addiction, despite the fact that you are required to use another intellect beside yours to solve your problems. Fleeing problems does not solve them; rather, it results in foolishness and lack of intelligence as problems become more complicated. We may say to the communities that suffer from such inflictions that if you would only take your laws from Allah's Guidance, you would be protected from such disasters.

Thus, we see that all new inventions always lead first to evil, and if we find that they have no evil intent, we direct them towards good. If only they were good purely for Allah's Sake, but if they are a deviant and distorted good because those who do not possess such inventions, such as the developing countries and the Third World, are made to be slaves and guinea pigs for the inventors, as a result of their discoveries and inventions. The latter use their advancements as ways to enslave and degrade others, even if they seemingly appear to do otherwise.

Why is this so? It is because we have been truly honest neither with ourselves nor with the reality of our advancements. Unlimited scientific ambitions should not be causing us all this trouble; we should have achieved more comfort after the actualisation of these ambitions. But this has not occurred. Why? This is because we, humans, are being led by our whims, which are not trustworthy guides. The true trustworthy guide is the Law of Allah *Glorified is He* Who legislates only for the good of those He has created. Since Islam outlines the safe way with the Creator, the self and the universe around us with all the species on it, then the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* is surely Islam (which means submission and surrendering to Him). This is the inevitable conclusion. So the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘...It is to Him that we devote ourselves [as Muslims].’ (*Al-'Imran*: 84) The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* then continues saying:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**If anyone seeks a religion other than [islam]
complete devotion to God, it will not be accepted
from him: he will be one of the losers in the
Hereafter [85] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 85)**

What will bring happiness to the entire world is the religion of Islam. Whoever desires a religion other than it, Allah *Glorified is He* will not accept it from him. If anyone is not pleased by the Legislation of Allah and with amazement says, ‘This legislation is too harsh; you cut off a person’s hand and disfigure him.’ We reply to such a person with the following analogy:

A car might crash into another and disfigure tens of people inside both cars, or a train accident might cause a disaster and disfigure hundreds of people. If we count the number of hands that have been cut off throughout the entire history of Islam, we will find that the number is considerably lower than the number of people disfigured by road accidents. Any argument about protecting the beauty of human beings is indeed ironic, for the law of hand amputation regarding thieves brings righteousness and discipline to life, whereas whimsically motivated wars have disfigured and annihilated hundreds and even thousands of people. This kind of statement is sheer sophistry. Does

the carrying out of the legislation of punishments cause crimes to occur? No; carrying out the legislation of punishments is meant to act as a warning for people to commit such crimes.

When we tell anyone, 'If you kill someone, the authorities (commissioned by the ruler) will kill you', is this not a way of preserving his life as well as the lives of others? When legislation in the religion preserves one person's life, it preserves the life of every person at the same time. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Fair retribution saves life for you, people of understanding so that you may guard yourselves against what is wrong.' (*al-Baqara*: 179)

Thus, this legislation is proven to be perfectly sound. Then, the Statement of the True Lord, *Glorified and Exalted is He*: 'And whoever desires other than Islam as religion – never will it be accepted from him...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 85) indicates that whoever legislates a law that contradicts what Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated, it is as though he has put Allah *Glorified is He* in the wrong. In essence, it is like he is saying to Him: 'We are more concerned about humanity than you, O Lord, because you have erred in this issue.'

This statement is a clear deviation from the Law of Allah *Glorified is He* and man must always behave properly with his Creator, and refer all matters back to Allah, his Lord. When you refer all matters back to your Lord, O man, then you can rest and relax with peace of mind and in comfort unless you benefit through deviation. If you benefit through deviation, this means that you desire what Allah *Glorified is He* does not. But if you desire the good of the people, you will find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has legislated laws that serve the interests of all mankind. So, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'And whoever desires other than Islam as religion – never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 85).

Someone might say regarding this statement, '... never will it be accepted from him...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 85) that it does not completely reassure me that I will be rewarded by Allah in return for my good deeds, for He *Glorified is He* may or may not accept them since no one can force Him to do anything. To such a person, we can say that you will eventually meet or come back to your Lord whether you like it or not; so why do you utter such words? Be as wise

as you can be and do not rebel against the Commands of your Lord. ‘...and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 85). A loser as a word is a noun whose present participle (gerund) is ‘losing’, which means, in Arabic, waste and squandering of capital. The Hereafter is a final life. Yet man is foolish enough to say, ‘I will be tortured a little, and then it will be over.’ No; it will never be over because the Hereafter is an eternal life after which there is no other life that follows it. Then the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Why would Allah guide people who deny the Truth, after they have believed and acknowledged that the Messenger is true....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 84).

كَيْفَ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ قَوْمًا كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ وَشَهِدُوا أَنَّ الرَّسُولَ
حَقٌّ وَجَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Why would God guide people who deny the truth, after they have believed and acknowledged that the Messenger is true, and after they have been shown clear proof? God does not guide evildoers [86] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 86)

Here we witness incredible use of language: The True Lord *Glorified is He* calls on us to wonder at the act of those who disbelieve after having believed. Had they not announced their faith before, we would have said that they had not tasted the sweetness of faith. However, can the one who has believed and tasted the delight of faith go back to disbelief? This is a bizarre rebellion.

Someone might ask the following question, ‘Since Allah *Glorified is He* has not guided them, why are they held accountable?’ To such a man, we should stress what we have always repeated in this context in order to clarify a certain issue which is common among the non-religious people who say: ‘Allah did not want to guide me, so what can I do?’ This is an argument to give an excuse for being deviant.’ Such a statement only comes from someone who has transgressed against himself (by sinning). This statement never comes from someone who obeys Allah *Glorified is He*. That one who says, ‘It has been ordained by Allah that I should commit sins, so why am I held responsible?’ must learn that obedience also comes from Allah *Glorified is He*, so why does he not say instead, ‘Obedience is from Allah; so why does He reward us for

that?' Why do you, O sinner, ignore mentioning the reward of obedience and think only of sins? You say that you 'have been destined by Allah to commit sins, so why does He punish you?' You should have also said, 'Since Allah has decreed that I should obey Him, why does He reward me for that?' We can say to those who justify deviating from the right course that they want to be rewarded for obedience and to escape the punishment for disobedience.

You need to duly understand this matter. I have said before, that 'Guidance' has two meanings. First, it means simply directing (people) to the way that leads to the aspired goal. An example of this is inanimate road signs. Every sign shows a specific road and guides towards it. There is no one at these signs to help any person and say to him, 'I will help you and repair your car' or 'I will get in the car with you and take you to your destination.'

These signs are only a means of guidance, i.e. they show the road that leads to the desired destination. Allah *Glorified is He* has guided all people, the believers, and the disbelievers, i.e. Allah *Glorified is He* has shown them the way that leads to the ultimate goal. Afterwards, people have been divided into two groups: a group that accepts the religion is pleased with it and acts as Allah wants, and a group that does not. When a believer resorts to Allah's Omnipotence and believes in Him, it is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to him, 'You have believed in Me and My Religion, and so you will have another reward. I will assist you to overcome the troubles of life.' This is the second form of Guidance which Allah *Glorified is He* grants as a reward to those who believe in Him and choose His religion. This form of Guidance means 'assistance'. Allah *Glorified is He* gives His believing servant the sweetness of obedience and helps him to do good deeds, energetically. So, Guidance sometimes means 'direction' and sometimes means 'assistance'. I repeat these words so that this point may become clear to the mind of everyone. Let us always remember this matter and ask, 'Who assists man?' The one who assists man is the One Who man believes in. As for those who disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* they are not assisted by Him.

I have cited this example several times: A person drives towards Alexandria, then he gets confused about choosing the correct direction to reach his destination. He finally finds a policeman and asks him how he can reach Alexandria. The

policeman shows the motorist the way leading to Alexandria by saying, 'This is the correct road to Alexandria.' Here, the policeman is directing this man, and when the motorist says to him, 'Praise be to Allah that I have found you here, for you have made the journey easier to me.' These words soften the heart of the policeman and make him give further information to the motorist, showing him in detail how to get to his destination. He may warn him of any obstacles he might face. If the motorist thanks the policeman more and more, this will please the policeman and motivate him to get in the motorist's car and lead him to the right course, explaining to him the obstacles he needs to avoid. Thus, the policeman has given all forms of assistance to the one who thanked him profusely.

Suppose, however, that another man asks the policeman about the right path, and then he refuses to believe him. In such an instance, the policeman will ignore this man. I give this example with the objective to clarify, not to compare. Allah *Glorified is He* provides (His slaves) first with the general guidance that covers all people and shows them the right path to the religion. Whoever believes in Allah *Glorified is He* and relies on His Omnipotence will be granted a second guidance, the guidance of facilitation and assistance.

'Allah has increased the guidance of those who follow the right path, and given them their righteousness...' (*Muhammad*: 17). The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives them the true sweetness of guidance: righteousness. It is as though He says to the believing servant, 'Since you have accepted Faith in Me, you are, thereby, granted the sweetness of this Faith.' As for the one who disbelieves and wrongs his own soul by being polytheist, the True Lord *Glorified is He* withholds the guidance of assistance from him because he has already experienced the general guidance that showed him the straight path, but he has not followed it. So, the question in this verse: 'Why would Allah guide people who deny the Truth, after they have believed...?' (*Al-'Imran*: 86) is for denial and exclusion, and not regarding general guidance of showing the straight path, but in regards to the guidance of assistance instead. In other words, the question is 'Why would I assist those who disbelieve in Me?'

This question refers to some people of the Book to whom the description of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been revealed in

their scriptures to the extent that Abdullah ibn Salam *God be pleased with him* who was one of them said, 'When I saw Muhammad, I knew him well, as I know my own son. Indeed, my knowledge of Muhammad is even better.' The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* confirms this fact in the Glorious Quran, saying: '...those... who follow the Messenger – the unlettered Prophet (Muhammad) they find, described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel– who commands them to do right and forbids them to do wrong, who makes good things lawful to them and bad things unlawful, and relieves them of their burdens, and the iron collars that were on them. So it is those who believe him, honour, and help him, and who follow the light which has been sent down with him, who will succeed.' (*al-A'raf*: 157)

Let us contemplate the accuracy of the Quranic expression in this verse, which does not say: '... the unlettered Prophet (Muhammad) whose description they find in the Torah that is with them and in the Gospel...' Rather, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...the unlettered Prophet [Muhammad] they find, described in the Torah that is with them, and in the Gospel ...' (*al-A'raf*: 157).

It is as though whoever reads the Torah and the Gospel is able to see the very image of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by means of a precise description. The Torah and the Gospel knew him in a detailed, comprehensive way with supporting statements described by some people of these two messages. There is a difference between 'knowing' and 'speaking': a person might know something and conceal it, but they knew Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and admitted this fact. They used to pray for victory over the disbelievers through this prophet, as the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'When there came to them a Book (the Quran) from Allah confirming what they already had, and when they had been praying for victory against the disbelievers, even when there came to them something they knew [to be true], they disbelieved in it: so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

Before the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they considered him a source of their victory over the disbelievers by saying, 'There will come a prophet, and we will follow him. We, together, will kill

you as was the case with the people of 'Ad and the City of Iram.' But what did they do on the ground? The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* answers: '...even when there came to them something they knew [to be true], they disbelieved in it: so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89)

So, they had believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before he came. But when he came, they disbelieved in him. See the Fairness of Allah *Glorified is He* when He guides them to honesty, truth, and faithful dignity: '... Say, Allah— and those who have [true] knowledge of the Scripture— are sufficient witness between us.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43)

Those who have knowledge of the Scripture are the Jews and the Christians. They bear witness that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*. The most equitable Quran is fair to the Torah and the Gospel: the books that are in their possession: 'Why would Allah guide people who deny the Truth, after they have believed and acknowledged that the Messenger is true...' (*Al-'Imran*: 86). They believed in him as a messenger relying on their own books, then announced this belief when they said, 'There will come a prophet, and we will follow him. We, together, will kill you as was the case with the people of 'Ad and the City of Iram.'

Since they have done such a thing, why would Allah guide them? Neither are they prepared for guidance nor shown any signs of love towards Allah *Glorified is He*. So, Allah *Glorified is He* does not assist them to be rightly guided. Had they only turned to Allah *Glorified is He* He would have assisted them, for He *Glorified and Exalted is He* declares as such: 'Allah has increased the guidance of those who follow the right path, and given them their righteousness...' (*Muhammad*: 17). For those who have not sought guidance, Allah *Glorified is He* has left them without the guidance of assistance. This clarifies the meaning of Allah's words: '... If Allah leaves anyone to stray, you [Prophet] will never find the way for him.' (*an-Nisa*': 88)

Those, who do not follow the general guidance of adhering to the right path and, thus, turn down faith, Allah *Glorified is He* sends them astray, i.e. leaves them in their delusion and disbelief. Does Allah *Glorified is He* help those who originally reject Him and grant them His Guidance of Assistance? Of course, he does not. Having disbelieved in Allah *Glorified is He* are such

people going to trust that Allah *Glorified is He* grants facilities and conveniences to His slaves? No, they are not going to trust that. You must know that the guidance of showing the right path is a general guidance for all people of every age. As for the guidance of assistance, it is solely for those who accept faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. You can say that the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses man as follows: 'you have believed in My General Guidance, so take My Guidance of Assistance', or 'you are worthy of My Assistance', or 'you will find easiness in all matters'. As for the one who disbelieves, Allah *Glorified is He* does not guide him.


Allah *Glorified is He* does not assist a disbeliever because assistance first requires an action on the part of the one being helped, and a disbeliever has not done what he is required to be granted this assistance. He has not believed, and so the final word is this: '...and Allah does not guide the disbelievers' (*al-Baqara*: 264), and the true word is this: '...and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 108), and the true word is also this: '...and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.' (*Al-'Imran*: 86) These are the wrongdoing people who commit the greatest evil: attributing partners to Allah. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says in response: 'Luqman counselled his son, 'My son, do not attribute any partners to Allah: attributing partners to Him is a terrible wrong!' (*Luqman*: 13)

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* leaves them, He increases their misguidance and seals their hearts so that they do not know the path to Faith: 'Why would Allah guide people who deny the Truth, after they have believed and acknowledged that the Messenger is true, and after they have been shown clear proof? Allah does not guide evildoers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 86)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them with signs, proving the sheer truthfulness of his Message, but they wronged themselves greatly and terribly by attributing partners to Allah *Glorified is He*. But was this verse revealed in regards to the people of the Book who had in their possession a description of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* along with signs and glad tidings of his coming? Or was it revealed on another occasion to the point that some people believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then disbelieved in him?

In fact, the two groups are included here: the people of the Book who believed in the previous messengers, but did not believe in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who believed in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then denied it, as during the time of the Messenger in the case of Ta'ma ibn Ubayriq, Ibn Al-Aslat and Al-Harith ibn Suwayd. They all announced their faith, went to Mecca and stayed there. One of them repented, so his brother obtained a pledge of protection for him from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, while the others did not repent. This actually applies to both groups, and Allah's *Glorified is He* Glorious Words refer to the members of both: 'Why would Allah guide people who deny the Truth, after they have believed and acknowledged that the Messenger is true, and after they have been shown clear proof? Allah does not guide evildoers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 86)

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* explains to us the punishment of these people with His Wise Words:



 أُؤْتِيكَ جَزَاءَهُمْ أَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ لَعْنَةَ اللَّهِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

Such people will be rewarded with rejection by God, by the angels, by all people [87] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 87)

'Curse' in this verse means deprivation of mercy. Allah *Glorified is He* knows every cursed man belonging to those people. Since they are deprived of the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* then the angels who believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and witness what man does not see repeat this curse. The believers among Allah's Creation and everyone do as well. The question is this: How could the people all together, the believers and the disbelievers curse them? How could the disbelievers, in particular, curse them? We know that when a disbeliever sees a person committing a sin, he both looks down upon and despises him.

Suppose that a disbeliever meets with a person who disobeys the religion and commits sins. Does this disbeliever not curse such a person? Actually he does because the disposition instilled by Allah *Glorified is He* in mankind rejects this and never approves it.


It is the Will of the True Lord *Glorified is He* to make them, as disbelievers, curse one another. We also find that everyone rejects them because they disbelieved Allah's (God's) *Glorified is He* religion after they had believed. This has led them to commit sins causing them to be rejected by everyone. Moreover, they are eternally cursed, as Allah *Glorified and Exalted* says:


 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ الْعَذَابُ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ

And so they will remain, with no relief or respite for their suffering [88] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 88)

‘...with no relief... for their suffering.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 88) means that the torment will remain always and forever. Some people might imagine that when a disbeliever enters Hell and is burnt in it, his affair will, thereupon, come to an end. No, this is not the case. One remembers one thing and ignores another; he forgets the True Lord's Words: ‘We shall send those who reject Our revelations to the Fire. When their skins have been burned away, We shall replace them with new ones so that they will continue to feel the pain: Allah [God] is Mighty and Wise.’ (*an-Nisa*: 56).

They will continue suffering by the Command of the True Lord *Glorified is He* forever and ever. Some may say that science has proven that man's feeling of pain as a result of whipping decreases after the first twenty lashes. These people forget that torment in the Hereafter is of another kind. Allah *Glorified is He* will create for the tormented person a new sensation so that he will feel the torment eternally. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘... with no relief or respite for their suffering.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 88) This means that their torment is not questioned, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not even give them respite from such torment. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:


 إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

Not so those who afterwards repent and mend their ways – God is most forgiving and merciful [89] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 89)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the Creator of all creatures and wants them to be as He wants them to be since they are the handiwork of Him. Allah

Glorified is He loves both those who turn to Him and those who keep themselves clean. He *Glorified is He* has ordered His servants to sincerely repent to Him, faithfully, honestly, and with no setbacks. This repentance requires renouncement of sins, regret for what happened, determination never to return to repeating them and finally seeking the forgiveness of those you have wronged, if there are any.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says regarding this, ‘Allah, stretches out His Hand during the night so that the people may repent for the faults committed from dawn till dusk, and He stretches out His Hand during the day so that the people may repent for the faults committed from dusk to dawn. (He would accept repentance) before the sun rises in the west (before the Day of Resurrection).’⁽¹⁾

This way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* lays down the conditions for His slaves' repentance so as to reform the universe, for had Allah *Glorified is He* not laid down repentance for the sinners, this would have meant that those who have been heedless of Allah's religion even for a single incidence, would have become, in their own view, lost, corrupted and guilty of committing sheer follies. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* by encouraging man to repent from sins, provides an opportunity for sinners, who have wronged themselves, to return to Him, as well as bestowing mercy on the community by preventing the evils of these corrupt people. Thus, repentance is laid down for the good of the universe and the benefit of mankind so that they can enjoy Allah's Love. For this reason, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: ‘Not so those who afterwards repent and mend their ways– Allah [God] is Most Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 89) Despite their previous disbelief, Allah *Glorified is He* by His Mercy, exempts them from this admonition since they still have a chance to repent. The meaning of ‘*aslaha*’ is to do what elevates something that is already good and righteous. Allah *Glorified is He* has not created anything in the universe that is fundamentally corrupt. Rather, corruption results from the misdeeds man commits by his free will. Repentance entails that one increases righteousness in the universe, which, in turn, guarantees that he would not corrupt anything that is already good and righteous. Since

(1) Narrated by Muslim: good and authentic Hadith

repentance means to elevate something that is already good, it necessarily includes not damaging or harming what is good and righteous.

Perhaps those who have wronged themselves at a moment of heedlessness and decrease of faith would remember the sin or misdeed they have committed with remorse and be determined to do good deeds with diligence and sincerity; so Allah *Glorified is He* will blot out their previous sins by virtue of their latter good deeds.

For this reason, many of those who strive with zeal and perseverance in the cause of goodness and reformation may have previously wronged themselves in some way, so they try to make amends for their past by doing good deeds in many different ways. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to each of them, 'You have committed something that I have forbidden, and I want to guide you to what I have ordained you to do so as to compensate for that.' Allah, the True God *Glorified is He* thus, turns an individual's past sins into a compelling motivation that constantly picks at their conscience and directs them to diligently do good, so they would generously give charity to the poor so as to undo their past. Perhaps those who do good without sufficient earnestness or zeal do not have any powerful incentive in their lives.

However, those who have constantly trespassed the limits of Allah *Glorified is He* are the ones continually motivated by this fierce power so that when any of you sees a person who has transgressed against himself by doing sins, prays to Allah *Glorified is He* to guide them to the Straight Path. Know with certainty that Allah *Glorified is He* will ease the means for him to do good because no one can ever cause the universe to deviate from the laws of the Creator. This applies to those whom Allah *Glorified is He* describes in the Noble Quran, by saying: 'Not so those who afterwards repent and *aslahu*...' (*Al-Imran*: 89). '*Aslahu*' means to do righteous deeds with earnestness and zeal, motivated by the kindled remorse constantly felt over previous transgressions so that always struggling to do righteous deeds, would lead to eliminate previous deviations.

Next, Allah, the True God *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَزْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَنْ تَقْبَلَ
تَوْبَهُمْ وَأُوتِيكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

[although] the repentance of those who, having believed, then increase in their disbelief, will not be accepted. They are the ones who have gone [far] astray [90] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 90)

This verse of the Noble Quran talks about those who not only disbelieve after having believed, but also increase in disbelief. The repentance of such people will not be accepted, and they are truly astray. This verse follows, contrasting the previous one: It talks about those who do not repent in comparison with those who do. But how does a disbeliever increase in disbelief? He not only disbelieves in Allah, but also forms an obstacle for other people to believe. He is not content with his own failure; rather, he attempts to spread disbelief among others. This is an increase in disbelief. [We seek refuge with Allah from it!] This verse has been revealed to tell about some of the Jews who had believed in the signs that foretold the advent of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Then when Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was sent by Allah *Glorified is He* they denied his Message, and when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a Messenger, their denial of the Truth was further increased.

They first disbelieved in 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and then increased in their disbelief when they denied the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and claimed they were the children and beloved, or chosen people of Allah *Glorified is He*. These are not among those who have repented. They may have claimed their repentance with their tongues, but their hearts were not sincere, and 'deliberately violating repentance in disrespecting Allah. May Allah protect us all from such a calamity!

Next, Allah, the True God *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلءُ الْأَرْضِ
ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَى بِهِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

**Those who disbelieve and die disbelievers will not be saved
even if they offer enough gold to fill the entire earth.
Agonizing torment is in store for them, and there will be no
one to help them [91] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 91)**

They disbelieved, and Allah *Glorified is He* did not decree that they should repent, so they died as disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us the end results of their deeds in life, as well as their destiny in the Hereafter. They are punished for the misdeeds they have committed in the worldly life since they were given free will to choose between good and bad; therefore, they are deprived of this privilege of a good life in the Hereafter and have no free will to choose their destiny. Scholars of the Quran have debated a point in this verse: Does ‘...enough gold to fill the entire earth...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 91) figuratively mean that they have spent in their lives the equivalent of an earth-full of gold? We can say concerning this that no matter how much they spend on good causes in this life, they do not benefit from their spending since Allah has erased all their deeds due to their disbelief.

Suppose a disbeliever dies without repenting to Allah *Glorified is He* and had spent the equivalent of an earth-full of gold for a good cause. We tell them that this spending will bring a disbeliever no fruits in the Hereafter, for they have committed the greatest treason against Allah *Glorified is He*: disbelief in Him combined with denial of the Truth He has sent. As long as he does not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* it means he had spent that money for the sake of people who are definitely in no position to reward him for these good deeds in the Hereafter. His intention had not been directed to Allah when he did his good deeds, so he receives no reward from Him. Whoever does a deed should seek reward from whomever they have done it for. Was Allah *Glorified is He* in the mind of that disbeliever when he did a given good deed? No, because he died, while still disbelieving, so even if he spends an earth-full of gold, it will not be accepted from him.

People are in his mind when doing a given good deed, and they already have given him the praise they think he is worthy of. He could be an inventor, a philanthropist or whatever beneficial position, and he will receive his reward from mankind. Concerning people like this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'You did that so that such-and-such would be said (in praise of you), and indeed it was said.'

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to him, 'I was not in your mind when you did that good, so why do you ask Me for a reward in the Hereafter? It did not cross your mind that all the dominion is Mine.' He *the Exalted and Almighty*, says in the Quran: 'The Day when they will come out with nothing about them will be concealed from Allah. "Who has control today?" Allah, the One, the All-Powerful!' (*Ghafir*: 16)

Some people say that they have generously enriched the world and added to people's welfare with countless discoveries and innovations with which they have reduced humanity's pains and suffering; so how is it that they will have no reward in the Hereafter?! To them, I reply that, indeed, they have done much for humanity, but humanity has given them their due reward already. They have been eulogized and commemorated in history. Statues, records, celebrations, and prizes have been dedicated to them. They have worked for the sake of people, and people have rewarded them, so no injustice has been done to them. The intention behind their deeds was not directed to Allah Who vividly depicts their situation in The Quran, saying: 'But the deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage in a desert: the thirsty person thinks there will be water, but when he gets there, he finds only Allah, who pays him his account in full—Allah is swift in reckoning!' (*an-Nur*: 39)

A mirage is seen from afar in the form of a water hole in the eyes of a thirsty desert traveller; in actuality, it is only an optical phenomenon formed by light rays. A traveller keeps moving towards the imagined water and pins desperate hopes on reaching it, but when he arrives, he finds nothing and is surprised to find that only Allah *Glorified is He* is there. Remorse strikes him, and he receives his recompense. Even if he spends an earth-full of gold in good deeds, it will not be accepted from him, nor will Allah *Glorified is He* accept from him an earth-full of gold to ransom himself in the Hereafter, if he

has such a ransom at all. Even if he has an earth-full of gold to ransom himself in the Hereafter, will Allah *Glorified is He* accept it from him? No, and in fact, he will not even have the gold, for in the Hereafter, he will have nothing, not even choice. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: ‘...Who has control today?’ Allah, the One, the All-Powerful!’ (*Ghafir*: 16)

Allah *Glorified is He* also says in the Quran: ‘If the evildoers possessed the earth’s assets twice over, they would offer them to ransom themselves from the terrible suffering on the Day of Resurrection; God will show them something they had not reckoned.’ (*az-Zumar*: 47)

‘... Agonizing torment is in store for them, and there will be no one to help them.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 91) These people will face an agonizing torment because every action derives its power from the power of him who performs it. When torment is from Allah *Glorified is He* Who has Omnipotent Power and Might, this torment will be insufferable. The evildoer will find no one who can spare him this torment. For he will have no one to help him or intercede for him; no one will make the following offer: ‘So-and-so is suffering severe torment, let us go and help him.’ No help will be offered by anyone.

After this, Allah, the True God *Glorified is He* says:

لَنْ نَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّى تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ وَمَا تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٢﴾

None of you [believers] will attain true piety unless you give out of what you cherish: whatever you give, God knows about it very well [92] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 92)

The Arabic stem formed from the letters ‘*b-r-r*’ denotes ‘ampleness’, ‘vastness’, etc. ‘*Barr*’ may mean ‘ample’, ‘extensive’, etc., or it may refer to the spacious land on earth in contrast to the sea. Someone might say that ‘the sea is wider than land (*barr*) because the size of the continents is far smaller than the waters running through or separating them!’ We can reply to someone who might say this that your movements, however, are far more expansive on land than they are at sea; a ship or even a log is required, in most cases, to move through the sea, which is a form of constraint. As for land, on the contrary, one can walk, ride, or run, so one’s scope of movement on land is wider than at sea.

The Arabic word '*berr*' mentioned in the verse may mean 'true piety', 'devotion', or 'Paradise'. Thus, they are all interrelated since they all denote 'ampleness'. True piety and devotion lead one to attain the ample Mercy and reward of Allah *Glorified is He* and paradise is the fruit to be reaped as a result. They are all interrelated because they all denote the meaning of 'ampleness'; worship and piety constitute the cause for attaining such ampleness, and Paradise is the outcome. Someone might ask why Allah speaks about spending after speaking about the suffering of the disbelievers. The answer to this is that when Allah, the True God *Glorified is He* speaks about those who will be grievously tormented because they disbelieved and died as disbelievers and that they will have no help in the Hereafter, the following contrast comes to mind: those who believe, do good deeds and die as believers, will be spared such grievous suffering and granted the opposite of it which is delight, and they will find abundant help and reward unlike the disbelievers who will find no one to help them. Believers will receive their reward from Allah *Glorified is He* for their true piety (*berr*); '*berr*' is a word that denotes every form of goodness, and when it is mentioned generally, it refers to the reward Allah *Glorified is He* grants believers for such goodness, the ultimate manifestation of which is paradise.

How Allah *Glorified is He* deals with believers, is thus presented in contrast with His way of dealing with disbelievers. The Quran is the Miraculous Speech of Allah and when He *the Exalted* addresses His creatures, who are entrusted with delivering and committing to His Message, He addresses the human faculties which He has created; so this Speech must enrich and satisfy those faculties. If speech is not addressed by the Creator of those faculties, there may not be tuning between the speech and such faculties. However, since these are the Words of Allah (the Creator), they are necessarily in harmony with the nature of these faculties.

Human nature encompasses several faculties which are linked together precisely; so it is possible when addressing the faculty of hearing that the sentimental faculties can be stirred and moved. Were speech from other than the Creator Who has Omnipotent Knowledge of such faculties, it would not be able to influence the faculty of hearing, while also agreeing with and affecting sentimental faculties in such a way that makes human nature capable

of grasping meanings and associating them with each other. 'Association of meanings' is a unique quality true of human beings. It is the process through which one grasps a particular meaning that, in turn, brings to the mind other meanings linked to it. For example, when you see a person you know, this process of 'association' brings memories to your mind, makes you recall your relationship with him, and retrieves your mental image of his family, friends, acquaintances, etc. All what has passed between you and him along with the events you have witnessed together flash in your mind upon seeing him, and this is what we call 'association of meanings', the process of one meaning invoking another.

When Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* addresses mankind, He addresses every quality within their disposition, all at the same time so that one quality will not be nourished at the expense of another. The Speech of Allah *Glorified is He* has come in its miraculous way to completely satisfy all the qualities human nature is comprised of. For example, The True Lord *Glorified is He* has commanded that idolaters should be forbidden from circulating the *Ka'ba* in the Sacred Mosque of Mecca. Before that divine prohibition, idolaters used to circulate the *Ka'ba*. They came from far and wide to witness the season of pilgrimage; they brought their money along to spend it on the people of Mecca and bought everything they needed from there. The season of pilgrimage was also an economic season. When Allah *Glorified is He* decreed the prohibition of idolaters from performing pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque of Mecca, He addressed the Muslims who lived then in Mecca so they would prevent idolaters from circulating the *Ka'ba*. He the Exalted and All Knowing knew the abilities He has created and that the prohibition would provoke one of those abilities, so He says in the Quran: 'Believers, those who ascribe partners to God are truly unclean: do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after this year...' (*at-Tawba*: 28).

When this command was revealed, it inevitably provoked certain qualities in the natural disposition of the human soul; Allah knew, through His Eternal, Omnipotent Knowledge that the natural human instinct that craves economic benefit would be kindled in the people of Mecca upon hearing this command, and that this would induce some of the Muslims who lived then in Mecca to

say, 'If we stop idolaters who come to us with their money to buy our goods, the economic season, on which we depend for sustenance throughout the year, would recede, and then what will we do?!' Allah *Glorified is He* knew that prohibition of idolaters from approaching the Sacred Mosque of Mecca would inevitably awaken this disposition of the human soul that cares about material benefit, so He *the Exalted* says directly afterward: '...And should you fear poverty, then [know that] in time Allah will enrich you out of His Bounty, if He so wills: for, verily, Allah [God] is All Knowing, Wise!' (*at-Tawba*: 28)

Allah *Glorified is He* knows that poverty would be a concern, and concerning this, the magnificence of His Speech is clearly manifested. When a person speaks, he may well forget to stress some ideas of importance, which may cause confusion, uproar, and chaos to erupt among his addressees. The True High Lord, however, says: '...those who ascribe partners to God are truly unclean: do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after this year...' (*at-Tawba*: 28). Then directly comes reassurance: '....And should you fear poverty, then [know that] in time Allah will enrich you out of His Bounty...' (*at-Tawba*: 28), and indeed He did. Allah *Glorified is He* provided the people of the Sacred Mosque with produce. It was as if He were saying, 'Do not think this provision has come on its own; rather, it is, truly, provision from Us', a meaning which He confirms in His Words: 'They say, 'If we were to follow guidance with you (Prophet), we would be swept from our land.' Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary where every kind of produce is brought, as a provision from Us? But most of them do not comprehend.' (*al-Qasas*: 57).

No one has the choice to offer sustenance to the people of the Sacred Mosque or begrudge them of it. Rather, provision is brought to them by the Will and Bounty of Allah *Glorified is He* as a reassurance to the soul's inclination to seek material benefit. Allah *the Exalted* gives economic security for which life necessitates. If we closely examine the verse of The Quran, we find that they are arranged in context in such a way where the idea in each verse is associated with those represented in the preceding and following verses. This perfect arrangement of the Quranic context aims at satisfying all the qualities comprising the natural human disposition so that nothing of what is revealed falls short of generating such satisfaction. Let us consider an example of this

when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and they say to themselves, ‘Why does not Allah chastise us for what we are saying?’ Hell shall be their allotted portion: they shall [indeed] enter it – and how vile a journey’s end!’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

The idolaters did not disclose what they had in mind to anyone, but they said it within themselves. However, Allah, the True God, *the Most High* and All-Knowing, reveals their secrets and also what they conceal. He is the One Who knows all the secrets of His servants and their natural dispositions He has created within them. Ponder these words of Allah *the Exalted*: ‘None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety, or Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish: Whatever you give, Allah knows about it very well.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 92) This verse encourages the believers to give generously, and, for a reason, it follows another verse declaring that there is a form of spending Allah will not accept: ‘Those who disbelieve and die disbelievers will not be saved even if they offer enough gold to fill the entire earth. Agonizing torment is in store for them, and there will be no one to help them.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 91)

When people realize that there is a kind of charity that Allah *Glorified is He* rejects, association of ideas in the human mind would make them wonder what, then, is the charity He accepts. This has made it necessary to make the following declaration: ‘None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety or Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish....’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 92) Just as Allah *Glorified is He* warns against the kind of charity He rejects, He also tells us of the kind He accepts. Therefore, we see that the verse that encourages spending is in har with the one before it. ‘None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety or Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish....’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 92) Some may wonder why one should spend of what he prefers in order to attain *berr* (true piety/ Paradise).’ As a matter of fact, the human soul is naturally inclined to greed; that is why Allah says in the Noble Quran: ‘Remain, then, conscious of Allah as best you can, and listen [to Him], and pay heed. And spend in charity for the good of your own selves: for such as from their own covetousness are saved – it is they that shall attain to a happy state!’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16)

Human greed stems from insecurity; man fears strength would turn into weakness, so he craves material possessions to secure himself against such a

perceived weakness, which makes him reluctant to give. From this, the notions of possession and property arose, for they did not exist at the dawn of mankind creation; instead they started when resources became scarcer than needs. If resources accommodate needs, there will be no reason to worry about possible weakness, inability, or destitution.

Suppose a man bought a large box of oranges and took it home. His children would be allowed to indulge themselves. However, if there were not that many oranges, his wife would make sure to divide them between the children. She would not let every child get what satisfies his desire at the expense of the others.

When man was first brought on earth, land and fruits were right at man's disposal to have of them as much as he liked. When opportunities grew gradually fewer in the face of needs, due to the scarcity of resources, there emerged a desire for appropriation and possession. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to an important point: If you look at spending in its true light, you will find that you are only a worker for Allah and one for whom He guides to do good deeds so as to set things aright. The meaning of 'worker' is that you work in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He* using what He has endowed you with: a mind to plan with, strength to employ with diligence and materials to use. So what do you actually possess?

The dominion is only Allah's; everything is His, and you are only a worker who possesses nothing. Since this is the case, O servant of Allah, do your duty to Him as you should. Allah is in no need for whatever you give, for He is the Richest of the rich. Instead, fulfill your duty to Him by helping your weaker brothers who are unable to produce what they need. Do not think Allah *Glorified is He* wants you to spend out of what you cherish because He wants to begrudge you by asking you to give charity. Rather, when He asks you to help your poorer brother, while you are capable of it, He is only reassuring you that, if you were to become weak or poor yourself, He takes out of the possessions of the able to satisfy your need. This is reassurance from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to motivate us to spend generously and lovingly on others, but perhaps one may feel inclined to spend out of what he does not

cherish, so he would give worn-out clothes or shoes that are no longer fit to use to a poorer person. However, Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to spend out of what we cherish. See how the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reacted when they heard this verse: 'None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety or Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 92). When Abu Talha *Allah be pleased with him* heard this, he said, 'O, Messenger of Allah, the most beloved of my possessions to me is *Bayruha*' (a tract of land with plantation, and I am giving it to Allah's cause.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Then divide it among your relatives.' So, he did. Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him* heard this noble verse, and he had a horse named 'Sabal' that he loved. So he said, 'O, Messenger of Allah, you know how I love my horse, so I am giving it to Allah's cause.' Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* took it from him and brought Usama ibn Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* to mount it. So, Zayd said, 'I felt something in my soul.' When he said this, he meant that he felt sadness. Then, he said, 'O, Messenger of Allah, I had meant to give this horse to Allah's cause, and you give it to my son to ride!' Hence, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told Zayd, 'Indeed, Allah has accepted it from you!'

The Companion Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* gave a no less admirable reaction to the aforementioned verse. He had some she-camels and a stud that helped them to produce offspring. That stud was the dearest to him among his possessions. A guest came to Abu Dharr, and the latter said to him, 'I am busy, so go to my camels, and choose the finest one to slaughter for your reception.' The guest went out and returned with an emaciated she-camel. When Abu Dharr saw it, he said, 'Brother, I told you to bring the finest camel!' The guest said, 'O Abu Dharr, I saw that the finest was a stud, and I thought of the day when you would need it.' Abu Dharr replied, 'The day when I need it is the day when I am placed in my grave!'

The great Companion, Abu Dharr, realized that the day a person is put in his grave is the most important day worthy of preparing for.

The Companion 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* had a beautiful slave-girl from Persia, whom he loved. When he heard the aforementioned verse,

he said, 'Nothing in my possession is more beloved to me than this slave-girl.' So, he freed her. He could have married her afterward, but he said, 'If I did not fear it would diminish my reward [from Allah] for freeing her, I would marry her.' The Companion Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* has taught us an invaluable lesson concerning the issue of spending, a lesson that shows his understanding of human psychology. He said, 'Wealth belongs to three partners: fate, which does not ask your permission before afflicting you with destruction and death.' When Allah *Glorified is He* sends His Decree, He asks no one's permission before doing as He wills with his wealth, so riches may be destroyed or dear ones may pass away, and one would not be able to stop it. So the first partner that shares one's wealth is fate.

As for the second partner, Abu Dharr said, 'It is your inheritor who awaits the day when you lay down your head (die) then takes control of your wealth.' By death, one is deprived of everything he had possessed in this world as he stops being an inhabitant of it. It is as if an inheritor said to himself, 'Let me enjoy what is left for me!' This is the second partner in one's wealth.

Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* then clarified the third partner to which wealth belongs: 'The third partner is you; so if you can avoid being the weakest of the three, then do so.' Do not let fate or inheritors defeat you in regards to your wealth. Unless you spend out of your wealth generously for Allah's cause, the other partners will outdo you!

So did the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* react to the verse when it was revealed. They competed in giving their most beloved possessions to others, and the reward of their doing was Paradise. They grasped well the meaning of the Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'None of you [believers] will attain berr unless you give out of what you cherish...' (*Al-'Imran*: 92). 'Berr' can mean paradise, as a result of one's obedience to Allah, piety, expansive blessing or an increase of strength, which are all interrelated meanings denoting 'ampleness'. Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Divine Hadith: 'People requited doers of good deeds in worldly life with goodness, and today I requite them with Paradise.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* grants *berr* [piety/paradise] as a reward for giving charity, and He knows whether you have spent out of what you truly

cherish or have chosen to give away something inferior you no longer value. Beware, O, believer, of cheating yourself in this matter, for He Who promises piety and paradise as a reward for spending out of what you cherish knows fully well the secrets of the soul and what you conceal. Thus, He *Glorified is He* says: '...Whatever you give, Allah knows about it very well.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 92) Allah has All-Encompassing Knowledge; He knows your real intentions and in what manner you have given charity.

Allah *the Exalted* has thus clarified the kind of spending He rejects, even if it were an earth-full of gold and the kind He accepts and grants paradise as a reward for. This helps us to clearly see the meaning of both through contrast. What is the need for this clarification? Some of the people of the Book denied the Message revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at the onset of his call. They denied the glad tidings that foretold his prophethood eventhough such glad tidings and the attributes of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* are stated in the Books sent down to them: the Torah and the Gospel. They rejected and denied his Message eventhough they had previously believed and hoped in this good news that the disbelievers might embrace faith: '... they had been praying for victory against the disbelievers, even when there came to them something they knew [to be true], they disbelieved in it...' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen to disclose their ill will and what they had done to the Torah though they believed it to be their scripture. They had distorted some of the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* in the Torah, imagining that such distortion would remain secret from the rest of the world. Allah *Glorified is He* disclosed their falsehood through events that were beyond their expectations in order that it would clearly understand that they had corrupted the Torah. We have mentioned before the woman from Khaybar who committed fornication and whom the leaders of the Jews wished to lessen her punishment, for the punishment prescribed for fornication in the Torah is stoning. Those leaders said, 'Let us go to Muhammad, for perhaps he has some lighter punishment.' When they went to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* he told them stoning was the prescribed punishment. They said, 'No, you are not just in your judgment.' Hence, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him told them to seek judgment from the Torah that they held to be their book. The Torah was brought forth, and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* asked them to start reciting. When they reached the verse of stoning, they wanted to skip it, so Ibn Salam *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘O, Messenger of Allah, they have skipped the verse where stoning is mentioned!’

This made everyone realise that the leaders of the Jews wanted to disregard and deny one of rulings Allah has prescribed in their book, just as they erased the description of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* described in it by leaving no trace of it. Allah *Glorified is He* however, made them forget to erase other parts of the Truth so that they would serve as a proof of the truthfulness of the Message revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. On another occasion, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declared that the consumption of the milk and meat of camels is permissible, they said those two have been forbidden since the days of Ibrahim (Abraham) and even before him, during the days of Nuh (Noah). Therefore, they could not accept their lawfulness eventhough Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained to them that Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed their consumption.

They should have understood that even if the consumption of the milk and meat of camels had been forbidden before, a Messenger was then sent by Allah *Glorified is He* with a legislation that abrogated what came before it. However, camel meat and milk had not actually been forbidden, and for this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered that the Torah should be consulted. This event is, in and of itself, magnificent evidence that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* received revelations from Allah *Glorified is He* for he would not have ordered that the Torah be consulted unless he was confident that it would bring forth a ruling that would support what he was saying. This was despite the fact that he could neither read nor write! The Torah was brought forth, and a statement was found in it that confirmed what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said. Allah reveals this fact in The Quran, saying:

كُلُّ الطَّعَامِ كَانَ حَلَالًا لِبَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ إِلَّا مَا حَرَّمَ إِسْرَءِيلُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ مِنْ
 قَبْلِ أَنْ تُنَزَّلَ التَّوْرَةُ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِالتَّوْرَةِ فَاتْلُوهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

Except for what Israel made unlawful for himself, all food was lawful to the Children of Israel before the Torah was revealed. Say, 'Bring the Torah and read out [the relevant passage] if you are telling the truth [93] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 93)

When Allah's Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob/Israel) *peace be upon him* forbade consuming certain foods for himself even though he was free to do so. Perhaps he did that so as to fulfill a religious oath, or as a form of medical treatment or as a way of practising asceticism, but Allah *Glorified is He* did not forbid him from such a thing. The pretext the Jews sought, as a proof of their claim, was concerning only Prophet Ya'qub's case which he applied only to himself. Allah says: 'All food was lawful to the Children of Israel except what Israel made unlawful for himself...' So why do you claim that the milk and meat of camels were forbidden?

They shamefully plotted this falsehood to conceal their wrongdoing and spare themselves disgrace. Nevertheless, Allah discloses their disgrace in the Noble Quran: 'And unto those who are Jews, We forbade every (animal) with undivided hoof, and We forbade them the fat of the ox and the sheep except what adheres to their backs or their entrails, or is mixed up with a bone. Thus, We recompensed them for their rebellion [committing crimes like murdering the Prophets and eating of Riba (usury)]. And verily, We are Truthful.' (*al-An'am*: 146)

So some things, like the foods listed in the aforementioned verse, were made unlawful for the Jews because of their wrongdoing, thus, they were being punished for their sins as the noble verse points out. The verse clearly says all animals with feet that included undivided hooves (like camels, ostriches, geese and ducks), except for the fats on their backs, the fats contained in their entrails and the fats that mix with their bones. That prohibition was not made to protect the prohibited animals from harm; rather, it was their punishment for wrongdoing themselves and transgressing against others.

I say this so there would be no chance for whoever desires to trespass the laws set by Allah *Glorified is He* to say this: 'What is the harm that requires such-and such to be forbidden?!' Posing such a question reflects a desire to trespass the limits set by Allah *Glorified is He*. Prohibition might be legislated for the purpose of discipline or chastisement. On our human level [and, undoubtedly, Allah's is the Highest Description; nothing is comparable to Him], one may forbid his child from pocket money or candy to punish him for disobeying his mother. Likewise, the aforementioned prohibition was recompense for the Jews due to their evil-doing, as Almighty Allah says in the Quran: 'For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before: for having frequently debarred others from Allah's path; for taking usury when they had been forbidden to do so; and for wrongfully devouring other people's property. For those of them that reject the truth, we have prepared an agonizing torment.' (*an-Nisa'*: 160-161).

This is the recompense that Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed for them.

It is as if divine legislation is laid down as a warning to wrongdoers who deviate from the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* to think twice about the reason for which they commit the transgression.

Why do they commit injustice? Why do they eat *riba* (usury)? Why do they hinder people from the way to Allah *Glorified is He*? Why do they usurp the wealth of others? Wrongdoers commit the likes of these in order to gain enjoyments of which they have no right to. Hence, the divine legislation forbids them from lawful enjoyments to chastise them for craving unlawful ones.

For example, it is prescribed that a murderer is denied inheritance of the one he has murdered since he has murdered him to hasten a privilege Allah *Glorified is He* has delayed for him, namely, receipt of his inheritance, which is why he committed murder. Thus, the divine law withholds from him inheritance, the very privilege he sought to hasten by sinning.

It is as though the Legislator said to him: 'Since you harboured evil intention, you are deprived from inheritance.' This ruling guarantees protection of anyone who possesses wealth, or else they would face the threat of their inheritors' attempts to murder them so that their wealth would be transferred

to them. The Legislator addresses them by saying, 'No! There will be no inheritance for them. They have committed various forms of transgression: denying the Truth, blocking off people's way to Allah *Glorified is He* accepting riba (usury) and wrongfully consuming the property of others. The more they craved gains that were not their right, the more Allah forbade them from things that were previously lawful for them.

The Jews at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* absolutely did not want such things to be known about them, so they said, 'This food was prohibited for the children of Israel.' However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then found out that these foods were permitted in the Torah, and thus he exposed what they tried to conceal not causing them to be disgraced eventhough they were trying to avoid that.

Why does this verse follow these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'None of you [believers] will attain *berr* [true piety/ Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish...'? (*Al-Imran*: 92). We know that this verse follows the one that describes the kind of spending Allah *Glorified is He* does not accept. Let us review what we mentioned earlier about the association of meanings in the human mind. Within the human disposition, when one quality is stimulated, it influences other qualities. When the True Lord says: 'All food was lawful to the Children of Israel...' (*Al-Imran*: 93), those who hear this will react in different ways. A satiated person may not pay full attention to this point; a person who has little to satisfy his hunger may be provoked to wish for other kinds of food, and he who barely has any food will long to know what food is permissible and what is not.

Therefore, before stating the rulings of what is permissible and forbidden, the ruling would stimulate a hungry person's desire for food and cause sadness over its scarcity; Allah *Glorified is He* first encourages the able to give out of what they have. For this reason, before Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*, mentions food so as not to trigger the poor's desire for it, He revealed to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the followng: 'None of you [believers] will attain *berr* [true piety/Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish...' (*Al-Imran*: 92). Thus, Allah *Exalted is He* first encourages the wealthy to give generously before revealing the ruling that would incite sorrows of the

destitute. This way, the balance, on which basis Allah *Glorified is He* has created the universe, can be struck.

He is the Lord Who manages the affairs of His universe, and never does He forget anything. ‘...My Lord does not stray, nor does He forget.’ (*Ta Ha*: 52) His Omnipotent Knowledge encompasses all things, and He is the All-Knowing, Almighty Creator. He does not remember some of His creation and forget some; rather, He makes some poor and some rich for a reason.

Allah has made some people poor to be a reminder and a lesson to the rich, but He has not abandoned them. Poverty reminds every person that the ability to accumulate wealth is nothing but temporary. A person who is now able to earn may become incapable of it at any given time, and the strong may turn weak. When the strong and the able learn this lesson, they will be encouraged to give generously to others; and, in turn, Allah *Glorified is He* will be there for them if they become weak and will send them help through the strong. Therefore, it is for the good of the able to help the needy as Allah *Glorified is He* commands them, for if they become the needy party, those who are able will help them and relieve their distress.

As we have learnt, this verse of the Quran: ‘None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety/Paradise] unless you give out of what you cherish...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 92) serves the purpose of its preceding verse which tells that Allah *Glorified is He* will not accept charity given by any disbeliever even if it amounts to an earth-full of gold. Since they disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He*, their deed will be rendered futile, and they will reap no fruit from it.

After elucidating this point, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the kind of spending that will not be in vain. Then, He discloses the falsehood of the Jews by unveiling a ruling stated in the Torah, which they had lied about. Since that ruling is also related to food, Allah *Glorified is He* knew it would rouse the natural desire for this worldly pleasure in the souls of the poor. Reactions of the rich and poor to such an issue will not be the same. To prevent poverty from kindling the longing of the poor for what they miss and afflicting them with distress, Allah *Glorified is He* first softens the heart of the rich by encouraging them to give generously to the poor and prevent their feelings of distress: ‘None of you [believers] will attain berr [true piety/ Paradise] unless

you give out of what you cherish. Whatever you give, Allah knows about it very well.' (*Al-Imran: 92*) Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Taurat (Torah) was revealed. Say (O Muhammad...): "Bring here the Taurat (Torah) and recite it, if you are truthful."' (*Al-Imran: 93*)

The Arabic word for 'lawful' used in the aforementioned verse is '*hel*' which is a noun stem that has no plural in the Arabic language; so it does not take the plural form even if it functions as a modifier of a plural noun, as in this verse of the Noble Quran: 'O, you who have attained to faith! Whenever believing women come unto you, forsaking the domain of evil, examine them, [although only] Allah is fully aware of their faith; and if you have thus ascertained that they are believers, do not send them back to the deniers of the truth, [since] they are not [any longer] *hel* (lawful) to their disbelieving husbands, and they are not [any longer] *hel* (lawful) for them...' (*al-Mumtahana: 10*).

In this verse, the singular word '*hel*' is used as a modifier for 'they', the plural pronoun referring to a group of women. In reference to the main verse, the True Lord says: 'All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself...' (*Al-Imran: 93*), which means Prophet Ya'qub (Israel) forbade certain foods for himself, while he was free to eat them. Perhaps, he forbade these foods for himself, and Allah sanctioned that, due to the fact that when a person vows something that Allah *Glorified is He* has not enjoined on him, he has thus made himself bound before Allah to fulfill that vow.

The time when Prophet Ya'qub (Israel/ Jacob) forbade these certain foods for himself was '...before the *Taurat* (Torah) was revealed...' (*Al-Imran: 93*). This proves that this prohibition was not from Allah *Glorified is He*. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* commands His Noble Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to address the children of Israel: '...Say (O Muhammad...): "Bring here the *Taurat* (Torah) and recite it, if you are truthful."' (*Al-Imran: 93*) Their falsehood was exposed, and they knew that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew that the text would confirm his veracity was in the Torah. Therefore, the Jews did not bring forth the Torah; they knew it contained a clear, indisputable text confirming what Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him said. Since they did not bring forth the Torah to resolve the argument, this was clear evidence of their untruthfulness. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

فَمَنْ أَفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

Those who persist in making up lies and attributing them to God after this are the wrongdoers [94] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 94)

This statement contains a clear warning that no one should make up anything about Allah *Glorified is He* that He did not reveal to any of His Messengers or in any of His Books. Whoever invents lies about Allah does not wrong anyone but himself. Allah then says:

قُلْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ فَاتَّبِعُوا مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٩٥﴾

[Prophet], say, 'God speaks the truth, so follow Abraham's religion: he had true faith and he was never an idolater' [95] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 95)

Allah *Glorified is He* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: '(Prophet), say, "Allah speaks the truth, so follow Ibrahim's (Abraham's) religion: he had true faith..."' (*Al-'Imran*: 95).

We know that the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) is that which first gave the name of 'Muslim' (one who surrenders to Allah) to all those who believe in Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah's command for us to follow the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) elucidates that the essence of faith is one with all the messages of Allah; all the Messengers and Prophets call for one faith. The word 'follow' means that there is a leader and a follower. The word 'religion' encompasses all beliefs and general legislations just as 'law' encompasses rulings and 'creed' includes beliefs.

We have said before that the word '*hanif*' means he who walks in a straight line and, likewise, follows a straight, upright way. We call our religion, Islam, 'the tolerant *hanifiyya* (true religion)'. What most would be surprised to know is that the root word '*hanaf*' means 'clubfoot' which is a kind of deformity, or

deviation. How, then, is it plausible to say that the True Religion, guiding to the Straight Path of Allah, is '*hanif*'?

We have said before that Allah sent each of his Messengers at a time when corruption was prevalent. In a world rife with corruption, the one who deviates from it is the one who is guided to the straight path, so '*hanif*' means a definite deviation from corruption, and the one who does so is truly upright. '[Prophet], say, "Allah speaks the truth, so follow Ibrahim's (Abraham's) religion: he had true faith and he was never an idolater."' (*Al-Imran*: 95).

'Allah speaks the truth', of course, because 'truth' is when speech conforms to reality. When Allah, the True God, speaks and He is the eternal All Knowing, what happens? Invariably, reality must conform with what He *Glorified is He* says. It does not make sense that Allah *Glorified is He* would make a statement through a Messenger and his followers that life's reality would contradict or variate. The True Lord Who has eternal, omnipotent knowledge, sends down speech with the main purpose of calling to His guidance.

Logically, therefore, when Allah *the All-Mighty and All Knowing* mentions an aspect of faith, He has eternally known that it would happen according to what He said even when the circumstances in which His Words were revealed did not seem to lead to immediate comprehension, or understanding. In the beginning, the believers were oppressed and subjugated, and those who had no ties to clans that could protect them had to emigrate from Mecca, or else they were tortured and oppressed. Amid such hardship which was right at the time when oppression of the believers reached its peak, Allah sent down these reassuring words to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: 'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.' (*al-Qamar*: 45)

When the Companion 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* heard this verse, he wondered what those forces were. The reality of the situation at that time offered no clue for understanding. Later, at the Battle of Badr, the believers did meet the forces who turned their back, were defeated, and thus fled. Allah *Glorified is He* had foretold an event and guaranteed that it would take place. This is the Absolute Truthfulness. One may choose to deny what is told as truth if it is told by other than the One Who has created all things and Who possesses Absolute Knowledge of them as well. So, from where can contradiction

emerge? This is the meaning referred to in the following verse: 'Will they not, then, try to understand this Quran? Had it come from any other but Allah, they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!' (*an-Nisa*: 82)

The Quran is the truth told by the True Lord and One Creator of all things Who has Eternal, Omnipotent Knowledge. Surprisingly, people of the Scripture, Jews and Christians disputed over Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham): the Jews claimed he was a Jew, and Christians claimed he was a Christian. They disregarded the fact that the revelation of Judaism and Christianity was long after the time of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), so how could he have been a Jew or a Christian since these religions came after him? For this reason, Allah gave them the following reply in the Noble Quran:

'People of the Book, why do you argue about Ibrahim (Abraham) when the Torah and the Gospel were not revealed until after his time? Do you not understand?' (*Al-'Imran*: 65) Then, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'Ibrahim (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was upright and devoted to God, never an idolater.' (*Al-'Imran*: 67).

How could they allege that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was a Jew or Christian? Only someone who is utterly bereft of insight would make such an allegation. The words of Allah *Glorified is He* in the aforesmentioned verse, brings forth a clear statement that is the undeniable truth: Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), as the verse says, was 'never an idolater'. Are the people of the Scripture idolaters? Yes. When they claim that 'Uzayr (Ezra) and 'Isa (Jesus) were the sons of Allah; such a claim is a form of associating other divinities with Allah. The Arabs, who were idolators too, likewise claimed that they were followers of the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham); they brought forth the following pretext for their false claim in the fact that the rituals of pilgrimage were first revealed to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. To refute this allegation and clear Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) of it, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: '[Prophet], say, "Allah speaks the truth, so follow Ibrahim's (Abraham's) religion: he had true faith and he was never an idolater."' (*Al-'Imran*: 95) This indicates that the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) conforms to the religion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him and Islam is essentially the same religion as the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* called for. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لَلَّذِي بِبَكَّةَ مُبَارَكًا وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٦﴾

The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Bakkah (Mecca). It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people [96] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 96)

We have previously discussed the process of the association of meanings through which Almighty Allah satisfies every quality in the human disposition. Before the aforementioned verse, which discusses construction of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, Allah addresses the truth about Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '[Prophet], say, "Allah speaks the truth, so follow Ibrahim's (Abraham's) religion: he had true faith and he was never an idolater."' (*Al- 'Imran*: 95)

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was the first of the Prophets to have a connection with the Sacred Mosque of Mecca. He raised the foundations of the Sacred Mosque after it was buried by the Great Flood that took place at the time of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. When the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his message is mentioned *peace be upon him* the greatest event in his history comes to mind which is the construction of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca. Furthermore, when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the debate between the Muslims (led by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and guided by the Quran) and the people of the Scripture (in whose hands were the distorted Torah and Gospel), He *the Exalted* refers us back to one thing: the religion of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) who gave all believers the name of Muslims [literally those who surrender to Allah]. Allah *Glorified is He* wants people to be guided by divine values and abide by them through their actions. If whims replace these values, the balance Allah wants to strike on earth will be shaken by contradiction, and human's actions, deviating from the divine guidance, will be squandered and fruitless.

For a person to act upon the beliefs ingrained in his heart and approved by his mind, he must possess a physical form through which puts the Laws of Allah into action. Otherwise, such laws and beliefs would remain confined to

the heart and mind and would never find their way to the world by performing the mission for which mankind are created.

For this physical body to perform this mission, acts of worship have been ordained for refining and elevating it above mundanity. As we work for the prosperity of the world, we also direct our faces to the Sacred House of Allah and direct our intentions to Him in all our deeds. Allah has sent His Messages to reveal to us His Laws by which He governs both the human heart and the physical form. He has enjoined on us *salat* (the Five Daily Prayers) that we observe by directing our bodies to the Sacred House of Allah as we direct our hearts to Him, feeling His Presence. Why is it necessary to engage the body with the heart in worship?

When Allah *Glorified is He* sends down His Mercy and Revelations, He wants the human body to be prepared for receiving these blessings. The Sacred House of Allah *Glorified is He* toward which every Muslim directs his face represents the unity of religion. Just as Allah has created unity in the Messages sent down to all His Messengers, He has also decreed to emphasise unity among the believers by directing them, their bodies, and their hearts to His Sacred House. Every place where Allah *Glorified is He* is worshiped, in the manner He commands, is a mosque, and Allah has made this easy for the nation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who said: 'The earth has been made for me a mosque and a pure place (for worship).'

Observing acts of worship in the previous religions required a special place, but Allah *Glorified is He* has granted an abundance of His Mercy to the nation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as He has not granted to any prior nation of any other Prophet.

Sand of the earth is ritually pure. Therefore, when water is unavailable to perform ritual ablution, dry sand, which is commonly considered as unclean when accumulated on a given surface, has been made a means for attaining purity for us.

A person can perform dry ritual ablution with clean sand when water is unavailable. Allah *Glorified is He* has thus made it exceptionally easy for every person of the nation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* to get

ready for standing before Him in *salat* (prayer). Every place where a Muslim worships and prostrates himself to Allah *Glorified is He* is considered a mosque.

However, there is a difference between any place where we worship Allah and a mosque. A worker may worship Allah in his factory, a student in his classroom, a farmer in his field and even a person walking on the street may observe *salat* (prayer) anywhere. However, when somewhere is dedicated to be a place of worship, it must be solely for worship, where none of life's daily activities may be pursued in it, for it is a consecrated place.

It is permissible to observe worship anywhere, but there is a difference between a place where one engages in a worldly activity, but can perform worship as well, and a place designated to be a mosque. A mosque is a place made solely for worshipping Allah *Glorified is He* so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered that nothing should be pursued in connection with our worldly lives in this consecrated place. He taught us that whoever engages in a business transaction in a mosque will not have that transaction be blessed by Allah; whoever uses a mosque to announce something he lost will not find what he is looking for, and even if he prayed, Allah will withhold from him whatever he lost.

Twenty-three hours is more than enough time to managing daily worldly affairs. Thus, it befits a believer to then devote the remaining hour observing acts of worship sincerely for Allah and leaving all the cares of this life just as he leaves his shoes at the door of the mosque. It is not showing enough respect and good etiquette with Allah *Glorified is He* for one to engage in anything other than worshipping Allah. This is especially true when he is in the place appointed solely for worship, during the times ordained to be dedicated to it.

Once you enter a mosque, you should keep yourself getting involved in any frivolous talk, along with making the intention to remain there as a form of spiritual retreat by observing worship only. When a particular place is chosen to be a mosque, what direction should worshipers face as they stand before Allah *Glorified is He*? Should everyone be left to choose his own direction? No. Unity amongst the believers manifests itself by their all directing toward one particular place: the Sacred House of Allah (in Mecca). We are given freedom to choose

whatever place to use as a mosque, yet in all of them, we are commanded to direct ourselves toward the place chosen by Allah: His Sacred House.

By so doing, all the believers everywhere will be facing each other every time they stand before Allah in *salat* (prayer). It is like forming a vast circle of worshipers all over the world with all of them directed towards the Sacred House of Allah along with facing each other. Now, why must we face the *Ka'ba* each time we observe *salat* (prayer) even though Allah *Glorified is He* says:

‘And to Allah belong the east and the west, so wherever you turn (yourselves or your faces), there is the Face of Allah (and He is High above, over His Throne). Surely! Allah is All-Sufficient for His creatures’ needs, All-Knowing.’? (*al-Baqara*: 115).

The answer is that there is no contradiction; this verse supports what we are saying. Indeed to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the east and the west. At first, people recognised the east and the west, then the north and the south. In addition to these four directions, science later specified the intercardinal directions: the northeast, northwest, southeast, and southwest. All these directions belong to Allah, and by directing to the *Ka'ba* from all over the world, we do actually face all of these directions from our various places, and this conforms to the aforementioned noble verse.

When a person faces the *Ka'ba*, the east might be behind him and the west in front of him. At the same time, another person might be facing the west with his face directed toward the *Ka'ba*. A third might be in a different spot of the world and also facing another cardinal point. This way, human beings from the east, west, north, south and all other directions face the *Ka'ba* throughout the day.

Thus, the words of the Almighty Allah: ‘And to Allah belong the east and west...’ are in harmony with the fact that the believers all over the world face all the various directions as they direct themselves towards the *Ka'ba*. No direction is preferred or more sacred than another. I do not want to further mention the belief that the *Ka'ba* is the focal point of the earth and that the earth was created from it; if an object is spherical, any point on it can be the focal point; therefore, let us not dwell on such a discussion. Is it not proof

enough that it is superior since Allah has chosen it to be His Sacred House? Yes, this is more than enough. It is superior to all other places because it is the House of Allah chosen by Him *the Almighty* and this suffices.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has taught us matters that the intellect cannot resolve; those that do not constitute a fundamental part of faith should not be a point of dispute or debate. It has been narrated on the authority of Companion 'Ali ibn Abu Talib *Allah be pleased with him* that a man asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* this question,

‘Is this the first Sacred House of Allah?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained that before it there were other Sacred Houses of Allah, but it is the first ever set up for all of mankind. The *Ka‘ba* is, therefore, the first place of worship Allah *Glorified is He* has made for mankind, as He *the Exalted and Almighty* says: ‘The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Bakkah (Mecca). It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 96) However, if species other than the human race have existed before, there must have been other places of worship.

No human being ever preceded Adam in existence, but other Adam preceded mankind at a distance. For this reason, existence of the Sacred House of Allah may clash with the logic of common Muslims who have only a shallow religious background. When one of them hears that discoveries have been made of fossils dating back to millions of years ago, he may wonder how that is possible when Adam did not exist millions of years ago. Let us suppose that five generations descended from Prophet Idris (Enoch), three generations from Prophet Nuh (Noah), eleven generations from Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and thirty generations from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This means that human existence dates back to thousands of years, not millions!’

Concerning this question, we reply by asking if anyone has ever claimed that Adam was the first creature to exist on earth. Islam does not claim as such, rather, it says that Adam is the father of the human race, but it does not mean he was the first person to live on the earth. Therefore, leave scientists to say that the earth has existed for millions of years, while we reflect on the words of Allah: ‘Prophet, do you not see that God created the heavens and

theearth for a purpose? He could remove all of you and replace you with a new creation if He wished to.' (*Ibrahim*: 19)

Basically, there is no need for us to conduct such an investigation, which is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'No, there were several Houses of Allah before it.' Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* clarifies that the jinn lived on earth before us: 'The jinn We created before, from the fire of scorching wind.' (*al-Hujurat*: 27)

Does Allah *Glorified is He* not say that He has willed placing humans on this earth as successors to which the angels replied: 'Prophet, when your Lord told the angels, "I am putting a successor on Earth," they said, "How can You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?"' He said, "I know things you do not.'" (*al-Baqara*: 30)

What the angels meant to allude to what other creatures who preceded human existence on earth did. So Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that the *Ka'ba* was the first place of worship ever set up for mankind, and its useless and needless to ask about matters the mind cannot resolve. If Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to tell us that the *Ka'ba* was the first place of worship ever built on earth, He would say: 'The first House [of worship] to be established on Earth...' and would not specifically point out the race that House was set up for. However, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Bakkah (Mecca). It is a blessed place...' (*Al-'Imran*: 96). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified that there were other places of worship before it, but it was the first one set up for mankind. It is an answer that can well encompass and supercede all that science may claim.

Let us ponder the Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'The first House of worship) to be established for people was the one at Bakkah (Mecca). It is a blessed place...' (*Al-'Imran*: 96). What is the meaning of 'first'? It means, or implies the beginning of something, but does every beginning necessarily lead to an end? No, some things have beginnings but no ends. Take numbers, as an example. Roughly, we may say numbers start from 'one', but can we specify where they end? We have perhaps imagined numbers running into decillions, yet there are other far larger numbers. In the past, people stopped at one thousand

and would describe a million as 'one thousand thousands'. Paradise is another example of an entity that has a beginning, but no end.

So the first place of worship set up for mankind was the *Ka'ba*. The previously mentioned verse proves that a place of worship was indeed set up for mankind, and as long as Adam is one as well as the first of mankind, then that House was set up for him too which means it preceded his initial appearance on earth.

This leads to the conclusion that the Sacred House was built before Adam, which is true, for Adam is from mankind. Allah *Glorified is He* further elucidates this point by saying: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people....' (*Al-'Imran*: 96) Is Adam not one of 'people'? Therefore, the Sacred House must have been built before him. Some people believe that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was the one who built the Sacred House in Mecca. To those who adhere to this belief, we say in reply that we should first understand The Quran, for such a statement contradicts what Allah *Glorified is He* says in it: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people....' (*Al-'Imran*: 96) And since many people existed before Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did they not have a place of worship to direct to in their devotion? Is this a privilege granted only to people who came after Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*?!

Allah has granted those who lived prior to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the same rights as those who came after him. A Sacred House, then, must have been made for them, as well. In the Quranic text: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people...', the doer of the action of 'establishing' is not mentioned, and the past participle form 'established' implies that such doer is not one from mankind. This leads one to ask who set up the Sacred House. Were they the angels?

We may consider the possibility that the angels received a command from Allah *Glorified is He* to undertake the building thereof, but Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Sacred House: '... a source of guidance for *al-'alamin*...' This Arabic word literally means 'worlds', which implies that the Sacred House of Allah *Glorified is He* is a source of guidance for the angels as well since they too form a 'world' among the creatures of Allah. It may, therefore, be suggested

that Allah *Glorified is He* set up the Sacred House before the existence of the angels. Indeed, the human mind will fall short of comprehending everything in this endless universe, so let the mind rest and respect its limits by not exceeding them to realms beyond its capacity. The idea that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was the first to set up the Sacred House is indicative of misunderstanding the Quranic text that states: ‘And (remember) when Ibrahim (Abraham) and (his son) Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the House (the *Ka’ba* at Mecca), (saying), “Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily! You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 127).

What does ‘raising’ mean? It means establishing the third dimension, which is height, as well as implying that length and width had already been specified. This is clear proof that the House already existed before Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* raised its foundations. Bearing this in mind, we reach the conclusion that just the foundations and height of the Sacred House remained to be established, but its length and width that marked the area of that sacred spot had already been there. The sacred place of worship had already existed and just needed to be marked by raising the building. This is proven by the fact that when the *Ka’ba* was destroyed, people still made pilgrimage to the place itself. When we pray in the third floor of the sacred place, we face the air above the *Ka’ba*. If we were to dig a hole in the ground a thousand metres deep to pray, we would face the roots of the *Ka’ba*, thus proving that the Sacred House encompasses the *Ka’ba* and its surrounding environment.

Accordingly, what Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did was just the construction of the building, marked by that place and not actually setting the place itself up. Let us contemplate, guided by our understanding of faith, what happened with Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* set out with his wife Hajar and her son, Ismail (Ishmael) and left them in Mecca. Hajar knew that the basic necessities of life are water, air, and food. Seeing that there was no water in that place, she asked Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* ‘Do you leave us here of your own volition, or by a command from Allah?’ He replied, ‘By a command from Allah.’ So she said, ‘Then I am relieved. Allah will never abandon us.’

Her worries were cast away when she realised that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, left them there as an act of obedience to the command of Allah, and this is the pinnacle of faith. If a mother's faith had not been strong, would she let her husband leave her alone with her little child in such a place that had no foreseeable source of food or water? It was not in Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that she put her trust, but in the Lord of Ibrahim *Glorified is He*. It is worth mentioning that Allah *Glorified is He* quotes from Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in the Quran as saying: 'Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House, Lord so that they may keep up the prayer. Make people's hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce so that they may be thankful.' (*Ibrahim*: 37)

According to this verse, we realise that the time when Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* left his family in that area, the Sacred House of Allah did exist. Besides, we know that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not raise the foundations of the House alone because it was his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* who helped him: 'And (remember) when Ibrahim (Abraham) and (his son) Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the House (the *Ka'ba* at Mecca), (saying), "Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily! You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower."' (*al-Baqara*: 127)

Undoubtedly, Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* must have been older and grown up enough to have been able to help his father, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in raising the foundations of the Sacred House. We have learnt that when Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was a child in the very place where his father, Ibrahim, left him with his mother, the Sacred House did exist. Therefore, we are certain that the Sacred House was there before Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Now, let us examine the meaning of the Arabic word 'Bakkah' which is mentioned in the noble verse: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Bakkah (Mecca). It is a blessed place...' (*Al-Imran*: 96). The place where the Sacred House exists has names: one of which is 'Bakkah' and the other 'Mecca'. Some scholars say that the Arabic letters *mim* (m) and *ba'* (b) are related in regards to the articulation as well as the meaning of both. Regarding articulation, we would

notice that a person with nasal problems would pronounce (m) like (b). The Arabic letters mim and ba' are phonetically close to each other, and the words starting with them are sometimes correlated in meaning.

Let us examine the derivation of 'Mecca' and 'Bakkah'. The Arabic verb stem bacca means 'crowded', so we can understand the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* in this light: 'The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Bakkah. It is a blessed place...' (*Al-'Imran*: 96). So it is the ever-crowded place to which people come from all around the world to perform the pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah *Glorified is He*. Due to this inevitable, undeniable crowdedness, Allah *Glorified is He* pardons men and women for mixing together, while circulating the *Ka'ba*.

Another difference may be that Bakkah is the name of the place where the *Ka'ba* lies and circumambulation takes place, whereas Mecca is the name of the whole city where the Sacred House is located. As for 'Mecca', it is derived from the verb makka which refers to the suckling of a mother's udder by a young cow or camel until it is empty. Consuming all the milk of a she-cow or she-camel until the last drop means the baby is hungry. Due to the scarcity of water resources in Mecca, people tend to consume any small amount of water they can find; hence the name is due to the resemblance and its name.

The word *mubarak* (Arabic for blessed) is derived from the root (b-r-k) that denotes 'durability'. So does it mean absolute durability or growing durability, which increases in the face of consumption? In daily life, we say money is 'blessed' when it seems never to decrease by spending, so it is like a durable source that continues to give and does not run out. Likewise, the word *birka* (the Arabic for pool) is derived from the same root; no matter how much we take of its water, it is ever abundant.

We say *tabaraka* Allah, which means that Allah *Glorified is He* has always existed, with no beginning and no end; He is the Self-Sufficient, the One God, Who has no partners, Who does not have a need for anything or anyone and Who never changes and is above experiencing any decrease *Glorified is He*. Thus, we see that the concept of 'durability' is intrinsic to the meaning of the name of the Sacred House of Allah. The Sacred House is ever blessed. How? The reward for goodness performed there is multiplied. Could blessedness

come in any better form? It is a place where all sorts of provisions are ever abundant and never cut off. In the past, a pilgrim would travel with all his needs, even his burial shroud, a needle and thread, salt, etc. Now, pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah find all they need there. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the sacred, blessed House as being: ‘... a source of guidance for all people.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 96). What is guidance? We have defined it previously as the direction that leads to a goal. Whoever visits the Sacred Mosque returns from it purified from his sins as pure as the day he was born. *Hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) has, therefore, made him closer to Paradise. It is by making Pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque that one finds the path to paradise. That is what makes it ‘a source of guidance’. When Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* speaks about the Sacred Mosque of Mecca, He specifically mentions the Station of Ibrahim (Abraham) *Glorified is He* even though there are many other signs worthy of mentioning: Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فِيهِ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ مَّقَامُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَنْ دَخَلَهُ كَانَ آمِنًا وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ
مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفِيرٌ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

There are clear signs in it; it is the place where Abraham stood to pray; whoever enters it is safe. Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it. Those who reject this [should know that] God has no need of anyone [97] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 97)

For those whose minds cannot comprehend the thought that Allah *Glorified is He* has softened the boulder for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* we say that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made a plan, due to fearing that his feet would slip as he stood on the boulder to build the Sacred House. Therefore, he carved a place in the boulder the size of his feet so that they would be firm as he carried and raised the stones. These are clear signs. Let us look more deeply into the story. Allah *Glorified is He* aided Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* because he had decided to raise the foundations for the House higher than the level his hands could reach. So Allah *Glorified is He* helped him to do this. We know that there are two kinds of guidance: the guidance of direction and the guidance of assistance:

‘Allah [God] has increased the guidance of those who follow the right path and given them their righteousness...’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘There are clear signs in it; it is the place where Abraham stood to pray; whoever enters it is safe...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 97). Signs, in this verse, mean amazing matters that cannot be denied or overlooked. Entering the Sacred House produces a feeling of security and inner peace. It is a feeling commonly associated with the place where the Sacred House is built even though it has witnessed feuds, blood and war among the tribes that once lived there. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* explains the condition that bloodshed must be prevented: ‘... whoever enters it is safe....’ Why is this? It is the House of Allah *Glorified is He* and it does not befit its sacredness that anyone should be punished or oppressed in it, even if he has committed a crime for which Allah *Glorified is He* has prescribed a punishment. A statement of ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* illustrates this point further when he said, ‘If I find the killer of Al-Khattab (his father) there, I would not stand up against him.’

However, this is not meant to be a way of escaping justice, for a criminal must be closely guarded until he leaves the Sacred House. This safety only pertains to his worldly life. As for his safety on the Day of Resurrection, this is a different issue. This is a high status Allah *Glorified is He* bestows on whom ever He wills, out of His Grace. The clear, indisputable signs in the Sacred House are witnessed by everyone who visits it. May Allah *Glorified is He* answer the hopes and intentions of everyone who desires to visit or revisit His Sacred House. As you face one side of the *Ka'ba*, another person is perhaps facing an opposite side of it; thus, the sacred building is surrounded by worshipers from all directions. When we are at the Sacred House, we direct our faces to the building that we know which makes up a part of the *Ka'bah* because we can plainly see it. We know this building, along with Hatim, the semicircular wall around the Stone of Ismail (Ishmael), form the entire construction of the *Ka'ba*. At one time, insufficient funds caused the construction of the building not to be completed, and the wall was made to demarcate the location of the *Ka'ba*. As such, it remained like this. When a person is far from the *Ka'ba*, it is sufficient that he faces its direction.

For this reason, we find that the rows around the *Ka'ba* are circular during *salat* (prayer) since those who pray inside the Mosque can see it. As for those who pray farther away from it, they can face its direction even if the length of a row runs a thousand metres long. That makes the rows of the worshippers, while praying always straight when praying outside the Sacred Mosque; this is due to the fact that they all face one direction, whereas inside, rows are circular since all are directing their faces towards the *Ka'ba*, where the longest dimension of it is twelve and a quarter metres. Among the one of the more amazing signs seen round the *Ka'ba* is how people struggle to kiss the Black Stone which is just a stone that belongs to the species of inanimate objects, the lowest species after mankind, animals, and plants.

We see people, and masters of the universe submit to the command of Allah *Glorified is He* Who would not completely accept their ritual unless they kiss that Stone or greet it. It is incredible how Allah *Glorified is He* thus makes the highest species among His creatures show such respect to an object belonging to the lowest species. People crowd around the Black Stone, and those who do not manage to kiss it feel that they have missed out on something tremendous, a wonderful manifestation of how people submit to the ordinance of their Lord and Creator. Even human arrogance is humbled when one fulfills a command from Allah to kiss or greet a stone, even when a simple greeting suffices. Therefore, one strives to kiss it to perfect his observance of the religious ritual. Although merely a stone, an inanimate object of the lowest species, it is so lovingly shown reverence solely due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* has ennobled it. It is a command intended to let man transcend his ego, and no one should interpret it to be any form of stone-worship or idolatry, whereas there is another stone that Allah *Glorified is He* commands performers of hajj (Islamic Pilgrimage) at which to throw pebbles.

So it could not be stone-worship. That would be out of the question, for we find that one stone is made sacred, whereas another is pelted with pebbles. We find one stone venerated and sought to be kissed, while another is despised and cursed. This is only to show submission to the Will of Allah *Glorified is He*. When He commands us to honor a stone and pelt another with pebbles, a believer does so only in obedience to Allah Who commands us to do as such. The nature of the stones themselves is completely irrelevant. Some of those

inclined to think the worst of everything claim that Islam has preserved a form of idolatry.

For those who think that, I pose a question: Why do you mention veneration of the Black Stone and deliberately disregard the pelting with pebbles of the three stones representing Satan?! A believer observing *hajj* (Islamic Pilgrimage) venerates one stone and despises three others only because Allah *Glorified is He* commands him to do so. That is the significance of the ritual since it is not the stone itself that is meant to be worshipped. Allah *Glorified is He* has elevated us above the baseness of idolatry which is the sheerest form of disbelief. He has commanded us to kiss the Black Stone, so when we do, it solely out of respect for His commandment. This is the peak of trust and glorification of the Lord Who has given this command. Both are stones, yet the veneration shown to one represented the height of polytheism, while that shown to the other is the height of belief in the One Allah. Are these not clear signs?

Is the Well of Zamzam that is located near the *Ka'ba* a clear sign as well? It is the miracle that commemorates the struggle of Hajar who kept running between the mountains of Safa and Marwah, desperately seeking water for her infant son, Ismail (Ishmael), whom she left beside the *Ka'ba*. In her quest for water, Hajar ran seven times back and forth between Safa and Marwah hoping to see a bird or a person who could lead her to a source of water so as to quench the thirst of her infant son. Had she found water between Safa and Marwah when she began running, would she have confirmed what she said to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he left her in that place: 'Allah will never abandon us'? Rather, Allah let her exert herself first in order to teach her and everyone that one must exhaust all possible means, for success comes from Allah Who grants when He sees His servant truly striving. Water did not emerge where she ran, instead it appeared under the feet of Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. This proves her statement, 'Allah will never abandon us.' Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* let Hajar run seven rounds, and a woman of her age, in all likelihood, could not manage to do more than that. This is a lesson meant to teach us that one must exhaust all possible means, while his heart depend only on the One Who controls those means: Allah *Glorified is He*. Such is the criteria that should govern human behavior and struggle in this life. When we see the Well of Zamzam where Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*

moved his little feet, this is a clear sign that delivers a message since it happened around him instead of between Safa and Marwah where Hajar struggled. The message taught is that we should exert our best effort, while directing our hopes and trust only to the One Who manages all affairs.

This teaches a believer that true faith truly means reliance on Allah *Glorified is He*. However, it does not mean that one should do nothing and just wait for the sky to rain good luck. Rather, it is working hard, while trusting that success comes from Allah *Glorified is He* only. To do nothing and expect that Allah will do everything for you, claiming that this is trust in Him, is but idleness. I say to such a person that if your belief is true, why do you stretch out your hand to attain food and eat with such an appetite? Why not wait for food to jump into your mouth? Do you not trust Allah?! Such is a true quality of the indolent; they would exhaust every possible means to satisfy their desires, yet when it comes to work, they sit back, claiming that is what it means to rely on Allah *Glorified is He*. The lesson we learn from Hajar, from the effort she made and from the gushing forth of water is that we should exhaust the means Allah has given us when we have an end to seek.

In the Sacred Mosque, one is so preoccupied thinking about his relationship with Allah to think of those around him, even the absolute dearest to him. Once one looks at the *Ka'ba*, the world and its cares flee from the mind. When the rituals are finished, one's mind becomes preoccupied once again with his work, family, money, etc. If one's attachment to the Sacred House remained so strong all the time, this blessed place would constantly be too overcrowded to give peace or calmness to anyone. Allah *the Exalted* says about the Sacred House: '...whoever enters it is safe...' (*Al-Imran*: 97). Here, we must understand the difference between a sentence meant to describe reality and that meant as a command even though it comes in the form of a statement.

The Arabic sentence rendered as '...whoever enters it is safe...' (*Al-Imran*: 97) is not meant as a description of reality, otherwise, many things would contradict it since the security of worshipers at the Sacred Mosque was threatened at times.

We know the story of the attack attempted by Juhayman some decades ago. When Juhayman attacked pilgrims at the Sacred House of Allah, they were stripped of the feeling of security, and some of them may have wondered how

that could happen since it contradicts what Allah says: ‘...whoever enters it is safe...’! Some maliciously alleged that the assault Juhayman launched against worshippers at the Sacred Mosque proves the verse ‘... whoever enters it is safe...’ is an untrue statement. This allegation is overwhelmingly refuted when we know that statements in Arabic language can be either informative or imperative.

Were the aforementioned sentence meant as a statement, it would mean that no one may ever be attacked or frightened so long as he is in the Sacred Mosque. However, that sentence is meant as a command and cannot be judged as true or false. Rather, a command can be obeyed or disobeyed. When Almighty Allah says: ‘... whoever enters it is safe’, it is as if He means, "O, believers, whoever enters the Sacred Mosque should be kept safe."

Let me give an example [and Allah *Glorified is He* is above all comparison]. If you tell your son, ‘O son, know that ours is a house of hospitality’, would you mean to state an essential fact that no guest has ever been or may ever be treated in your house other than hospitably? Or would it rather be meant as a command to your son?

It is in the form of a statement, yet it implies a command to your son that he should be generous and kind to any guest who visits the house. Such a command is likely to be obeyed or contravened, based on how docile the son is. Likewise, we understand from the following Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘... whoever enters it is safe...’ that the sentence is meant as an imperative one that will likely be obeyed or disobeyed. Another example of this is the noble verse where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them; they will have forgiveness and a generous provision.’ (*an-Nur*: 26).

Some people say that we find reality to be in conflict to this; a good woman would be doomed to marry a bad man, or a good man would be afflicted with a bad wife; so how is it plausible that Allah says so? The answer to this is that Allah *Glorified is He* in the aforementioned verse does not mean to state an actual fact of life, but He is giving a command that should be obeyed. In accordance to that verse, Allah *Glorified is He* enjoins on the believers that a good man should be married to a good woman, and so should the corrupt be

married to each other. If people obey the commandments of Allah, reality will synchronise with the outcome expressed in the noble verse. Otherwise, good men will be married to bad women, and vice versa.

Thus, the Words of Almighty Allah: '...whoever enters it is safe...', though apparently a statement, is meant as an imperative sentence. So whoever wishes to be faithful to what Allah *Glorified is He* commands should provide security to whoever enters the Sacred Mosque. After giving that command, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the same verse: '... Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by people who are able to undertake it. Those who reject this (should know that) Allah has no need of anyone.' (*Al- 'Imran: 97*).

When one hears the phrase 'owed to', it is understood that the benefit goes to the object of the prepositional phrase and the obligation is on the subject of the verb 'owe'. If we say: 'so-and-so owes something to so-and-so', it means the benefit is for the object of the preposition and the obligation is on the subject. Based on the same rationale, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by people...' (*Al- 'Imran: 97*), the benefit thus goes to Allah *Glorified is He* and the obligation is on people. However, if we grasp the meaning of the sentence, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* does not benefit from anything that He commands us to do; *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) is observed for the sake of Allah, but the benefit goes to the one who observes it. Whatever you do for Allah, he returns it to you; so it is an obligation on you and a benefit for you at the same time.

The fruit of every command of Allah that you obey actually returns to you; so it does not befit Him, which is how we understand the noble verse: '...Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by people...' (*Al- 'Imran: 97*) that 'owed to' implies that Allah benefits from your obedience of this obligation. You perform *hajj* (pilgrimage) for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He* but the benefit goes to you and is meant for you only. Allah *Glorified is He* is far exalted above deriving benefit from any of the rulings He enjoins upon us. When He *the Exalted* ordains something, a believer must know that the benefit of submission is meant for him only. Worship must be devoted to Allah *Glorified is He* and the intention behind it directed to Him and none but Him; yet the fruit of devotion goes to the servant of Allah for his obedience.

Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* orders the believers to make *hajj* (pilgrimage) to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, and He is the Creator and knows that obligations are always heavy to the soul. Still, for a believer to undertake a difficult responsibility, he must reflect on the benefit that comes from compliance. That makes it easier for him to bear the difficulty. When one does not consider the reward he would be granted for devotion, he finds obedience tiresome and feels reluctant to observe acts of worship. Likewise, when one thinks only of the pleasure derived from a sin and ignores the punishment, it is easy for him to commit that sin without any remorse. Consider the purpose of obedience, and you will realise that its fruit goes to you only. You will understand that it is for you, not against you.

If a sinner thinks of the punishment for disobedience, he will realise that it is against him, not for him, and the pleasure derived from it is only transient. Heedfulness of punishment would prevent him from ever approaching a given sin. However, when one commits a sin, he thinks only of the instant ecstasy he feels and never thinks of the requital. Were one honest with himself, he would let reminder of punishment at the moment of desire reason away and desist the lure of sinning. Remembering punishment extinguishes the desire to sin. I always find that the best example to give here is the fiercest of human instincts: sexual desire.

Suppose that a man saw a beautiful girl and wanted to win her affections. I advise him then to think of the punishment prepared for him. Imagine yourself before a blazing fire and just about to be thrown into it. This is what you should expect if you were to enjoy that girl outside the lawful boundaries of marriage. Would he then insist on winning the affections of the girl or even think of his desire, seeing that such severe torment awaits him? Will this sexually deviant approach such a sin? No, for the desire to sin disappears upon recalling its punishment. Allah *the Most High* says: 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their *sabeelan* (way) to it' (*Al-'Imran*: 97). In Arabic, '*sabeelan*' signifies the path leading to a goal. Such path is usually well-trodden. When a person sets off to fulfill his/her obligation of the *Hajj* (pilgrimage), s/he is a pilgrim travelling on this path. There are three points to observe regarding this:

1. a pilgrim: a person upon whom Allah ordains *Hajj* who must be legally qualified to perform the *Hajj*,
2. a well-trodden path,
3. an ultimate end: the pilgrimage to the Sacred House.

Since the pilgrim will take a road, s/he must have the ability to use this path. However, how could s/he get this ability? The ability, prior to taking it, requires the attainment of provisions and means of transport. As such, the pilgrim needs provisions and a means of transport in his/her *Hajj* journey.

Furthermore, the way to *Hajj* must be safe and free from danger. To conclude, the ability to perform *Hajj* requires three things: provisions, a means of transport and safe road. Provisions usually pertain specifically to the person; s/he provides for him/her self only. However, if this said is supporting a family and young children, the legal ability requires that s/he must leave them sufficient provisions that would last until his return from the journey of *Hajj*. We should carefully observe that the Divine formula used in all obligations is the following: 'O you who have believed, (such-and-such) is ordained upon you...' Yet, in *Hajj*, Allah *Glorified is He* clearly states that *Hajj* is a Divine Obligation due to Allah upon all people, Muslims, or non-Muslims. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even invited the people of the Book who laid claim to Ibrahim (Abraham) as their prophet, to make pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah. However, they refused. If *Hajj* was only for Muslims who believed in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Prophet Muhammad would not have offered the Jews and Christians pilgrimage to the House of Allah so that it would be a means of gathering all of mankind in the House of Allah to worship One God, the Lord of the House, but they refused. As such, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* strongly condemned those who do not go to perform *Hajj* without having a legal excuse, such as a debilitating illness, fears from tyrant rulers, or abject poverty and penury.

Imam 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever has the provisions and the means to enable him to go to Allah's House, and he does not perform *Hajj*, then it does not matter if he dies as a Jew or a Christian. Simply, Allah *Glorified is He* says

in His Book: 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it' (*Al-'Imran*: 97).

It is for that reason that the obligation of the *Hajj* is directly followed by Allah's saying: 'But whoever disbelieves' (*Al-'Imran*: 97). In other words, do those who do not perform *Hajj* without a compelling, legal excuse, fall into disbelief? Concerning this, scholars have to elaborate. In response to this question, the scholars say that, indeed, they do fall into disbelief.' Why? According to scholars, there are two kinds of disbelief: first, the disbelief in Allah, and second, the disbelief in the blessings of Allah. For example, Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* says: 'And Allah presents an example of a town which enjoyed peace and security; its provision coming to it in abundance from all places, but it denied the favours of Allah. Thereupon, Allah afflicted them with hunger and fear in punishment for their evil deeds' (*an-Nahl*: 112).

It may also mean actual disbelief, as pertains to the case when a person dies as a Jew or a Christian. In this instance, we say to be careful and not to issue biased judgments that would disregard any of the given contextual evidence. This practical obligation is clearly set out by Allah *Glorified is He* in His words: 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it.' (*Al-'Imran*: 97) Do you dispute that this is obligation? Or, do you believe in it but fail to carry it out?

The obligation is 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it' (*Al-'Imran*: 97). Do you believe in it or not? 'Yes' is the normal answer of all believers. However, it differs from one believer to another. Some believers are careful to keenly perform the obligations prescribed by Allah *Glorified is He*; those are the obedient believers. Others may not show keenness to perform the obligations and thus become disobedient.

In this regard, we find that disbelief is of two kinds. Some disbelieve in the ruling of *Hajj*, that is, they deny the obligation of it as owed to Allah *Glorified is He* by the people. These are truly disbelievers. There are others who may commit the sin of denying Allah's blessings; Allah has given them the ability, i.e. provisions, a means of transport, safe passage and enough provisions for their dependents. In this case, it is obligatory upon them to perform *Hajj*. As such, a God fearing man, endowed with esoteric knowledge, once said: 'If

any of them is told that he has a share of inheritance in Mecca, they will make their way thereto by all possible means.'

Therefore, Allah's *Glorified is He* saying: 'Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to Allah by all who can make their way to it.' (*Al-'Imran*: 97) Therefore, it is an article of faith; those who believe in it are free of disbelief, whereas those who dispute or deny it fall into disbelief. Whoever performs *Hajj* is obedient, and whoever does not, whilst believing in the *Hajj* is disobedient.

Let us consider the exactness of the Quranic discourse in Allah's, saying: 'But whoever disbelieves, then, indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds.' (*Al-'Imran*: 97) Someone may raise a question and ask: why does Allah not say: 'but whoever disbelieves, then indeed, Allah is free from need of 'them'?' instead of saying, 'Allah is free from need of the worlds'? The proper response to this is that Allah is really in no need of any of His creatures. Be careful! Never think that those who believe and observe their obligations do any favour to Allah by their obedience. Allah is All-Sufficient; He needs neither the obedient nor the disobedient. Beware of presuming that those who obey Allah have done Him any favour or lent Him a hand: 'Indeed, Allah is free from need of the worlds' (*Al-'Imran*: 97).

He is in no need of those who obey or those who do not. After this, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

قُلْ يٰٓأَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لِمَ تَكْفُرُوْنَ بِآيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ شَهِيدٌ عَلٰى مَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾

**Say, 'People of the Book, why do you reject God's
revelations? God witnesses everything you do' [98]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 98)**

When you hear 'say', it is a command from Allah to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* as previously stated. When you entrust someone with a message to another, does this person mention the command 'say' or just say the message? For example, when you say to your son, 'Say to your uncle, "My father will visit you tomorrow."' Your son goes to his uncle and says: 'My father will visit you tomorrow.'

Someone might say, 'Would it not have been sufficient enough for Allah to have said to Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*: 'Say, O Muhammad.' As such, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have passed it on to us saying, 'O, People of the Book, why do you disbelieve?' That would have been enough, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered the commandment itself from Allah; he only narrated it verbatim as he had received it from (Allah). The message Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received from Allah was the following: 'Say: "O, People of the Book."' This indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered the message he received from Allah verbatim. There are many verses in the Quran that begin with Allah's Command: 'O, People of the Book' without preceding it with the introductory verb, 'Say.' Other verses begin with the command 'Say.' What is the difference between these two styles? We find that the True Lord sometimes kindly addresses His creatures directly so He shows that they are worthy of being addressed directly. He does this by saying: 'O, People of the Book!' This is a direct address from Allah *Glorified is He* to them. Other times, He says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'O, Muhammad, Say to them' because they do not have a position worthy of being directly addressed by Allah. When Allah *Glorified is He* addresses mankind, the address may or may not begin with 'Say'; so, we know that when the True Lord addresses His creatures directly, He is honouring them as being worthy of the direct Divine address. However, when they show obstinacy, He tells His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to 'say to them.'

An example of this [and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond compare] from everyday life is when one of us says to a person next to us, 'Tell the one with the loud voice to keep silent.' This person deems himself above directly addressing the person with a loud voice, so he asks his neighbour to tell the noisy person to keep silent. When an address comes to the people of the Book, we know that they are the Jews, the Companions of the Torah, and the Christians, the Companions of the Gospel. Allah *Glorified is He* refers to them saying: 'O, People of the Book.'

No one has ever said to us, 'O, People of the Quran'. Why? The answer is simple: when the Lord says to them, 'O, People of the Book', we know that any written material forms a 'book', but their disbelief contradicts the revelation

written in their books as sent down to them by Allah *Glorified is He*. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who sent it down to them, and He knows that it calls to belief, not to disbelief. Since He is the True Lord Who sent down the revelation, He also stands as Witness over them. It is absurdity on the part of the people of the Book to throw themselves into the snare of disbelief. This way, they tell lies against Allah. Allah *the Most High* records that they went against the revelation written in their Books. However, if the people of the Book can deceive the people of the world, they will never be able to do so with the Creator of the heavens and earth.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Why do you disbelieve in the verses (revelation) of Allah' (*Al-Imran*: 98), should we understand that their disbelief in Allah's verses mean their concealment of Allah's revelation from the onset? Or does it mean that they first believed in them but fell to disbelief afterwards? The glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were written in the Torah and in the Gospel. They even believed them before his coming. Yet, when Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* actually came, they disbelieved. In this respect, the Wise Quran declares:

'And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them, although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved. 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).

Why did they disbelieve in Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him*? It is because he removed temporal power from them that was causing them to sell both paradise and Allah's *Glorified is He* pleasure in order to achieve their own interests without the least regard of the rulings of Allah *Glorified is He*. I said before that Quraysh had refused to say '*La ilaha illa Allah*', i.e. there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah. This refusal proved that they understood the meaning of '*La ilaha illa Allah*.' If it were just a simple phrase, they would have said it. However, they knew and understood that there is no one, who is worthy of worship, of obedience and of having the right to legislation and commandments, except Allah *Glorified is He*. In His Address to the people of the Book, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لِمَ تَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ ٱللَّهِ مَن ءَامَنَ تَبْغُونَهَا
 عِوَجًا وَأَنتُمْ شُهَدَآءُ ۚ وَمَا ٱللَّهُ بِغَفْلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

Say, ‘People of the Book, why do you turn the believers away from God’s path and try to make it crooked, when you yourselves [should be] witnesses to the [truth]? God is not heedless of anything you do’ [99] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 99)

Suppose that you betrayed yourselves and bore the sins of your own misguidance, why would you also bear the consequences of sending other people astray? Is it not enough that you bear your own sins without also bearing the sins of misguiding others? Allah *the Most High* says: ‘They shall bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear’ (*an-Nahl*: 25). This judgment came eventhough Allah *the Most High* says: ‘No burdened soul carries the burden (sins) of another’ (*Fatir*: 18).

The one who does not bear any burden other than his own is the misguided person who does not send others astray; this person bears only his own sins. As for the one who bears his own burden along with the burdens of others, such is the misguided person who sends others astray. In this verse, the Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* asks them from the mouth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Why do you hinder him/her who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (to make) it crooked’ (*Al-'Imran*: 99). It is as though the Lord is saying to them: ‘What do you want from the religion that connects the servants to their Lord? Do you not want it to be an upright religion? You seek to make it crooked.’ The crookedness only occurs for some evil intent. Simply, the crooked way is not straight and is thus elongating distances. Why should a person who travels a straight path want to divert from it and make his journey longer? If one wants to reach a destination directly, he will choose the straight path. As for the one who diverts from the straight path, he does not want to reach the intended destination. Rather, he makes his journey longer and might never ever reach the destination.

The True Lord says: 'Why do you hinder him who believes from the way of Allah? You seek (to make) it crooked....' (*Al- 'Imran: 99*) The Arabic word '*iwajan*', or 'crooked', has two pronunciations: "*Awajan* and '*iwajan*.' Each of them has a different meaning. The former describes a slanted upright thing such as a wall or a spear, whereas the latter describes the abnormality of values and morals. For this reason, the True Lord spoke to them about their crookedness in values and morals: 'You seek (to make) it crooked, while you are witness, and Allah is not heedless of what you do.' (*Al- 'Imran: 99*) Allah *Glorified is He* as a result, tells them that they want the religion to be crooked despite the fact that they shall stand as witnesses over the Truth brought by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He is only delivering the message of truth which they used to foretell, for which they previously besought Allah for victory over the pagans of Mecca. It is like He is saying, 'A prophet will soon come whom we will follow and with whom we will destroy you just like 'Ad and Iram were destroyed.' O people of the Book, you are witnesses to the truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

They committed several acts of disobedience: they went astray and they strove to lead others astray. If only this were a result of ignorance! Indeed, it was committed intentionally with full knowledge. Although they were witnesses to the truth, they insisted on going astray and leading others astray. The meaning of 'witness' is that they knew exactly what they were saying since witness can stand for seeing things. Seeing something is not like hearing about it. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* reminds them: 'Allah is not heedless of what you do' (*Al- 'Imran: 99*).

The Message that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered is very clear as also mentioned in their own manifest scriptures. What has caused your deviation, from the way of the truth, O, people of the Book, although you count as witnesses to that truth? You must have doubted Allah's awareness of this. As such, Allah *Glorified is He* says to them: 'Allah is not heedless of what you do' (*Al- 'Imran: 99*). After this, Allah *the Most High* 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] disbelievers.' (*Al- 'Imran: 100*). In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* warns the believers that those who disbelieve in

Allah's revelation will not be at ease so long as you, O, Believers, are firm and upright. The disbelievers who deny the Divine revelations will not be at ease unless they stir doubts in the hearts of the believers about their religion. All they want is to make it crooked and turn the believers into disbelievers after they have accepted Islam.

The believers must be aware of this issue because those who want to advocate crookedness have gone astray and lead others astray, as well, even though they are witnesses to the truth and know that Allah is not unaware of what they do. What should then the stand of the believers be? Allah makes it evident in His saying: 'O, you who have believed...' (*Al-'Imran*: 100).

The people of the Book try to prevent the believers from the path of Allah. The meaning of '*al-sadd*' or prevention does not refer to someone who prevents believers from faith; rather, it refers to an attempt on the part of the people of the Book to convince the believers to denounce their faith and apostatise from it. The believers, in this sense, refer to the group that adheres to Allah's Commandments. Therefore, Allah warns them by saying: 'If you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] disbelievers' (*Al-'Imran*: 100). In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* specifies only a group from the people of the Book which is a clear sign of the truthfulness, objectivity, fairness, and unbiasedness of this account. It is as if Allah *the Most High* is telling us that there is a group from the people of the Book who will behave in a straight manner and will eagerly come to Muslims, individually or in groups, to accept Islam. As such, Allah was not referring to all the people of the Book. He only says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا
الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُم بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

**You who believe, some of those who were given the
Scripture would turn you into disbelievers if you were
to yield to them [100] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 100)**

Allah *Glorified is He* relates the accounting of events in full preservation of the truth. After that, He says.

وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ
وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِم بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

**How can you disbelieve when God's revelations are being
recited to you and His Messenger is living among you?
Whoever holds fast to God will be guided to the straight
path [101] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 101)**

It is a rhetorical question states a denial of believers possibly returning to disbelief after enjoying the delights of the Divine Knowledge. The messages of Allah are recited to them and Prophet Mohamed, the true Messenger of Allah, is actually with them.

Allah *the Most High* says to the believers: 'If you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture...' (*Al-'Imran*: 100). This verse has a story to tell. The Jews of Medina had dominated the economy with absolute authority; they mastered the financial transactions. Since they were acting as moneylenders, those who were in need of loans would go to them. The Jews also excelled in knowledge because they had the scripture, whereas most of the people of Mecca and Medina were illiterate and had no access to the divine scriptures. In addition, there was another way the Jews showed excellence: their experience in war, for they had fortresses and strongholds. Hence, the Jews had three points of excellence: wealth which lent them dominance and leadership over the economy, knowledge of scripture which helped them to achieve scholarly superiority and finally their experience in the arts of war. Moreover, they would attempt to create and deepen conflicts among groups of people. For example, they attempted to stir up enmity between the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. They frequently bestirred this enmity to keep war raging at all times so they could guarantee the marketability of arms trade which they manufactured and sold to all conflicting parties. When Islam started to flourish, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* united the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, then the Jews lost their economic superiority.

Islam brought forth a religion and a scripture that superseded all past scriptures; thus, the Jews lost their scholarly status. Likewise, the Jews lost their military advantage as they witnessed a small number of believers

making the disbelievers suffer an emphatic defeat at Badr. Due to these reasons, all the powers of the Jews in Medina faded away. Consequently, they wanted to return to their pre-Islamic situation. They decided to rekindle and stir up enmity between Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. A Jew, Sha's ibn Qays, once passed by the men of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj as they were experiencing faithful harmony and peace. He was so irritated by their kind friendship and sincere smiles that he said, 'By Allah, we must cause war to break out again and return them to their former state of hatred and enmity, for we will have no stability as long as they are united.'

Then, he sent a young Jew to sit with men of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. The Jew led the conversation to the memories of the Day of Bu'ath, a pre-Islamic day in which Al-Aws defeated Al-Khazraj. This Jew kept quoting chivalrous poems said in the context of military victories achieved on that day to rouse the passions of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj. Consequently, the conflict grew with the boastings of achievements, and tempers flared. As such, a fight was about to break out. They shouted, 'Take arms! Take arms!' Thus, the plan worked and news of the event reached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He went out with his Companions until they reached the gathering of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj where they found the situations at the height of agitation, conflict, and rage. Weapons were at hand. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Do you recall the shouts of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, while I am amongst you?' In other words, you should be ashamed of yourselves because the Messenger of Allah is amongst you. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then added, 'Allah has honoured you with Islam, by means of which He has removed the affairs of the days of ignorance from you and united your hearts!' What was the effect of the Prophet's words on the souls of the people? His words made them put their weapons, weep, and then embrace each other. They left in the company of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. No day began uglier yet ended finer than that day.

Reflecting on the Jewish act of inciting the civil strife between Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, we find that they understood the nature of the old conflicts between them and wanted to reignite old hatred and enmity. Likewise, we

find that their stirring up the emotions of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj had opened a door for chaos, causing fighting to almost break out. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke to them, they calmed down, dropped their weapons, and regretted their actions.

If we wanted to deeply envisage why this happened, we would find that the Jewish knowledge of the conflict between the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj inspired them to reignite the old vendetta. Then, the tribal fanaticism of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj led them to take up arms.

In this way, we find that the perception of something has three stages: firstly, perception; secondly, emotional reaction to it; and thirdly, the corresponding behaviour. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke, Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj understood the matter in the correct manner; so they dropped their weapons, their anger abated, and they abandoned these incorrect perceptions.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* reminded them of three things: 'Do you recall the shouts of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, while I am still among you? Allah has honoured you with Islam, by means of which He has removed the affairs of the days of ignorance from you and united your hearts!' In response, they first put down their weapons before weeping. Such was the result of being emotionally moved which inevitably led them to embrace one another. In other words, they corrected their perceptions and behaved in the opposite manner. When this happened, the Jews were enraged, disappointed and gloomy. The one who narrated this account said, 'There never was in Islam a day that began uglier yet ended finer than that day.'

The day began gloomily and ended with reassurance. Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* words acted as a shield against any evil suggestions within the souls of the believers: 'Do you recall the shouts of the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, while I am still among you? Allah has honoured you with Islam by means of which He has removed the affairs of the days of ignorance from you and united your hearts!'

This noble statement was remembered, thus, thwarting every evil suggestion or enemy's scheme. The True Lord *Glorified is He* immunised the believers of

Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj from the wicked plots and devilish temptations. Hence, we see that Allah even uses a disbeliever to raise the status of faith. If this event had not happened, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have made his poignant speech. As such, Muslims would not have had this immunity from such tensions amongst them. If one of the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said these words, his words may have had the same temporal effect. However, having these words said by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* created an immunisation from other similar situations that had yet come whether the prophet was there or not.

For this reason you, O, believer, if you look at the disbelievers, you will find that their intellects are miserable. They spread Islam, unintentionally, by their foolish attitudes. For example, they said to the people of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, 'A prophet will soon come whom we will follow and with whom we will destroy you just like the people of 'Ad and Iram were destroyed.' Then, what happened? Once the people of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj heard about the new religion, they said to each other, 'Listen, people, it is the religion that the Jews foretold. Before they rush to it, let us be ahead of them.'

The Jewish arrogance and boastfulness against Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj motivated them to embrace Islam. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* makes the disbelief of disbelievers a means to strengthen the belief of believers.

When the Lord *the Most High* says: 'And how could you disbelieve, while Allah's messages are being conveyed to you and His Messenger has come to you? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path' (*Al-'Imran*: 101), we understand that this is a divinely formed rhetorical question. When you hear, 'How could you disbelieve' it is an astonishing matter, for it is so unlikely that the believers could disbelieve, whilst the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* is being revealed and recited to them and the Messenger of Allah is amongst them.

After this comes the call to hold firmly to Allah *Glorified is He*. The Arabic word '*i'tisam*' (holding firmly) signifies the firm adherence to something that is of superior position. For example, 'I adhered firmly to the rope of faith.' A human being has integral weight. If this weight is not lifted by something

else, the person will fall. This does not happen unless the person is hanging in the air, while holding on to a rope with no one to push him down, but he does fall due to his own weight. Whoever adheres firmly to Allah and to the rope of faith protects himself from falling.

In essence, we feel that holding firmly to Allah *Glorified is He* is to follow the verses recited to us and the example of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. To illustrate further, the key to the firm adherence to Allah *Glorified is He* is by following the Book of Allah and the example of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Likewise, the presence of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* amongst them was needed at the time due to the fact that they were immersed in the mire of ignorance. The presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* showed them that Allah *Glorified is He* had saved them by pulling them out of the darkness into the light. The True Lord did not take His Messenger's soul until after He had perfected the religion for us, completed His favour upon us and chosen Islam as our religion. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I have left with you two things with which will keep you from going astray: the Book of Allah and my *Sunnah*.'

In this way, we see that the presence of Allah's revelation and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* protect and guide us to the Straight Path. Guidance, as well known, is a means leading to the desired destination. Suppose that your goal was going to a specific place; what leads you to this place is guidance. Whatever directs a person to a destination is called 'guidance'.

Allah *the Most High* created all the creatures making some of them subservient and others free-willed. All the creatures in the universe are subservient except for mankind. However, human beings are subservient in some matters. As we have stated before, every single being other than mankind fulfils its predestined purpose; the sun never refuses to rise, the wind never refuses to blow and the sky never refuses to rain. For example, the earth never says to man, 'You disobey Allah, so I will not produce crops for you.' Likewise, no one attempts to ride a tamed steed and endures its refusal by it saying, 'You are sinful, so I am going to buck and not allow you to mount my back.'

Therefore, in this respect, we see that everything except mankind is compelled to fulfil its intended purpose which is the serving of mankind. Only human beings are endowed with free will. As such, we must always be aware that Allah's plans decreed that all creatures of every species shall be subservient by nature and act in harmony with one another except for mankind who has free will and, thus, suffers division. In this regard, Allah *the Most High* says: 'See you not that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and *Ad-Dawab* (moving living creatures, beasts, etc.), and many of mankind? But there are many (human beings) on whom the punishment is justified. And whomsoever Allah disgraces, none can honour him. Verily! Allah does what He wills.' (*al-Hajj*: 18)

The subservient inanimate objects that humbly prostrate are 'the sun, the moon and the stars; and the subservient plants that prostrate are the trees; and so do the beasts as included in the Divine decree of uniformity and agreement. All these subservient beings are subservient to Allah's command by their very nature. As for the human being, the Lord says about them: "But there are many (human beings) on whom the punishment is justified..." (*al-Hajj*: 18).

Therefore, what is the source of division amongst humans? Simply, it is because Allah *Glorified is He* endowed mankind with free will. Was it not possible for Allah *Glorified is He* to create mankind subservient like the rest of His creation? Is it not a truism that subjecting these creatures substantiates the power of the Dominant Lord, as nothing from His creation can escape His Power? This is absolutely true. However, in the same respect, the Lord wanted to confirm His Power and Might by subjecting His creatures. He also wanted to acknowledge His love of the creation by granting them free will. Whoever is endowed with free will to believe or to disobey then he chooses to believe, he is, in essence, asserting his love of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Thus, in light of this, Allah *Glorified is He* classified the creation into two groups: a subservient group that naturally submits in recognition of His Power and a free group that is endowed with freedom of choice in confirmation of the Divine Love of the creation. Allah willed mankind to have freedom of choice to do an act or not to do it. Why then, do human beings not always act

in harmony with the faith? It is due to the fact that desires have an outer glitter that attracts mankind just as fire attracts moths. When a person lights a fire in the open, its light attracts moths. Then the moths burn in the flame of the light. The light attracted and allured them, while they were not aware that it will burn them.

An Arabic proverb says: 'Many a soul has longed for its own ruin!' The same holds true for desires that appear alluring and attractive to human beings, leading them to nothing but destruction. But how can mankind protect themselves from this? Protection occurs only in following the Divine Guidance: 'Do' and 'Do not do.' Anyone who seeks salvation from the schemes of Satan and their lower self should submit to Divine Guidance in Commands and Prohibitions.' I have previously said that it is inconceivable that someone would manufacture anything and forget to develop a manual of its rules for effective maintenance. Mankind, in their limited crafts, do not forget this, so what about the Creator in His absolute Omnipotence? The Creator *the Glorious and Exalted* created human beings and revealed the effective rules for the maintenance of humankind as declared in His Commands and Prohibitions: Do that! Do not do that! Whoever wants to hold fast to the firmest rope and escape satanic temptations, schemes of enemies or capricious desires must stick firmly to Allah's guidance. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator Who created mankind and placed His guidance as a Divine manual for the maintenance of His creation.

Allah *the Most High* says: 'And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path' (*Al- 'Imran*: 101). The fundamental meaning of '*i'tisam*' is when a person is hanging in the air and his own weight pulls him down. However, when he holds firmly to Allah's *Glorified is He* guidance, he saves himself from decline and fall. The main work of Satan is to make sins alluring and make humans drawn to them. Therefore, Satan will come on the Day of Resurrection, arguing against us. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And Satan will say when the matter has been decided: Verily, Allah promised you a promise of truth. And I too promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I called you, so you responded to me. So blame me not, but blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I deny your former act in associating me (Satan) as a partner with Allah (by obeying me

in the life of the world). Verily, there is a painful torment for the *zhalimun* (polytheists, wrong-doers, etc.)” (Ibrahim: 22)

Confirming what we already know, authority is of two kinds: firstly, to control by force, but Satan cannot control the mankind in this manner and secondly, to convince a human being to commit a sin and Satan may convince a person to commit a sin. In this regard, what is the difference between forced control and convincing? In forced control, Satan forces a human being to do something against the will of man, but this is beyond the capability of Satan. In the case of convincing, however, Satan makes the sin seem alluring to a person, and so he does it out of his own free will. Satan will announce on the Day of Resurrection, ‘I had no power over you, O, mankind, to make you disobey Allah. I only made the sin alluring to you, O, mankind, and you responded to me.’ Satan will say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘I cannot help you, nor can you help me’ (Ibrahim: 22). What does the word *musrikhiyya* (help me) mean in the verse in question? It is derived from the verb (*Asrakh*) which means ‘to hear a cry for help and respond to it.’ Satan is saying that he cannot help mankind, and mankind cannot help him.

As such, the heavy inclination of human souls to this world leads them to plummet into hell without being pushed or thrown therein by force. There is no rescue for humankind from this plummeting or falling except by holding fast to the rope of Allah *Glorified is He*. Divine Guidance acts as a rope extended to us all, and whoever holds on to it is saved from this falling.

Since we hold fast to Allah’s rope which is the Quran revealed from our Creator and the pure Prophetic *Sunnah*, Allah is well aware of the natural inclinations of human beings, and He will surely guide us to the Straight Path. After giving that command, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the same verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ تَقَاتِهِ ۖ وَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

You who believe, be mindful of God, as is His due, and make sure you devote yourselves to Him, to your dying moment [102] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 102)

Allah *Glorified is He* has granted believers the basic rules for protection: first, they should not listen to the words of the enemies of the religion. When

we hear the word '*ittaqu Allaha*' or fear Allah, we must understand that there are things that will cause you exhaustion and suffering, therefore, you must take a preventive action from them. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'And fear the Fire, which is prepared for the disbelievers.' (*Al-Imran*: 131) Allah instructs human beings to make a shield and a barrier between themselves and Hell in order to save themselves from it. For example, Allah *the Most High* says, 'Fear Allah. Verily, Allah is Swift in reckoning' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4); this means to place a barrier between yourself and Allah to avoid His Wrath. Someone might ask, 'How can this be when I am a believer, and I want to live in Allah's company?' The answer is that you shall protect yourself from the Divine Attributes of Might and remain in the shade of the Divine Attributes of Beauty. The true believer is the one who protects himself from the Attributes of Might such as the Overwhelming Power, Dominance, and so on. Likewise, Hell is one of the agents of Allah's Attributes of Might.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Fear the Fire' (*Al-Imran*: 131) or 'Fear Allah' (*Al-Imran*: 102), the meaning is the same. When a person hears the words of *the Most High* Lord: '*ittaqu Allaha haqqa tuqatihi*' (i.e. fear Allah as He should be feared' (*Al-Imran*: 102), what does '*ittaqu Allaha haqqa tuqatihi*' mean? In Arabic, the word '*haqqa*' refers to the 'firmly confirmed and invariable fact which never ends or quivers'. Surely, this is the truth. But how can one fear Allah *Glorified is He* as should be feared? One can fear Allah *Glorified is He* as should be feared when his faith is firm and unwavering. The should-be feared is manifested by following His guidance, obeying all of His Commands, glorifying Him with frequent remembrance and thanking Him without any trace of ingratitude. Obedience is achieved by following the guidance of 'do's' and 'don'ts'. One may frequently engage in the remembrance of Allah and may obey and follow His guidance, but he may become distracted by the graces of Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah's guidance calls you to remember all the Divine Blessing you have, yet beware of forgetting the One Who bestows them upon you.

The worshiper should praise Allah *Glorified is He* in a way that is due to Him, and should not be ungrateful for the blessings bestowed upon him. As long as you accept, O, servant, each and every blessing and return to Allah by saying 'this is what Allah has given; there is no power except by Allah', which is an expression of gratitude for blessings, you are fulfilling the rights

of the blessing. Fulfilling the right of a blessing is to praise the Lord for it and avoid ingratitude.

It is said that 'as He should be feared' means that no critic can waver your firm belief in Allah *Glorified is He* and that you shall speak the truth, even if it is against yourself. Such is the utmost, best form of fearing God. It is to fear Allah as He should be feared with sincerity and piety. The scholars say that when this verse was sent down and the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad heard it, they considered themselves too weak to live up to it. Some of them then said, 'Who could ever be up to this level of piety?' In response, Allah sent down: 'So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can.' (*at-Taghabun*: 16)

Does this mean that Allah first commanded the believers to something beyond their ability, and then provided them relief by saying: 'So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can'? No, Allah *Glorified is He* does not charge a soul beyond its capability. People might misunderstand His words, 'So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can,' by claiming that they are unable to fulfill this obligation. Furthermore, they might think that this obligation is no longer incumbent upon them. The truth of the matter is that this is a form of misunderstanding. The Divine Direction 'So keep your duty to Allah and fear Him as much as you can' means that you should be conscious of Allah within your given abilities, so what you can do, you should do. No one is allowed to understand the opposite meaning and say, 'I am unable.' To put it more simply, Allah *Glorified is He* knows the limits of your capability.

When you are unable, He is the One Who can relieve you. You cannot relieve yourself, O, servant. Only the True Creator is the One Who knows whether a given matter is beyond your capability or not, and, therefore, could relieve you. Consequently, a person must not manipulate Allah words: 'Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity' (*al-Baqara*: 286) by taking them out of context. Indeed, a human being cannot assess the ability to make a parallel evaluation of the religious duties accordingly. Rather, man must understand that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created the soul, and He is the One Who sent down the religious duties and responsibilities according to the ability of human beings. Since the Creator of man is Allah, He knows better the duties and responsibilities that man can bear. He *the Most High* is the One

Who assigns the responsibilities, and He knows better that the soul has a limited capability. Thus, He does not burden a soul with more than it can bear. If He gives a commandment, know, O, servant that He has commanded that which is within your capability. Likewise, when something happens to a person that is arduous for him or completely prevents him from performing that which he is responsible for, He *the Most High* grants exceptions so as to provide relief, as set out in legal concessions.

For example, those who are sick or in a state of travel have the concession to break their fast in *Ramadan*. Similarly, a traveller may shorten the four-unit prayers during the time of his journey.

Evidently, Allah *the Most High* is the Omniscient and knows the bounds of the capability of the human soul, which He created. In conclusion, do not calculate your capability first, and then measure the religious duties against it. Instead, you should respect the religious duties first and maintain the attitude that as long as Allah has commanded it, it must be within your capability. Allah concluded this noble verse saying: 'Die not except in a state of Islam (as Muslims)' (*Al-Imran*: 102). In this verse, we have a proscription: 'Die not unless you are surely submitting yourselves (as Muslims) to Allah at your dying moment.'

How could that be done? Can anyone ask another person not to die! Death falls into the arena of which man has no choice. It is part of the divine decrees. If someone says to you 'Do not die,' you would definitely find it strange because it is beyond your power or control. However, if someone says to you 'Do not die except as a Muslim [in submission to Allah *the Exalted*],' you begin to realise the intended meaning of the command through contemplation. The person has no control over death, but he does have control over the state he is in when death approaches. It is a divine command not to die except as Muslims [in submission to Allah *Glorified is He*.] There is no doubt that this is within the capability and control of a person. The phrase 'except as Muslims [in submission to Him]' in the verse renders the action within a person's capability because he can make the choice to submit himself to Allah *the Exalted*.

It is true that one does not know when he shall die. Therefore, he has to be wise and quickly submit to Allah *the Exalted* so that whenever death befalls him, he would die as a Muslim [in submission to Allah *the Exalted*].

Thus, the divine command in the verse, 'do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]' is a prohibition from doing the first action, 'not to die', which is not within the scope of human power or choice. Furthermore, it is a prohibition from being in a state contrary to what is enjoined at the moment of dying, and this is within a person's power and choice. The verse says: 'Do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him].' (*Al-'Imran*: 102). How can we reconcile the two commands? No one has any choice or control over the time of his death, and, likewise, no one knows when the calamity of death will befall him. However, a person has control over the state in which he dies. We are enjoined to submit ourselves to Allah *the Exalted* and hold fast to Islam so that whenever death approaches us, we would meet our Lord as 'Muslims' (in submission to Him). Allah *the Exalted* is commanding us to hold fast to Islam, i.e. submit to Allah *Glorified is He* because we do not know when the calamity of death will befall us.

The concealment of the time of death is not vague as some people may think. Rather, it is the pinnacle of clarity because the concealment of the time, the cause, and the surrounding circumstances of death best clarifies the essence of death. Why? Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained that such information is exclusively His. Accordingly, each of us should expect death at any time. As long as a person expects death at any time, this is the perfect clarity as referred to. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Hold fast to Allah's rope all together; do not split into factions. Remember Allah's favour to you: you were enemies and then He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by His grace. You were about to fall into a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it— in this way God makes His revelations clear to you so that you may be rightly guided.' (*Al-'Imran*: 103).

This verse is intended to warn the believers by reminding them of the Aws and Khazraj tribes that gave in to ugly tribal-pride and prejudice of the Pre-Islamic era. After Islam was introduced to Medina, Muslims were enjoined to find pride in Islam alone. If a Muslim gives in to ugly tribal-pride and prejudice and vies in boasting to others about having so-and-so as a member of his tribe, he should be reminded that this may have been acceptable before Islam.

It happened that some members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes vied in boasting with one another. A man from the Aws tribe said to one from

Khazraj tribe, 'Khuzaymah is one of us.' The man from the Khazraj tribe responded, 'Well, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Zayd ibn Thabit are from us.' Then, one from the Aws tribe said, 'Well, Hanzalah ibn Ar-Rahib is one of us, and he was bathed by the angels after his death!' Khuzaymah ibn Thabit *may Allah be pleased with him* was an honourable companion whose testimony was made equivalent to the witness of two people by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This was due to the fact that he *may Allah be pleased with him* possessed illuminating faith and the light of certainty which led him to sound judgments. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once bought a horse from a Bedouin. He *peace and blessings be upon him* went to bring the money to pay for this horse. The Bedouin denied the sale agreement because someone else had offered him a higher price! The Bedouin called Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'If you want this horse, (then buy it), otherwise I shall sell it.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to the Bedouin, 'Have not I already bought it from you?' The Bedouin said, 'I swear by Allah, I have not sold it to you. Bring a witness!' This Bedouin had taken advantage of the fact that there were no witnesses at the time when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bought the horse from him. Khuzaymah ibn Thabit *Allah be pleased with him* was present when the Bedouin requested a witness. Driven by his absolute confidence in the truthfulness and honesty of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for which he was known possessing among his people even before he was commissioned to communicate the Divine Message to mankind, Khuzaymah *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I bear witness that you have bought it.'

Because this Bedouin was lying, he perhaps said to himself that possibly Khuzaymah had seen what happened!' He kept silent and left. After the Bedouin left, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called for Khuzaymah ibn Thabit *Allah be pleased with him* and said, 'O, Khuzaymah, how could you testify when you were not with us? On what (grounds) do you bear witness?' He *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'On grounds of believing you, O, Messenger of Allah, to be trustworthy.' (What he meant in saying this is: how can we believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning all what he conveyed from heaven and not believe him in this?) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* realised the illumination of trust

and sound reasoning of Khuzaymah. He *peace and blessings be upon him* made the witness of Khuzaymah equivalent to the witness of two people.

Usually, two witnesses are required. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* honoured Khuzaymah *Allah be pleased with him* by making his testimony equivalent to that of two people. Let us now examine how Allah *the Exalted* united the Aws and Khazraj tribes after Islam by pondering over the compilation of the Quran. Zayd ibn Thabit *may Allah be pleased with him* who was entrusted with the duty and honour of compiling The Quran, had said: I obliged myself not to accept a verse of the Book of Allah unless two men gave evidence of its being so and attested to it until I found the last verse of the chapter of *al-Tawba* written, and only Khuzaymah Al-Ansari attested to it. I did not find it with anybody other than him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about him, "The testimony of Khuzaymah alone is sufficient." It should be noted that Zayd ibn Thabit *Allah be pleased with him* belonged to the Khazraj tribe, while Khuzaymah *Allah be pleased with him* belonged to the Aws tribe. Allah *Glorified is He* had brought them together as evidenced by the incident of compiling the Quran. This underscores that people found pride in their tribal affiliation, or other worldly gains, before Islam. When they embraced Islam, Muslims of different races and colours found pride in their religion instead. Both the members of the Aws and Khazraj tribes should be proud of both Khuzaymah and Zayd ibn Thabit *may Allah be pleased with them* because they were united by the bond of Islam and the Quran. This is the way to hold fast to the divine bond with Allah *the Exalted*.

He says: 'Hold fast to Allah's rope all together; do not split into factions. Remember Allah's favour to you: you were enemies and then He brought your hearts together...' (*Al-'Imran*: 103). The Aws and Khazraj tribes were at war for one hundred and twenty years despite the fact the two tribes were originally of the same origin; they were the descendants of two brothers born to the same mother and father. When they embraced Islam, their hearts were brought together, and they became brothers by the grace of Allah *the Exalted*.

This indicates that every impulse of wickedness materialised by the actions of the limbs is the product of the heart's rage. A hand does not strike unless the heart is enraged. The condition of the heart is the most important factor.

This is why the verse underlined that Allah *Glorified is He* has ‘brought your hearts together...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103). Then, He says: ‘And you were about to fall into a pit of Hellfire and He saved you from it.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103) They were about to fall into hellfire. The verse means, ‘You have been guided to Islam. Were it not for it, you would have fallen into Hellfire.’

Allah *the Exalted* concludes the verse by saying: ‘... in this way Allah makes His revelations clear to you so that you may be rightly guided.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103). Thus, we realise the blessing of being guided to Islam in this worldly life. A believer does not have to wait for the Hereafter to witness the power of faith saving humankind from hellfire; it can be witnessed in this worldly life as well. Before Islam, Arabs were steep in conflict, dispersed due to ugly tribal-pride and prejudice, and dealing with discord and dissension prevailing amongst them. When Islam was first introduced in the Arabian Peninsula, they were made brothers. Indeed, this is a great blessing conferred upon them in this worldly life, even despite the fact that this worldly life is not the abode of recompense. What about the Hereafter, which is the abode of recompense and eternal existence? Allah *the Exalted* says:

وَأَعِصْمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ
أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا وَكُنْتُمْ عَلَى شَفَا حُفْرَةٍ مِّنَ
النَّارِ فَأَنْقَذَكُم مِّنْهَا كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**Hold fast to God's rope all together; do not split into factions.
Remember God's favour to you: you were enemies and then
He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by
His grace; you were about to fall into a pit of Fire and He
saved you from it – in this way God makes His revelations
clear to you so that you may be rightly guided [103]
(The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 103)**

When the divine command requires that you should do something you are already doing, you should know that it is urging you to continue to do it and hold on to it. When Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘O, you who believe,’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 102) it means, ‘Renew and foster your faith so that you will continue to believe and hold on to it.’ Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ
وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones [104] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 104)

The Arabic word for 'community' is '*ummah*'. It may be used to refer to a group belonging to any given race, such as the community of Arabs, Persians, or Romans. The Arabic word *ummah* may also denote a way of life, i.e. a religion. A third meaning of the word is a period of time as it is used in the following verse. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And of the two (prisoners) he who had been freed and remembered after a long time said, "I will inform you of its interpretation, so let me go."' (*Yusuf*: 45).

The man, for whom Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* interpreted his dream in prison was reminded of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* after an *ummah*, i.e. after a long period of time. Sometimes the word *ummah* is used to refer to a man or leader who embodies all the good, righteous qualities. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Surely, Ibrahim was an exemplar (who embodies all the good, righteous qualities), obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists.' (*an-Nahl*: 120)

This is because it is not necessary that one person should be endowed with all the righteous qualities and attributes of goodness. Rather, one person may be endowed with one righteous quality, while the other is endowed with another one, and so on. Thus, the broader community is collectively endowed with all the good, righteous qualities. However, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was endowed with all the good, righteous qualities.

When you say to a person, 'Be brave!' this means that he should train himself to be brave by training himself to embody this quality until it becomes second nature. When you tell someone, 'Be generous,' it means you are telling him to train himself to possess such a righteous quality.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Be a community that calls for what is good...' (*Al-'Imran*: 104). This divine command in this verse is for the believers to

train themselves to enjoin good and forbid evil. It may mean that the whole Muslim community is commanded to do as such, not just a group of them. Or, as some scholars say, a group from among the believers should undertake the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

However, there is a much more profound understanding of this verse suggesting that the entire community of believers should be one that calls for goodness and advises against evil-doing. In other words, this verse commands the whole community of Muslims to shoulder this duty and not let it be confined to just a group from amongst them. Whoever knows a religious ruling should call his fellow Muslims to abide by it.

Based on this understanding, some Islamic scholars hold that committing sins should not prevent a Muslim from submitting to the command in this verse. Even if you commit a sin, this should not prevent you from cautioning others against it. So a believer is required to do two things: first, he should avoid committing evil deeds and second, he should call others to avoid it, as well. Therefore, when someone advises you against a sin even though he commits it, you should not say to him, 'Just practise what you preach!' An Arab poet once said: 'Avail yourself of my knowledge and do not focus on my action; reap the fruits and leave the wood for the fire!'

However, it befits one who enjoins what is right and forbids what is wrong to be the first to act upon his advice; in doing as such, he would not be among those addressed by the following admonition of Allah *the Exalted*: 'O, you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do.' (*as-Saff*: 2-3)

Based on this understanding, let us reflect the divine command again: 'Be a community that calls for what is good...' (*Al-Imran*: 104). It is a command to the believers to be a community themselves in which each individual does his share of the duty of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'I swear by Time! Surely, most of man is in loss, except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.' (*al-Asr*: 1-3).

This noble chapter of the Quran underscores the essence of Islamic creed: faith reflected by good deeds. Let us further examine the command of Allah

Glorified is He: 'enjoin on each other' which implies that every believer has a tendency to do wrong; no one is safe from temptation. A believer may be too weak to resist one given sin, but quite strong in the face of another. Thus, he should offer advice regarding the former and, meanwhile, receive advice regarding the latter. This is what Allah *Glorified is He* means by 'enjoin on each other'. Islam does not assign the duty of advising what is right and cautioning against what is wrong to one group and make the rest of the Muslim community just recipients. Rather, the duty should be collectively and interchangeably shouldered amongst all believers based on the situation of each. Every believer should offer advice when he sees his fellow believer weak in the face of a certain sin, and he himself should accept advice when he is offered it during his times of weakness. Therefore, enjoining good and forbidding evil is a role to be performed by all Muslims. At times you are the giver of advice, while at others you are the recipient. The same applies for enjoining one another to adhere to patience in the face of adversity.

When a calamity befalls a Muslim, his fellow Muslims should advise and encourage him to endure it patiently. The very advice giver in that situation may himself need it if a calamity were to befall him later. Thus, the whole Muslim community is required to shoulder this duty: '... and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 3)

This is the best understanding of the noble verse: 'Be a community that calls for what is good, enjoins what is right, and forbids what is wrong. Those who do this are the successful ones.' (*Al-'Imran*: 104) The verse, thus, presents the divine command and also elaborates on its meaning: The duty to 'call for what is good' means to 'enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong'.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: '... Those who do this are the successful ones.' (*Al-'Imran*: 104) The Arabic word used in the original text, *muflihun* (successful) denotes reaping fruits of a profitable deal. It is derived from the root *f-l-h* meaning 'to cultivate the land'. The one who ploughs the land then sows the seeds will reap the fruits in the end. The word *muflihun* is used figuratively to denote the wider meaning of 'success'. When Allah *Glorified is He* uses this word, He also wants to convey another deeper meaning. It is the fact that the difficulty one incurs when he does a good deed,

will bring relief, and ease afterward. Whatever you give in the cause of Allah comes back to you many folds over. Consider a person who tills his land and sows in it a measure of wheat seeds. Suppose he had a foolish wife who would scold him: 'We have only four measures of wheat! How come you threw one of them in the land like that?' Such a woman does not know that this single measure of wheat seeds will produce a countless number of bushels of wheat in time. In the same manner, Islam does not command you anything except that which will certainly bring forth abundant fruits and rewards.

A farmer who works hard tilling the soil and irrigating the plants, whose forehead is covered with sweat and whose feet sink in mud and water, rejoices on the day of the harvest at the produce he gains. Another farmer who spares himself the trouble of work will reap nothing on the day of harvest except regret and distress. Muslim brothers and sisters do not therefore look on religious obligations as shackles or burdens meant only to deprive you of enjoyment. Rather, they are meant to protect you from regret and maximize your reward in both this life and the Hereafter. A Muslim should not assume that the ordinances of Allah are meant to impede his freedom. Rather, they are meant to protect people and prevent transgressions.

We have previously underlined that when the Islamic *Shari'a* (legal code) prohibits theft, for example, this is meant to protect the wealth of millions of people and not to restrict those who desperately need money! Thus, security prevails when people abide by the commandments of faith.

If we consider prohibitions in Islam in the same light, we will realise the true value of religious obligations. When Islam enjoins you to lower your gaze and refrain from looking at the women of your neighbour, for example, it simultaneously protects your own women from the eyes of other men. This commandment restricts the freedom of others so as to protect your women just as it restricts your freedom so as to protect the women of others.

Therefore, we need to remember that every Islamic obligation is meant to bring rectitude and success. The earth takes in a seed and gives you several shoots in return, each containing many seeds. Do not look at what religious duties take from your freedom, for it takes, for your sake, from the freedom of others, as well. Do not complain that religious obligations restrict your personal

freedom; they earn you valuable fruits far greater in value than what you have to give. The True Lord then says:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمْ
الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Do not be like those who, after they have been given clear revelation, split into factions and fall into disputes: a terrible punishment awaits such people [105] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 105)

This wise statement includes a prohibition of following whims and desires in regard to religion which, in turn, prevents conflict and disunity. Despite clarity of the signs and revelations of Allah *the Exalted* some insist on defying them. Those who follow their own whims after they were given clear revelations, therefore, deserve to be cast into hellfire. The severe torment awaiting them is in proportion to their flagrant denial of the clear truth. In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَ تَبْيَضُّ وُجُوهٌ وَتَسْوَدُّ وُجُوهٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْوَدَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ
أَكْفَرْتُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُونَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

On the Day when some faces brighten and others darken, it will be said to those with darkened faces, 'How could you reject your faith after believing? Taste the torment for doing so' [106] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 106)

In this worldly life, darkness and fairness of faces are associated with the various environments where people live. Allah *Glorified is He* has increased the colour pigments in the skin of darker-skinned, or black, people so their bodies can endure the conditions of their environment. As for the lighter or white-skinned, their bodies do not have the same level of colour pigments because their environment does not require them needing as such.

So darkness of skin in this world is not a sign of degradation in any way; instead, it is for the good of dark-skinned people and necessary for their

survival. In the Hereafter, as the aforementioned verse clarifies, blackness and whiteness will have a totally different significance. Just as the earth and the heavens will be completely different, so will be the matter of blackness and whiteness; the environment will stop being the cause. You will be amazed on the Day of Resurrection to see that a person who was black in the worldly life is white in the Hereafter, and vice versa.

Needless to say, darker, or black skin in this worldly life is not a sign of debasement or dislike by Allah *Glorified is He*. To this we say an emphatic no. Allah *the Exalted* has made everyone in the form that best suits them; He has granted people who live in certain kinds of environments concentrated colour pigments so they can endure the conditions they live in. On a human level, vaccinations, for example, are given to any person travelling to an infected place so as to protect them from diseases. Likewise, and surely Allah is above all comparison, He has created every creature in the best physical form and provided him with the immunities that help protect him. Blackness of skin is not a sign of divine wrath or dislike, but a means of protection in tough environments. This does not apply on the Day of Resurrection. The earth will be a totally new one, and the faces of the believers will whiten and shine, whereas the faces of the disbelievers will turn gloomy and dark. Also, whiteness and blackness referred to in this verse may be figurative and not meant to actually allude to these colours. The face of a white person may be covered in gloom and repulsion, whereas a black person's face may be bright with the light of faith and trust in Allah; you would feel as if it were radiant due to goodness and piety that you cannot help to look at him. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: '(Some) faces on that day shall be bright, looking to their Lord.' (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23)

What lies within the soul shows on the face of a person. A black person might be bright-faced with cheerfulness and attractive warmth, while another person might have a white face, yet his dark soul spreads over it. In this way, we understand that darkness or blackness of a person's skin in this life is purely meant to help him be in harmony with his environment. Take the example of the eyes. Is the white of the eye better than its dark pupil, or vice versa? No, but both are equally vital with each having an essential role.

Let us reflect upon another example. Consider a builder who is bending a straight iron girder. Can we say that he has 'disfigured' the iron girder?! No, he has simply moulded it so it can fit or be used for a specific purpose. Similarly, blackness and whiteness of skin are created for people to enable them to live in different environments. In the Hereafter, the laws and norms of this worldly life will not exist; the earth will not be the same, and nor will the sky remain as it had been. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'On the day when the earth shall be changed into a different earth and the heavens (as well), and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Supreme.' (*Ibrahim*: 48)

When a believer sees the eternal bliss Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for him, with what elation he will receive the Mercy and Bounty of Allah? As for the one who sees his place in hell, his face must be pale due to his state of fear and anguish, no doubt. After declaring that their faces will be dark on that Day, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the disbelievers: '..."How could you reject your faith after believing?..." (*Al-'Imran*: 106). This may be interpreted as a question by which Allah *Glorified is He* reproaches them, or it may be a question posed by those who knew these disbelievers in this life. Perhaps they will be taken by surprise for seeing them on the Day of Resurrection with black faces, whereas they used to be white in the worldly life. Thus, they will wonder: '..."How could you reject your faith after believing..." (*Al-'Imran*: 106)? They inferred by their dark faces that they had denied faith after having adhered to it; it is as if this darkness were the sign of forsaking faith. This will be their mark in the Hereafter, and as such people will ask, 'What is it that has changed you into this colour?' It is disbelief after having embraced faith. What does it mean that they have rejected faith after having accepted it? They had, at first, accepted faith, but then disbelief overcame them, and, as a result, they died as disbelievers. This statement refers to those who turned apostates after having been Muslims, such as Ibn Al-Aslat and others.

However, there can be another interpretation of the verse: '..."How could you reject your faith after believing?..." (*Al-'Imran*: 106) So they had been believers and turned disbelievers afterward. How did this happen? Has Allah *Glorified is He* not brought from Adam's loins his offspring and taken a pledge from them? Has He not said to them: '..."Am I not your Lord?" and they replied, "Yes, we bear witness."...' (*al-A'raf*: 172)? Thus, all the children of

Adam, when they were still seeds in the loins of their father, testified that Allah is their Lord. Whoever denies this truth has, therefore, disbelieved after having accepted faith. This verse may also mean that you (disbeliever) have disbelieved after having believed in Muhammad even after he had come to you with the signs and news that you had already known and read about in the Torah and the Gospel. They already expected his advent and knew he was the final Messenger of Allah *peace be upon him*. Therefore, they deserved to be addressed by these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: '... then when there came to them that which they had recognised, they disbelieved in it. So let the Curse of Allah be on the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

Therefore, the question posed in the verse may refer to apostates who had proclaimed faith then forsook it, or it may be an allusion to the pledge taken from mankind when they were still seeds in the loins of Adam *peace be upon him*. It may also refer to denying the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after having found news and signs of his advent in the Torah and the Gospel. This verse may be addressed, as well, to those who have innovated in faith for that which has not been revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* and, thus, causing them to split into different denominations, all falsely alleging to be Muslims, such as the Bahá'ítes, the Qadianis and others. The aforementioned verse can be understood in all these ways. When we examine the Quranic text closely, we find it open to various interpretations.

In the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the torment of the disbelievers: '... "How could you reject your faith after believing? Taste the torment for doing so." (*Al-'Imran*: 106) The statement closing the verse is addressed solely to disbelievers; their disbelief will cause them to be severely punished, which in turn means that faith will lead believers to be granted ample reward. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ابْيَضَّتْ وُجُوهُهُمْ فَفِي رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

**but those with brightened faces will be in God's grace,
there to remain [107] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 107)**

It is particularly worthy to notice that when Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the reward of the believer for his faith and obedience, He sometimes says:

‘...they are destined for Paradise, therein to abide.’ (*al-A'raf*: 42), while at other times, He says: ‘Allah will admit those who believe in Him and hold fast to Him into His mercy and favour; He will guide them towards Him on a straight path.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 175)

What is the difference between the two? With respect to worship, people are of two kinds. Some of them worship Allah *Glorified is He* aspiring to the never-ending delights of paradise; so Allah gives it to them as a reward for their devotion. Others worship Allah *Glorified is He* out of pure, unselfish love for Him. Paradise hardly ever crosses their minds. These are the servants of Allah whom He grants the essence of His Mercy because they are blessed with seeing the Face of Allah *the Exalted* above all that does not befit His Majesty.

What is the difference between the two rewards: His paradise and His Mercy? Paradise is one of the creations of Allah *Glorified is He* that He will keep as long as He wishes. Allah's Mercy, however, is an Attribute, and not created by Allah *Glorified is He* that will remain as long as He remains. This is an absolutely sufficient assurance; Allah's Existence has no end. Allah *Glorified is He* will grant those special rewards, His Mercy and seeing His Face, to His servants who worship Him purely out of love for Him, not just aspiration to His reward.

We have previously underlined that there is a rank in paradise called ‘*Illiyun*’ where there are none of the pleasures of paradise we have been foretold of except seeing the Face of Allah *Glorified is He*. In the Hereafter, the dwellers of paradise will experience no hunger and no need of any kind. So, what is better for them: the sensual pleasures of paradise or the matchless bliss of seeing the Face of Allah *Glorified is He*?

Which is better: enjoying blessings or enjoying the company of the Bestower of these blessings? No doubt, the delight of looking at the One Who bestows blessings is a far more profound type of happiness than enjoyment of sensual pleasures. The syntactic precision of the Arabic text of the Quran shows how overwhelming the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* will be for His righteous servants. They will not only be treated with Mercy, but they will be completely surrounded by it. They will not just feel it, but it will constitute the entire realm that encompasses their existence. In that Mercy, they will live

forever ‘... therein to abide....’ It is as if the Mercy of Allah were a vast space that His righteous servants will be admitted to and out of which they will never be taken. To the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* they will be admitted, and in the Mercy of Allah they will abide eternally.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

**These are God’s revelations: We recite them to you
[Prophet] with the Truth. God does not will injustice for
His creatures [108] (The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 108)**

The ‘communications’ of Allah *Glorified is He* also include His evidences and recompenses. Among them are the rewards to be given to His servants on the Day of Resurrection: The disbelievers will have dark faces and will receive torment, while the believers’ faces will be bright, along with them being granted the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* eternally. ‘These are the communications of Allah which We recite to you with truth...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 108). What makes a person conceal the truth? There must be some motive; perhaps the truth will cause him trouble, so he resorts to telling falsehoods. But is there anything that can cause trouble to the Creator? No, Allah is Exalted above any deficiency or failure. What then can prevent Him from speaking the truth? Absolutely nothing can. He speaks nothing but the truth, and the dominion of all things belong to Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: ‘...Allah does not desire any injustice to the creatures.’ (*Al-’Imran*: 108). In another verse, Allah reasserts that no injustice may ever be done on His part: ‘... and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.’ (*Fussilat*: 46)

The True Lord does not like injustice, neither from Him nor from His servants. Injustice may mean to punish or harm someone without their having committed any crime. This is a form of injustice. It may also mean begrudging a person the proper recompense he deserves. This is yet another form of injustice. Through injustice, one usurps benefits to which he has no right. He may take vengeance on an innocent person just out of bitterness and malice. He may falsely accuse a person of a crime because the latter poses a threat against a

particular interest he longs for. A person of authority may detain someone who has committed no offense for simply objecting to his corruption or despotism.

One would not abandon the truth and resort to injustice unless he desires a benefit he has no right to, or he desperately wants to protect himself from danger. Allah *Glorified is He* has no need to do injustice to attain any benefit for Himself or ward off any harm that His creatures might cause Him! He is *the Almighty* Creator and Lord Who is far elevated above all that. He is the All-Powerful, Supreme Master over His servants. Allah *Glorified is He* says in this Divine saying: 'O, My servants, verily I have made oppression unlawful for Me and has forbidden it amongst you. So do not commit oppression against each other...'

In fact, oppression is a striking manifestation of ignorance and foolishness! It has only strengthened the oppressed for it has earned them support and assistance from Allah *Glorified is He*. An oppressor intends by his injustice to weaken the oppressed, but, in fact, he is of little sagacity. In reality, he has only added a new power to the oppressed: the power of being aided by Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, an oppressor does exactly the opposite of what he wants. Consider the following example, and Allah *Glorified is He* is above all comparison. Imagine a child has wronged his brother. How will the father react? His heart would be inclined toward the wronged child; he will try to appease him and restore his right. The unjust child has harmed his brother a little that he, as a child, was able to inflict. He was unaware then that he has only given his brother such a benefit commensurate with the power of his father. He acted ignorantly of the fact that he has strengthened his brother, not vice versa.

We are all dependents of Allah *Glorified is He*. So what will He do when He sees one of His dependents oppressed? He *the Exalted and Almighty* will certainly be on the side of the oppressed person. This way, the oppressor has only shown his foolishness by strengthening the oppressed. Were he sagacious, he would have begrudged his opponent such power and would, therefore, have abstained from wronging him. He would have refrained from wronging him, so Allah *Glorified is He* would not grant him the great compensation of placing him directly under His protection and care.

One may commit injustice to gain a transient benefit, forgetting that he can never escape from the One Who has created him. I would love to say to

such a person: You cannot escape from the One Who has created you. You may escape punishment of a mortal like you; you may crave a transient gain you have no right to. Remember then that your Almighty Creator is ever Watchful: He is overtaken neither by slumber nor by sleep. It is a reassurance from the Almighty Creator to the oppressed: Sleep to your hearts' content, for you have a Lord Who is never overtaken by slumber or sleep.

‘... Allah does not desire any injustice to the creatures.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 108) Injustice results from a desire to get an undeserved gain or inflicting harm without a just cause. Allah *Glorified is He* is free of the need to do either of the two. He is the Self-Sufficient Creator of all things and the Possessor of all creation. He says in the following verse: ‘Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Allah; it is to Him that all things return.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 109)

He is the Holder of all control. Everything belongs to Him, is sustained by Him, and is part of His dominion; unto Him all things will return. We know that the Noble Quran has several modes of recitation. The closing sentence of this verse is recited in two ways: ‘... It is to Him that all things *tarje’u* (return)’, or ‘... it is to Him that all things *turja’u* (are returned).’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 109) So in one recitation, the verb is in the active voice and in the other it is in the passive voice. In the same way, elsewhere in The Quran, we find the following: ‘... to Him you *tarje’un* (will return)’, or it can be recited as: ‘... to Him you *turja’un* (will be returned)’. Based on these two different ways of recitation, we ‘return’ to Allah, or we ‘are returned’ to Him.

What is the difference between the two? *Tarje’un* (you will return) implies acceptance of our return to Him. The believer loves to meet Allah *Glorified is He* and longs to reach the Hereafter. He works doing righteous deeds in this worldly life because he aspires to the Afterlife and would love to return to His Lord, *the Almighty*. As for *turja’un* (you will be returned), the verb is in the passive voice since it applies to the disbelievers or sinners. Both would not like to proceed to the Hereafter, but it is not their choice. They are compelled to move to the Hereafter and receive their recompense, as Allah says: ‘On that Day they will be thrust into the Fire of Hell.’ (*at-Tur*: 13)

They are pushed into hell. They have no choice. Take this example [just for illustration, for Allah is above comparison]: A police officer would take

hold of a criminal and push him into a cell. The criminal would not do that voluntarily. This is what the aforementioned verse refers to. Likewise, this is how we understand the words of Allah: ‘... to Him you *turja'un* (will be returned)’; they will be pushed with a compelling force to return to Allah and meet their final destiny. A true believer, contrarily, would love to hasten to his Afterlife, longing to see the Face of his Lord.

Now, let us contemplate the verse:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ﴿١٠٩﴾

**Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God; it is to Him that all things return [109]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 109)**

Someone may wonder if things are out of His control so that they would need to ‘be returned’ to Him. Let us answer this. When Allah *Glorified is He* created the world, He made it subservient to mankind for their own benefit and created in it the law of causality, i.e. when a person exhausts all possible means, Allah grants him the outcome he seeks. Other benefits are not dependent on any means; they are given to all people effortlessly. The sun rises for us all and spreads its light, warmth, and heat, due to Allah’s order, for both believers and disbelievers. Allah does not command the sun to single out believers alone granting them the benefit of its rays. The air is available for believers and disbelievers to breathe, and water is there for all to drink. A disbeliever would reap the fruits when he cultivates a land; it is not an advantage confined to believers only.

Thus, the blessings Allah *Glorified is He* has created for us fall into two categories: one is made submissive to the service of all mankind, and the other is reached solely by effort. Whoever does the necessary effort will be granted such blessings, be they a believer or a disbeliever. Thus, in this life, Allah *Glorified is He* makes the means that lead to desirable results partly in the hands of His servants, and He is the holder of the complete control over all means, results, and the creation in its entirety. In the Hereafter, however, there are no causes or results: On that Day, all things ‘return/are returned’ to the control of Allah alone, and none of His servants will have possession of any authority. “‘Who has control today?’” “God, the One, the All Powerful...” (*Ghafir*: 16).

In this world, Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed that some people possess abundant means, servants and power because such is the nature of this worldly life. In the Hereafter, this will not be the case. Allah, by His Will and Benevolence, has given us power over causes and means that we can use to attain our ends in this worldly life. In the Hereafter, we will be stripped of any such power, and all things will be returned to Him alone: “Who has control today?” “God, the One, the All Powerful...” (*Ghafir*: 16).

Whoever takes pride in the transient power he has over causes and means should know that causes and means can bring him no benefit by themselves. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* has made them subservient to you. Some believe that physical strength is the source of activity and movement irrespective of the Creator Who has created it. Let them preserve that strength forever then if they can. Some are lured by their power and authority to the extent of forgetting about the Creator. Let them keep that authority forever if they can. No one has real power over anything. Allah *Glorified is He* has made the universe temporarily submissive to us in this life, but everything will return solely to Him in the Hereafter. Even though it may seem that certain things belong to you now, in the Hereafter, we all will be stripped of every power, and everything will be solely His. Allah *Glorified is He* has created all things from the beginning, and to Him all things will return in the end. Allah *the Exalted* says in the following verse:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَوْ ءَامَنَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ لَكَانَ
خَيْرًا لَهُمْ مِّنْهُمْ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God. If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them. For although some of them do believe, most of them are lawbreakers [110] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 110)

What makes the Muslim community ‘the best’? The best community must have particular attributes to deserve this superiority: ‘...You enjoin what is

right, forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah...' (*Al-'Imran*: 110). If any of these attributes is lost, there is no superiority in such a case, for being the best community is dependent on specific conditions: enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah *Glorified is He*.

The words *ma'ruf* (right) and *munkar* (wrong) have special significance. The former is derived from the stem '*arafa* which implies acceptance and approval. It describes a thing that one likes, takes pride in or is pleased to have others know about. The other word *munkar* implies disapproval and describes a thing that people are ashamed of. Naturally, approval and acceptance are granted to deeds of righteousness; such are the deeds one would love others to know about. Likewise, evildoing is subject to condemnation, and an evildoer is often keen to conceal or deny whatever misdeeds he has done.

Acts of goodness naturally lead to approval and regard even of the corrupt. A thief would not declare his 'profession' among strangers and would even profess contempt towards it whenever it is mentioned. Theft is a detestable act even by those who commit it. Allah *Glorified is He* has created in our natural disposition approval for *ma'ruf* (what is right) and disapproval for *munkar* (what is wrong). A sound disposition would always be inclined towards doing good deeds and see them deserving of commendation, while, on the other hand, would always see wrongdoing worthy of despise, even if the person himself commits bad deeds.

Why does Allah mention 'faith in Him' after 'enjoining what is right' and 'forbidding what is wrong'? Some people do good only to please themselves. They enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, do acts of righteousness, give generously, establish nonprofit medical and economic organisations for the needy and the weak, etc. Still, they do all that driven by an inner personal feeling, not out of keenness to follow the guidance of Allah and to please Him. Such a person will receive no reward from Allah *Glorified is He* for whatever good deeds he does, as it is not faith in Him that motivates him. Good deeds without faith will not avail their doer in the least. Allah *Glorified is He* rewards those who believe in Him, and who have Him in their minds when they do good. Whoever does good for the sake of gallantry, fame and reputation will gain his reward of the same type of his motives. Since he

works for self-satisfaction, praise or commemoration, his reward will be nothing but what he has worked for. This is what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had explained, 'The first whose case will be decided on the Day of Judgment, will be a man who had died as a martyr. He will be brought forth. Allah will remind him of the blessings He had bestowed upon him in life, and the man will acknowledge them. Then, Allah will ask him, 'What did you do to express gratitude for them?' The man will reply, 'I fought for Your cause till I was martyred.' Allah will say, 'You are lying. You fought so it would be said, "He is a brave warrior", and so was it said.' Then, orders will be given to drag him on his face and throw him into hellfire.

The next will be a man who had pursued [Islamic] knowledge, taught it to others, and recited the Quran. He will be brought forth. Allah will remind him of the blessings He had bestowed upon him in life, and the man will acknowledge them. Then, Allah will ask him, 'What did you do to express gratitude for them?' The man will reply, 'I acquired [Islamic] knowledge, taught it to others and recited the Quran for Your sake.' Allah will say, 'You are lying. You acquired [Islamic] knowledge so it would be said, "He is a learned scholar", and you recited the Quran so it would be said, "He is an able reciter [of the Quran]", and so was it said.' Then, orders will be given to drag him on his face and throw him into hellfire. The next will be a man whom Allah had given plenty of wealth. He will be brought forth. Allah will remind him of the blessings He had bestowed upon him in life, and the man will acknowledge them. Then, Allah will ask him, 'What did you do to express gratitude for them?' The man will reply: 'I left no way in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake.' Allah will say, 'You are lying. You did that so it would be said, "He is generous", and so was it said.' Then, orders will be given to drag him on his face and throw him into Hellfire.'

The reward he receives for his good deeds is people's praise. Allah *Glorified is He* will grant reward in the Hereafter only to those who devoted themselves to Him and sought to please Him only by their good deeds. Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* says: 'Who speaks better than someone who calls people to Allah, does what is right and says, "I am one of those devoted to Allah"?' (*Fussilat: 33*)

A believer does good deeds and declares that he does so because he is one of those who surrender to Allah *Glorified is He*. He does not do good driven by communist, existentialist, or philanthropic impulses. Disbelief is the most flagrant act of perfidy. Whatever good works a person does, while not acknowledging that Allah *Glorified is He* is his Lord, will inevitably be futile. A disbeliever denies the existence of his Creator. Let him then receive his reward from whomever for whom he worked.

Thus, as the verse illustrates, the best community is that which enjoins what is good, forbids what is wrong, and believes in Allah *Glorified is He*. But what makes them do good for other than Allah and disbelieve in Him? It is their coveting of disingenuous honour. At the onset of Islam, the people of authority from among the adherents of other religions thought Islam would strip them of their privileges, powers, positions and prestigious benefits they had come to enjoy. They sacrificed Paradise for transient worldly advantages. They feared for their mundane interests that showed they had but very little sagacity, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them. Although some of them do believe, most of them are lawbreakers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 110)

Had they believed, they would have earned the pleasure of Allah *Glorified is He* and would not have lost their authority and prestige either. They would have received their reward twice: once in this world and another in the Hereafter. They would have been amply rewarded both for having believed in the Prophet who was sent to them before and for accepting the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well. This is not a generalisation, though. Some of the people of the Book did believe, and Allah *Glorified is He* clearly states this fact in the Noble Quran: ‘... Although some of them do believe, most of them are lawbreakers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 110). Since disbelief is the opposite of belief, Allah would have said: ‘...Although some of them do believe, most of them are disbelievers.’ However, He says: ‘... most of them are lawbreakers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 110)

It is Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* Who speaks, so every word is selected with utmost precision. Disbelieving, while having no prior knowledge of faith or the signs and proofs associated with it, is one thing yet disbelieving,

while you know the fundamentals of faith, having read the Torah and the Gospel, is another thing.

People of the Book have read the Torah and the Gospel and have known the truth and clear signs of Allah *Glorified is He* from them. When they denied the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they thus added rebellion to disbelief and deserved to be called 'lawbreakers'. The plausible outcome, or result of their recognition of the proofs and signs associated with the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was that they should have embraced faith. Their denial of his prophethood makes them, not only disbelievers, but also defiers of Allah; they had recognised the truth, but then denied it.

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Although some of them do believe, most of them are lawbreakers.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 110), what then will the lawbreakers do with believers? The former constitutes the majority of the Jews and Christians, and they will sure plot against the believing minority and try to inflict harm and suffering upon them. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

لَنْ يَضُرَّكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى ۖ وَإِنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُكَلِّفُوكُمُ الْأَذْدَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصُرُونَ

they will not do you much harm: even if they come out to fight you, they will soon turn tail; they will get no help [111]
(The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 111)

Allah *the Exalted* reassures this minority that the disbelieving majority cannot do but a trifling harm to them. 'These can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 111). It is a promise filled with relief for the minority of the people of the Book who have believed, such as 'Abdullah ibn Salam *Allah be pleased with him* who converted from Judaism. Allah *Glorified is He* reassures them that the rebellious majority cannot inflict torment upon them. Allah *Glorified is He* reassures them that any attempt of the disbelieving majority to inflict harm upon them would not amount to anything more than a passing hurt.

What is the difference between *darar* (harm) and '*adha* (a passing hurt)? The latter causes pain at the moment of its occurrence then, this pain quickly

dies away. As for harm, its pain continues, and its effect persists for some time. If one receives a simple blow, it hurts, but its pain subsides immediately. If the blow is powerful and causes bruising and swelling, this is what we mean by *darar* (harm). A passing hurt can be caused by a word; the disbelievers may mock the believers, insult them or utter words of disbelief. Such words do not cause the believers any real 'harm', rather, they simply offend their ears. Allah *Glorified is He* reassures believers that the people of disbelief cannot do much harm to them; all they can do is to cause them a trifling hurt that has no lasting effect.

Thus, the Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'These can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you...' (*Al-'Imran*: 111) that they will never be able to hurt believers except with mere insults, taunts, and gestures that hurt their feelings or praise disbelief or by uttering vile words that faith does not have moral support. This is the most that the impious can do, but as to really harming believers, they are in no position to do so. Reality afterward comes in accordance with this divine reassurance; we see how Allah *Glorified is He* protects Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions *Allah be pleased with them* from disbelievers. Allah *Glorified is He* has made this statement: 'These can never inflict more than a passing hurt on you...' (*Al-'Imran*: 111), so it becomes a rule. Throughout the struggle between Muslims and disbelievers, it was clear the latter were not able to inflict more than a passing hurt on the people of faith.

Let us consider what happened to the tribes of Banu Qaynuqa', Banu Qurayza and Banu An-Nadir and what happened to the Jews of Khaybar: Did they inflict more than a passing hurt on the believers? They said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Let it not deceive you, Muhammad, that you have confronted feeble people who know nothing about war and defeated them. If you fight us, you will know who true men are!' That proved to be mere talk since history has kept an account of what has happened to them all: Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* inflicted a bitter defeat on them. No matter how hard they tried to inflict real harm on the believers, Allah *Glorified is He* did not allow them to. In light of this, He says: '...and if they fight against you, they succoured.' (*Al-'Imran*: 111). If disbelievers attempt to inflict real harm on believers, they will turn out to be too weak to

do so; they will only turn their backs and flee before the believers, so their defeat will be inevitable.

In the Arabic language, the conditional particle 'en' (literally 'if') causes omission of the letter 'nun' (literally 'n') from the verbs in the subordinate and the main clauses when these verbs fall under the category of present verb forms suffixed with pronouns referring to the second or third persons: '...and en (if) they *yuqatelukum* (fight against you), they *yuwallukum* (will turn their backs upon you) [in flight]...' (*Al-Imran*: 111).

The verb in the subordinate clause '*yuqatelukum*' is originally '*yuqatelu(n)akum*', but the 'n' has been omitted for the reason explained above. Likewise, the verb in the main clause '*yuwallukum*' is originally '*yuwallu(n)akum*', but the 'n' has been omitted for the reason explained above. When another clause is connected to the conditional sentence with the conjunction 'wa' (literally 'and'), the verb in that clause should also be without 'n' if it falls under the same category of present verbs, since it follows the same rule as the two verbs in the conditional sentence.

Nevertheless, the verb in that clause is written in the verse without omission of the 'n': '...and then they will not be *yunsaru(n)* (succoured).' (*Al-Imran*: 111). Apparently, this is a breach of the rule established in the Arabic language which is bound to suggest to the Arab mind that there is a special reason for this since the speaker is Allah Who is far elevated above error. Why then is the letter 'n' kept and not omitted in the verb '*yunsaru(n)*'? According to the Arabic grammatical rule explained above, the verse should read as follows: '...and en (if) they *yuqatelukum* (fight against you), they *yuwallukum* (will turn their backs upon you) [in flight], and then they will not be *yunsaru* (succoured)', with the 'n' omitted in all three verbs. Were the verse written this way, with the verb in the third clause '*yunsaru(n)*', it would mean this verb falls within the scope of the conditional sentence and is dependent on the occurrence of the condition in them. Were this to be the case, all three clauses would have been referring to a single situation, a single battle and describing the results to be expected in that single battle only.

However, Allah *Glorified is He* in the third clause means to state a general truth, not dependent on the conditional sentence or occurrence of the condition

stated in it. Reflect upon this verse: ‘...then they will not be *yunsaru(n)* (succoured).’ (*Al-'Imran*: 111) This wise statement incorporates a matter beyond the realm of the preceding conditional sentence; it does not take the form of the two verbs in the conditional sentence since it does not follow them in meaning and is not dependent on occurrence of the condition involved in them. It is a ruling from Allah *Glorified is He* that disbelievers will never be aided, whether or not they fight against the believers. The clause after the conditional sentence refers to a separate issue, a truth which is not dependent on the condition. The disbelievers will not be aided in any way, whether or not they fight against the believers just because they have disbelieved in Allah *Glorified is He*.

Now that we have examined the sentence as a whole, let us examine it more closely, and we will find in it a new meaning. In Arabic, ‘*thumma*’ (later afterward) and ‘*fa*’ (immediately after) are both particles implying order and succession, yet the latter implies ‘immediate succession’. Therefore, one might assume that the verse should read instead: ‘...they will turn their backs upon you [in flight], *fa* (and immediately after) they will not be succoured.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 111) That would mean disbelievers would not be able to defeat you if they were to attack you again immediately after their defeat. However, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the particle ‘*thumma*’ which denotes deferred, not immediate, succession. By this, Allah *Glorified is He* means disbelievers will not defeat you, O, believers, even if they take time to prepare for another battle to snatch victory from you after they had fled defeated from the earlier battle. Using the particle ‘*thumma*’ (later afterward) denotes an open-ended consequence, namely, defeat of the disbelievers whether they fight again immediately or later after fleeing. The particle ‘*fa*’, on the other hand *may* be used to denote, or imply, a direct consequence that immediately succeeds the earlier action. The particle ‘*fa*’ is used in such contexts of the Quran as in the following verse: ‘Then He causes him to die, *fa* (and immediately after) assigns to him a grave.’ (*Abasa*: 21). Use of the particle ‘*fa*’ is appropriate in this verse because entering the grave comes directly after death. Look also at the verse that follows immediately after the aforementioned one: ‘*Thumma* (later) when He pleases, He will raise him to life again.’ (*Abasa*: 22).

Again, *fa* denotes, or implies, immediate succession, while *thumma* implies deferred succession. The use of ‘*thumma*’ in the verse we are discussing

implies that disbelievers will not gain victory over the people of faith, neither sooner and nor later. They are doomed to be defeated regardless of when they choose to fight against believers again. '...And *thumma* (later) they will not be succoured.' (*Al-'Imran*: 111). If Allah had said, '... they will not gain victory', the verse would not involve such strong emphasis. Why? 'Succoured' implies that disbelievers will not succeed by their own means, and nor will they be aided by any other means so as to achieve victory.

'...And *thumma* (later), they will not be succoured' is a declaration that is a lasting fact, which is not confined to just the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but will continue forever. The disbelievers may never gain victory over the believers, either by their own means or through the assistance from others.

Improper understanding might lead a person to think that an error occurred in the verb form in the aforementioned clause, but we have already explained why the verb '*yunsaru*' (succoured; aided) comes in this form instead of '*yunsaru(n)*'. It is a promise from Allah *Glorified is He* which gives reassurance and security to the Muslim nation that disbelievers may never, by any means gain victory over them. As we have noted also, this expression is more accurate than '... they will not gain victory', for 'gain victory' implies that they may not be able to defeat the believers by their own means, whereas '...they will not be succoured' implies that they may never achieve victory even if they are joined by allies who attempt to succour them so that they may defeat the believers. Thus, whether by themselves or through assistance from allies, disbelievers may never gain victory against believers.

O, Muslims, know then if disbelievers gain victory over you, whether by their own doing or by the help from others, it means you do not abide by the guidance of Allah *Glorified is He* in your fight against them. Someone might ask: how do the Jews defeat us, while we are Muslims?! To this, I reply with pertinent questions: Do we presently follow the guidance and spirit of Islam? Do we have firm faith in our hearts that we put into action, abiding by the ordinance of Allah *Glorified is He*? Do you think Allah *Glorified is He* has let you down by causing your defeat? Do you consider your battle an Islamic one in the first place?

The answer is a resounding 'No!' We are motivated to fight for anything else but Islam. We give precedence to socio-cultural prejudice, nationalism, and ethnic affiliation over faith. So how is it plausible that we hope for aid from Allah? We have no right to ask for His aid unless we enter into our battle as His troops who hold fast to His guidance and fight in His cause. Defeat results from straying from the path of Allah for He has guaranteed victory and predominance for those who follow His path: 'And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners.' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

If we do not win a given fight, be certain then that we are not true supporters of His cause. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

ضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذِّلَّةُ أَيْنَ مَا تَقِفُوا إِلَّا بِحَبْلٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَحَبْلِ مِّنَ النَّاسِ وَبَاءُوا
بِعُصْيَانٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَسْكَنَةُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ
بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

and, unless they hold fast to a lifeline from God and from man- kind, they are overshadowed by vulnerability wherever they are found. They have drawn God's wrath upon themselves. They are overshadowed by weakness, too, because they have persistently dis- believed in God's revelation and killed prophets without any right, all because of their disobedience and boundless transgression [112]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 112)

The Arabic word '*dureba*' (cleave) is also used in the context of money. It refers to making coins by stamping metal. A blank disc is made when an image is struck on it. The softer metal used to make the coin is poured into a mold made of a harder metal, and then this image is impressed on it. In this context, the verb *dureba* means 'impressing'. The blank disc is forced to take the shape of the mold and cannot resist it. The images in the mold are impressed onto the disc that cannot be formed in any other way.

Thus, '*dureba*' implies forcing or coercion. Accordingly, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Abasement durebat* (is made to cleave) to them,...' it means that abasement has been forced on them just as an image in a mold is

impressed on a blank disc to make a coin: They can never be rid of such abasement just as the metal disc of a coin can never be separated from the shape and image impressed on it. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...wherever they are found', which means abasement will follow them wherever they go. Still, there is an exception to this. What is this exception?

We find it in the words of Allah *the Exalted* '... except under a covenant with Allah and a covenant with men...' (*Al-Imran*: 112). They will not suffer from indignity and disgrace when they are under a covenant of protection from Allah, or from strong people. When they were under a covenant from Allah first and a covenant from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after his arrival in Medina, they were safe. When they breached that covenant, what happened? They were overshadowed by ignominy again.

Therefore, they were safe so long as they kept their covenant with Allah *Glorified is He* but when they betrayed it, Allah *Glorified is He* deprived them from His protection. So, they ignited the conflict that we all know about and were paid their due. That is what happened to Banu Qaynuqa', Banu An-Nadir, Banu Qurayza and the Jews of Khaybar.

Before that affliction, they were under protection from Allah *Glorified is He*. We know that the first thing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did when he entered Medina was build his Mosque, and he also entered into a treaty with the Jews. They lived in peace until they violated the treaty, so Allah *Glorified is He* punished them by indignity and vulnerability, and they were expelled from Medina. This is how the words of Allah *Glorified is He* manifested themselves: 'Abasement is made to cleave to them wherever they are found, except under a covenant with Allah and a covenant with men...' (*Al-Imran*: 112)

They were granted protection from Allah *Glorified is He* through the covenant they entered into with the one who was in authority: Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They are always allowed to enter into such covenants with whoever has authority over Muslims at times when the doctrine of Islam is the ruling constitution. That exception, in fact, shows that they have no inherent strength; they are always overshadowed by vulnerability and ignominy unless they seek strength by making a bond with Allah *Glorified is He*

and a bond with people. This is also evidenced by the state of things during our present time: The Jews always need to live under the protection of others.

When we fought Israel in the October war, we inflicted a pending defeat on them until the USA intervened with its military force. On that occasion, the Egyptian president at the time said, 'I do not have the power to fight the USA.' If the war had been between us and Israel alone, their power would have fallen short of victory. They have no strength of their own and can only attain dignity when they are under a bond of protection from Allah *Glorified is He* and a bond with people. Allah *Glorified is He* says about them after that: '...and they have become deserving of wrath from Allah, and humiliation is made to cleave to them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 112). It is worth noting that *adh-dhellatu* (abasement; disgrace) has an exception, for they may be spared abasement and disgrace if they are under a bond with Allah *Glorified is He* or a bond with people. As for *al-maskanatu* (humiliation; weakness), it has no exception, and reflects what Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Jews in another chapter of the Noble Quran: '...And so *adh-dhellatu* and *al-maskanatu* overshadowed them, and they earned the burden of Allah's condemnation...' (*al-Baqara*: 61)

The fact that the Jews cannot be spared *al-maskanatu* (humiliation or weakness) under any exception is due to the fact that it is an inner quality, associated with their own selves, and therefore, cannot be compensated by any external assistance. Allah *Glorified is He* has willed that they will forever feel inner humiliation and misery even at times when they seem to gain apparent power through the help of their allies. *Adh-dhellatu* (abasement, ignominy) is an external matter that can be gained through external assistance, but *al-maskanatu* (humiliation, weakness) is intrinsic to them, so no bond or apparent power can save them from it. Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed them no chance to be spared the feeling of humiliation and weakness even through a bond with Him or a bond with people. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: '... and they have become deserving of Wrath from Allah...' (*Al-'Imran*: 112). Has anyone ever seen a greater manifestation of Allah's Wrath than the Jews being doomed to be dispersed throughout the earth? Let us read these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And We dispersed them as [separate] communities all over the earth...' (*al-A'raf*: 168).

The one place that accommodated them at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the Arabian Peninsula, especially Yathrib (present-day Medina). They settled there for a time, and they had scholarly superiority over other communities, which stemmed from their being people of the Book, as well as having economic and military superiority. It is surprising how they returned the favour to the one place where they found a home! The thing that made them go to Yathrib was what they found in the Torah: a prophet would come in this place, and they must follow him. Allah has mentioned this obligation in The Quran, as we have previously explained: ‘Allah took a pledge from the prophets, saying, "If, after I have bestowed Scripture and wisdom upon you, a messenger comes confirming what you have been given. You must believe in him and support him. Do you affirm this and accept My pledge as binding on you?" They said, "We do." He said, "Then bear witness, and I too will bear witness."' (Al-‘Imran: 81)

This pledge meant that the Messengers of Allah *peace be upon them* took it upon themselves to deliver their Message to the communities to whom they were sent and to inform the people of faith who followed them that a messenger would come to whom Allah *Glorified is He* will reveal the Perfect Message. The Jews did not go to Yathrib except out of hope that they would meet the expected Prophet, believe in him and fight in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He* against disbelievers. Still, what happened? Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* tells us about what they did: ‘...Even when there came to them something they knew [to be true], they disbelieved in it...’ (al-Baqara: 89).

Thus, the Jews earned the Wrath of Allah *Glorified is He* and He has caused them to be forever doomed to humiliation, misery and weakness. What was the reason? Allah *Glorified is He* gives us the answer in the Quran: ‘...This is because they disbelieved in the communications [revelations] of Allah and slew the Prophets unjustly...’ (Al-‘Imran: 112). They have denied all the miraculous signs Allah sent them, of which some are mentioned in this noble verse: ‘And We caused the clouds to comfort you with their shade and sent down unto you manna and quails, [saying,] "Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance"....’ (al-Baqara: 57)

Numerous were the signs Allah *Glorified is He* sent to the children of Israel, and immediately following is another one mentioned in the words of Almighty Allah: ‘Remember when We took your pledge and made the mountain tower high above you, and said, "Hold fast to what We have given you and bear its contents in mind so that you may be conscious of Allah."' (al-Baqara: 63)

Before their eyes, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the rock with his staff, and water sprang forth from it so that they could drink: ‘Remember when Musa (Moses) prayed for water for his people and We said to him, "Strike the rock with your staff." Twelve springs gushed out, and each group knew its drinking place...' (al-Baqara: 60).

Despite the signs they were sent, they disbelieved and even killed the Prophets when having no right to do so. The Jews accused their Prophets of lying and slew them, so Allah *Glorified is He* punished them for their wrongdoing: ‘...This is because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.’ (Al-‘Imran: 112) Their rebellion caused ignominy to cleave to them Allah’s Wrath to befall them, and humiliation and weakness to overshadow them forever. This punishment has come as a result of their transgression of the limits of Allah. He *the Most High* has sent punishment down on them as a retribution for what they have done.

To understand this, let us recite these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before: for having frequently debarred others from God’s path.’ (an-Nisa’: 160)

Allah *Glorified is He* forbade them lawful enjoyments because of the wrong they did to themselves. They sought pleasure through things Allah had forbidden, so He prohibited them from enjoying lawful things. Thus the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* comes contrary to that of whoever abandons His ordinance.

As we have said before, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us in the Quran the truth about what happened to them. However, He does not include them in a statement that groups them together. Some of them thought of embracing the Message sent down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and some of them did believe with him. Allah *Glorified is He* out of His Justice

differentiates between those who considered embracing faith and those who insisted on disbelief. Thus, He *Glorified is He* says:

لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ
 ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ ءَانَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

**But they are not all alike. There are some among the People
 of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations
 during the night, who bow down in worship [113]
 (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 113)**

Therefore, some of them were upright, but which of the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* did they recite? They recited the verses of the Perfect Book: the Noble Quran. Now, why does Allah *Glorified is He* say: '...prostrating themselves...'? In prayer we recite the Quran during prostration? To understand this, we need to know that the Jews do not observe the Night time prayer ('*Isha*'), and to give them an Islamic identifying mark, Allah *Glorified is He* says about them: '...prostrating themselves', thus identifying them as people who perform the Nighttime prayer ('*Isha*') which is enjoined on Muslims. As long as they observe the prayer of Muslims and prostrate themselves, they are Muslims. Here is another meaning we may infer from the words of Allah *Glorified is He* '...Prostrating themselves....' Salat (Prayer) is a symbol of solemnity and submissiveness to Allah *Glorified is He* and prostration represents the peak of such solemnity and submissiveness in prayer. As long as they perform the prayer, they must, therefore, recite the Quran throughout the night, in total submission to the One Who has revealed it. We know that one of the best acts of worship in Islam and one of the well-known acts of *Sunnah* (Teachings of Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*) is recitation of the Quran at night and observing *tahajjud* (voluntary night prayer; night vigil). It is one of the acts of worship that elevates a Muslim to the state of utmost devotion (*ihsan*).

The Arabic wording of the verse uses the expression *ana'* that encompasses every time of the night, not a specific part of it. The believers do not all recite the Quran at the same time of the night. Each chooses the time that suits him best; it is as though believers were dividing up the night between them so the

Quran would be recited throughout every part of it. Those who aspire to the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*) not only observe the mandatory nighttime Salah ('Isha') which takes but one part of the night, rather, they pray throughout the night, above what is mandatory. They do not tire of reciting the Quran because they want to attain the state of utmost devotion (*ihsan*). They have found that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord Who should be worshiped with earnest effort and sincerity; as a result, they exert themselves in worship above what He has enjoined on them. It is as though they said to themselves, 'O, Allah, You have enjoined on me five daily prayers, but I find this too little in my duty to You.' That was what some of the people of the Book did; they were not satisfied with sheerly announcing their conversion to Islam, but they let their faith manifest itself in such a special act of worship: observing voluntary prayer throughout the night. They loved having the thought that these words of Allah *Glorified is He* apply to them: 'The righteous will be in Gardens with [flowing] springs. They will receive their Lord's gifts because of the *ihsan* (goodness; utmost devotion) they did before.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16)

What is the meaning of *ihsan*? It is to have such firm faith in Allah *Glorified is He* and love for Him that you exert yourself in worship above what He has ordained on you. Allah *Glorified is He* has enjoined on us five daily mandatory prayers (*salat*), yet some perform the prayer twenty times a day, for example. We are commanded to observe fasting (*sawm*) just one month of the year, yet some of us do not let a month pass by without observing fasting some days in it.

Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to pay a fixed amount of poor due (*zakat*) yet some of us give so generously going beyond the prescribed amount. *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) is ordained once in a lifetime, for whoever can afford to observe it, yet some of us perform *hajj* several times. When a servant wants to reach the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*), the way to that is to maximize good deeds, by doing more and more of the acts of worship Allah *Glorified is He* has enjoined on us. However, an important point must be said: We are not permitted to invent our own ways of worshipping Allah *Glorified is He*; rather, we exert ourselves more in observing worship of the same kind as Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained.

To reiterate, people of the Book who believed in Allah *Glorified is He* and whom He praises in the Quran did not just embrace Islam, but they showed utmost keenness to do their duty to Allah. They prayed throughout the night and recited The Quran, aiming to reach the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*) and acting upon the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Sleeping only little at night.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17)

They performed voluntary prayer throughout much of the night, sleeping only little. Just as we look at the sky and admire the light of its stars, so do we appear to the dwellers up there when we strive to reach the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*) by praying at night. They too look down at the earth and see spots of light shining brightly on it. Thus, they inquire about those earthly stars, and the answer comes to them, 'These are the houses whose inhabitants pray throughout the night and prostrate themselves to Allah.' Every such house shines like a star to the dwellers of the sky. In description of these diligent worshipers, Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Praying at dawn for Allah's forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 18) Does Allah command His servants to pray throughout the night and sleep just little? No, but those who aspire to the elevated station of utmost devotion, i.e. (*ihsan*) do so. As for ordinary Muslims, they perform the Nighttime *Salat* ('*Isha*'), and when dawn comes, they perform the Dawn *Salat* enjoined upon them. Only those who hope to attain the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*) sleep only little and spend the night in worship, thus deserving to be praised by Almighty Allah in the Noble Quran:

'The righteous will be in Gardens with [flowing] springs. They will receive their Lord's gifts because of the good they did before: sleeping only little at night, praying at dawn for Allah's forgiveness, giving a rightful share of their wealth to the beggar and the deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-19)

Preciseness of the Quranic language is truly worth contemplating. When the Quran speaks about the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*), it tells us its seekers to give their money to those who are in need, yet the amount they give is not specified. When the Quran speaks about the station of faith (*iman*) which comes next after that of *ihsan*, it says: 'Who give a due share of their wealth to beggars and the deprived, who believe in the Day of Judgement.' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24-26)

He who aspires the station of faith (*iman*) might restrict his giving to the limits of the prescribed *zakat* (poor dues), or a little above it, but he who hopes to attain the higher station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*) would set no limit to what he gives to those in need. So we know that people of the Book are not all alike, for some of them have entered Islam right through the door of *ihsan* (utmost devotion) which is proven by the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Not all of them are alike; a party of the people of the Scripture stand for the right. They recite the Verses of Allah during the hours of the night, prostrating themselves in prayer.' (*Al-'Imran*: 113). Allah *Glorified is He* thus emphasises that people of the Book are not all encompassed in His words: '...This is because they disbelieved in the communications [revelations] of Allah and slew the Prophets unjustly; this is because they disobeyed and exceeded the limits.' (*Al-'Imran*: 112). People of the Book are not all the same, so the aforementioned verse does not apply to them all; a group from the people of the Book pray, recite The Quran, and prostrate themselves to Allah *Glorified is He* throughout the night. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* describes this category of the people of the Book as *qa'ema* (upright). In Arabic, *qa'em* (standing) is the opposite of *qa'ed* (sitting up); *jales* means 'sitting down'. It is different from *qa'ed* in the sense that it means changing from a reclining position to a sitting position, so one who is sitting (*jales*) has been reclining and then he sat up.

Yet when we say someone is *qa'ed*, it means he has been standing then he sat down. Sitting down in prayer is comfortable, unlike standing; we know Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would stand up in prayer until his feet swelled up. When one is standing, all his weight is on his feet, but when one sits, he distributes his weight all over the lower part of his body. When Allah *Glorified is He* describes some of the people of the Book by saying: '... a party of the people of the Scripture are *ummatun qa'ema* (a nation that stands for the right)...' (*Al-'Imran*: 113). This means that they have accepted the responsibility of performing their obligations with complete sincerity, while observing prayer constantly and submissively. Allah *Glorified is He* continues to describe them in the following verse:

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ
الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

**who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is
right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good
deeds. These people are among the righteous [114]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 114)**

By their belief in Allah *Glorified is He* and the Last Day, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, they are described with the same attributes with which Allah *Glorified is He* describes the best community that has ever been brought forth from mankind, the community of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This group of the people of the Book embraced faith wholeheartedly from the beginning and aspired to reach the station of utmost devotion (*ihsan*). Their diligence testifies that they were truly awaiting the advent of the new prophet. Once the new prophet came, they believed in his message and became part of the best community ever brought forth for humankind. Allah *Glorified is He* then says about them: '...who yusare' una (are quick) to do good deeds....' (*Al-'Imran*: 114). This bears resemblance to His address to the believers: 'Sare'u (be quick to seek) your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden as wide as the heavens and earth prepared for the righteous.' (*Al-'Imran*: 133).

The following two Arabic nouns have almost the same meaning, but with different connotations; *sur'ah* (from which the above-mentioned two words are derived), which means to do something quickly, and the word '*ajalah* which means 'rushing'. They both agree in meaning with respect to performance of an action in the shortest possible time, such as a person covering a certain distance from one place to another within a certain time. The difference between the two words becomes clearer by considering their opposites: The opposite of *sur'ah* is *ebta'* (dawdling), while the opposite of '*ajalah* is *anah* (prudence; discretion). For example, to make a decision with *anah* is to take your time and think about the matter carefully before deciding. So *sur'ah* (quickness) is praiseworthy, whereas its opposite *ebta'* (dawdling) is not. '*Ajalah* (rushing) is blameworthy, whereas its opposite *anah* (prudence; caution) is praiseworthy. In other

words, *sur'ah* is to advance quickly when quickness is required, whereas 'ajalah is to rush, or to do hurriedly what should be done with patience and caution. For this reason, the Arabic proverb goes: 'Rushing brings regret: Be cautious, be safe.' In the aforementioned verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Sare'u* (be quick to seek) your Lord's forgiveness...' (*Al-'Imran*: 133).

In the verse we are discussing, He says: '...who *yusare'una* (are quick) to do good deeds...' (*Al-'Imran*: 114) which means that whenever they have a chance to do good, they seize it; they advance with quickness when it is appropriate to do. They know that life is short and that there is no guarantee for a person that his life will continue to do a good deed he intends. Realizing this, we must be quick to do good deeds and avoid procrastination. 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *Allah be pleased with him* was taking his usual siesta, and his guard prevented people from waking the Caliph up. The son of 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz approached and said to the guard, 'I want to talk to the Commander of the Believers this instant.' The guard would not allow him and said, 'This is the time when he rests, and he rests at no other time of the day or night, so leave him to rest.' Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *Allah be pleased with him* heard the noise and asked the guard about it. The guard said, 'It is your son. He wants to talk to you, but I am asking him not to do so that you can rest.' Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz said to the guard, 'Let him come in.' When he entered his father's place, the son said, 'Father, I heard that you will give such-and-such estate as an endowment for Allah's cause.'

'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I will, God willing. Tomorrow we will settle this.' The son asked, 'Will God preserve you until tomorrow?' Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *Allah be pleased with him* said, with tears in his eyes: 'Praise is to Allah Who has given me children who aid me in doing good!'

The son wanted his father to be quick to do that good deed. When you feel the desire to do a good deed, do it without delay; you do not know what will prevent you from doing it if you procrastinate. If an opportunity to do good appears, seize it before you lose it. The son of Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz was keen on helping his father to do good without delay. Contrarily, presently, a son would sue his father for interdiction to prevent him from giving

money to charity, thus ignoring the words of Almighty Allah: '...who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous.' (*Al-'Imran*: 114). Therefore, the following question arises: Why are they among the righteous? The answer requires a little reflection. We say things like, 'So-and-so is a righteous man, or so-and-so is an evil man.' Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen mankind to be His vicegerent and has made them fit to carry out this responsibility. Allah *Glorified is He* has created Adam and made him and his progeny vicegerents on earth. When a man who is righteous and able sees a good or beneficial thing, he would leave it either as it is or increase its goodness or benefit. An evil person would rather spoil what is good and would not do what renders anything better or more beneficial.

Suppose a man found a well that people get water from. If he were an ordinary person, not one with strong will, he would leave the well intact. If he were evil, he would perhaps fill the well with sand to make it unfit for use. If he were a person of both righteousness and strong will, he would try to be creative in serving people who get water from the well. He would, for example, build a tank, draw water from the well with a lever, and/or install pipes to carry water from the tank to houses so that people would get water directly at their homes. A man with righteousness and good will would use his intellect to maximise the well's benefit.

So a man is described as righteous and able when he is fit to be a vicegerent on earth and work for its prosperity by leaving beneficial things intact increasing their beneficence or trying to rectify anything that needs rectifying. A righteous and able man works based on deep knowledge, so he does not do any work that gives a superficial benefit, which then causes harm in the course of time. For example, the inventors of pesticides thought they managed to combat infection in crops, but they did not know they have actually done more harm to agriculture and the environment than good, if any good at all. Later, they changed their minds and started warning people against using these pesticides. Every action must be based on sound scientific principles, so let us recite these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Do not follow blindly what you do not know to be true: ears, eyes, and heart. You will be questioned about all these.' (*al-Isra*': 36). Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Say

[Prophet], “Shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions: whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work?” (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

So Allah *Glorified is He* praises the people of the Book who believed with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and describes them perfectly in the Quran. They recite the Quran throughout the night, prostrate themselves, believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and the Last Day, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and are quick in doing good deeds. Then, the True Lord judges them generally to be righteous and able and worthy to be vicegerents on earth. After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

and they will not be denied [the reward] for whatever good deeds they do: God knows exactly who is conscious of Him [115] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 115)

Allah *the Exalted* will give them fair recompense. He is the True Lord Who denies no one the rewards for their good deeds. The good that they do will not be effaced or concealed from people. He *the Exalted and Almighty* has full knowledge of those who are conscious of Him. A person might do things that no one sees, but Allah *Glorified is He* watches over everyone and gives everyone their due reward for their deeds. After this, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the state of disbelievers by saying:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

As for those who disbelieve, neither their possessions nor their children will help them against God – they will be companions in the Fire, there to remain [116] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 116)

The disbelievers assume that their possessions and children will avail them against Allah *Glorified is He*. They do not see things the way they are; possessions and children are rather meant for trial not rescue, as Allah

Glorified is He says: 'And know that your worldly goods and your children are but a trial and a temptation, and that with Allah there is a tremendous reward.' (*al-An'am*: 28)

The fact that possessions and children are trials, does not mean they are things to shun or detest; trials are not detestable in their own right, but they are only tests, and a person may endure a trial and succeed in the test. One may have wealth but is not deluded by its lure and so uses it for doing good. One may have children, but instead of taking improper pride in them, he teaches them to follow the guidance of Allah *Glorified is He* and raises them according to religious ethics. Any matter that is meant as a trial, is not necessarily detestable in itself; rather remember that it is only a test, and one must do his best to succeed in it. A trial is destructive only when one falters and gives in to weakness instead of facing it with strength and patience. The disbelievers do not pass the test of possession and children, but they surrender to the lure. The Day will come when they possess neither wealth nor children. Even if they had wealth, it will avail them nothing in the Hereafter and each of their children will be occupied with their own selves, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'People, be mindful of your Lord and fear a day when no parent will take the place of their child, nor a child take the place of their parent, in any way. Allah's promise is true, so do not let the present life delude you, nor let the Deceiver delude you about Allah.' (*Luqman*: 33).

Everyone will have something to deal with which will distract them from everyone else on the Day of Resurrection. In the life of this world, disbelievers are busy with their possessions and their children. Reflect upon the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...neither their possessions nor their children will help them against Allah...' (*Al-Imran*: 116) What does 'rich' mean, then? A rich person is he who is in no need of anyone else, who does not need anyone to provide for him. Therefore, reflect upon this Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Richness is not having many possessions, but it is contentment of the soul.' 'Possessions' refer to the material objects of this worldly life, whether one has many or only a few of them. Indeed pleasures of this world are like salty water: The more you drink, the thirstier you feel! A disbeliever is doomed to self-deception; he cheats himself and lets the temptations of wealth and children dazzle him forgetting

that this life proceeds by the ordinance of He Who possesses all dominion in Whose Hand is disposition of all affairs. He considers life something other than its true purpose; he does not realize that the pride and pleasure associated with wealth and children are but sheer deception, for a person can live his life until the end without wealth or children. Whoever is deluded in this life by wealth and children will come on the Day of Resurrection only to find that what had pleased him in his worldly life has turned into a source of sorrow and remorse in the end. Whenever he remembers that wealth and children distanced him from preparing for that Day, anguish and regret eat his heart.

Allah *Glorified is He* says about him who is lured by wealth and children, while disbelieving in Him: ‘... they will be companions in the Fire, there to remain.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 116). This is the end for those who fall into self-deception and let wealth or children captivate them.

What does it mean that they will be ‘companions’ in (literally: of) the fire? First, we must understand the meaning of ‘companion’. If we say that so-and-so is someone’s companion, it means he is close to him, but where does this companionship begin? It begins with the first person, while it is for the second person to either accept or reject this companionship, an attitude which may be revealed to us or concealed from us. Companions of the fire cannot conceal their regret; they blame and condemn themselves for choosing Hell as their company and final destination.

In this life, a person would commit a sin and receive his due punishment as a result; therefore, we would find him rebuking himself and admitting that he deserves to be punished for what he has done. Likewise, a disbeliever, when thrown into hellfire on the Day of Resurrection, will regret his wrongdoing and say to himself, ‘I deserve what I am suffering! It is all my own doing!’ Hell will say, in reply to the question of its Lord *the Exalted*: ‘We shall say to Hell on that day, “Are you full?” and it will reply, “Are there no more?”’ (*Qaf*: 30)

In the Hereafter, a disbeliever’s organs that he used in sinning will hate him and curse him. He has control of them in this life, and they are submissive to his will, but on the Day of Judgment, their owner will be submissive to their will. An oppressor would order his hand to strike the weak with hard blows,

and his hand would just obey because Allah *Glorified is He* has created it to be submissive to his will. A disbeliever would command his tongue to utter a word of disbelief, and his tongue would not defy him. In this worldly life, one's organs are submissive to his will, but the situation will be reversed on the Day of Resurrection. A disbeliever will be stripped of his free will, and his organs will be set free. He cannot force them on that Day to do what they dislike. Organs will rebel against their master and testify against him before Allah *Glorified is He*. Someone might say that it looks as though his organs will testify against themselves! It is they that will be punished! However, they will accept punishment as a means to have their sins expiated.

Such will be their final destiny: '... they will be companions in the Fire, there to remain.' (*Al-'Imran*: 116). If you see disbelievers doing good in this life, beware of being deceived. Instead, remind yourself that such goodness must not deceive you into thinking they will have a reward in the Hereafter. Disbelief renders every effort futile. Allah *Glorified is He* does not accept the deeds of those who do not believe in Him, even if such deeds are not rejected by people. Allah *Glorified is He* says about them in the following verse:

مَثَلُ مَا يُنْفِقُونَ فِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ رِيحٍ فِيهَا صِرٌّ أَصَابَتْ حَرْثَ قَوْمٍ
ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فَأَهْلَكَتُهُ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ

And whatever they give away in this life will be nullified: a frosty wind strikes and destroys the harvest of people who have wronged themselves. It was not God who wronged them; they wronged themselves [117] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 117)

Allah *Glorified is He* likens what the disbelievers spend in this worldly life to *serr* (a wind with intense cold) that smites the seed produce of a people who have done injustice to themselves. In the Arabic language, the root made of *sad* (s) and *ra'* (r) denotes severity or clamour, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, describing the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham): 'Thereupon his wife approached [the guests] with sarrah (a loud cry), and struck her face [in astonishment] and exclaimed: "A barren old woman [like me]!"' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 29)

She cried out due to her state of disbelief in the news because she was very old and barren so naturally unable to conceive. Another example is seen

is the following verse: 'And as for the 'Ad – they were destroyed by *sarsar* (a stormwind) furiously raging.' (*al-Haqqā*: 6). *Sarsar* is a wind that carries frost and makes a roaring sound.

Reflect upon the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...a frosty wind....' It means the wind has caused the frosty weather to be prevalent. Frost may be confined to a certain place, but when the wind blows, it carries this frost from one place to another and widens the scope of the area affected and harmed by the frosty weather. What would a frosty wind do? It can cause disasters, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...A frosty wind strikes and destroys the harvest of people who have wronged themselves....' (*Al-'Imran*: 117) The word used in the Arabic text of the verse is *harth* which literally means 'tilth' but is used here to refer to 'harvest'. We know the word means 'produce', but Allah *Glorified is He* refers to it with the word *harth* (tilth) so we realise that if we do not sow, we will not reap fruits. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you ever considered the seed which you tahruthun (cast upon the soil)? Is it you who cause it to grow – or are We the cause of its growth? [For] were it Our will, We could indeed turn it into chaff, and you would be left to wonder [and to lament].' (*al-Waqi'a*: 63-65)

Thus, tempestuous wind destroys tilth (which is a necessary action for the growth of crops). Tilth is the turning of land to make it soft so that weak roots can grow in it and be strong enough to penetrate it, making it possible for us to take sustenance from it. These roots are able, due to the softness of the tilled earth, to take in the air necessary for them to grow.

The condition of such a land destroyed by frosty wind is like that of disbelievers who spend their money in good ways; however, whatever they spend will be in vain and will avail them nothing before Allah *Glorified is He*. He illustrates this when He says (and true are His words): '... A frosty wind strikes and destroys the harvest of people who have wronged themselves. It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.' (*Al-'Imran*: 117).

This is the result of spending with an intention directed to other than Allah *Glorified is He*. Whatever is spent is fruitless in the end, exactly like tilth, in which a fierce, frosty wind has blown on and destroyed. The Arabic word *sarr* we have already introduced conveys the meanings of severity, chill, and

violence. Hatem At-Tai, the famous generous Arab *Allah be pleased with him* once said to his slave: Light the fire, for this night is bleak, and the wind, O son, is too icy for the weak. Let a passerby catch a glimpse of your fire. Bring a guest to us, and you will be set free! This generous man, Hatem At-Tai, promised to free his slave in case he guided a cold guest to the warmth of his house! A guest would be most welcome in a night of extreme cold, with icy winds that violently carry the frost everywhere. Villagers know that frost can ruin some kinds of crops. *Allah Glorified is He* brings forth this verse after confirming to us in the one preceding it that those who disbelieved will not be availed by their possessions and children, and their fate will be the fire. *He the Exalted and Almighty* then removes any doubt that might occur to the listener that the wealth disbelievers spend in good causes might avail them anything in the Hereafter, for it will not. Why is this?

Deeds are judged by intentions; one is driven by a certain intention that motivates him to do a given deed. Consider the deeds of disbelievers: When they spend their money on good causes, like distributing aids, relieving the distressed or establishing hospitals, do they direct their intentions to *Allah Glorified is He* Who has granted them all these blessings? Or are they driven by greed for fame, commemoration in history and praise for their humanity?

Doubtlessly, they do good for the sake of fame, commemoration, or praise, for they believe in nothing beyond that. They do not believe in the existence of Allah, the One God, nor do they believe in the coming of Judgment Day when they will be held accountable for what they had done in this life. We have said before when one does a good deed, recompense should be sought from whomever he has done that deed for. As long as disbelievers work to earn fame and esteem in this world, they already receive their fair recompense based on their intention.

Allah Glorified is He gives us parables so that we may reflect. The meaning of a parable is as follows: An abstract concept, the understanding of which might be above some minds, so it is compared to a material thing that everyone knows. We all know that material things are the means by which abstract concepts can be comprehended. A child first learns to be aware of material things, and then he develops understanding of abstract concepts through these things.

A child, for example, would see a fire, try to catch it and, as a result, is burned by it. That makes him develop the idea that fire burns. He would taste honey, find it sweet, and, therefore, develop the idea that honey is sweet. A child would realize that colocynth is bitter when he tastes it, and so on. Thus, one learns abstract concepts through the tangible things he realises with his senses.

Tangible things, as we know, are detected by means of the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch, and each of the sense plays a key role in developing conception. The human body is rich in abilities and skills, the effects of which we are aware of although we are not aware of their means of functioning. For example, there is depth perception, which allows a person to judge whether an object he looks at is near or far. Weight perception allows a person to gauge the weight of an object he is carrying; he feels its weight by means of a sense other than the five senses. Weight perception allows a person to find out which of two objects is heavier through the muscles that carry these objects; one knows which one requires more effort to lift. Another sense peripheral to the five senses is the sensation of an interval; this is by means of which a person grasps a piece of material with his fingertips, and by doing so, determines whether it is thicker than another piece of material. To gauge the thickness of something, it must be held and touched between two parts of the body.

Therefore, we have many senses that lead us to realise abstract concepts. All perceptions are born of sensation. Reflect upon these words of Allah *Glorified is He*: '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)

These are the means of perception, and Allah *Glorified is He* mentions hearing and sight first because they are the primary senses. After this, He mentions minds that harbors abstract concepts, emotions and so on. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* wills to set forth a parable of an abstract matter, on which minds might differ, He uses a tangible matter on which the senses agree. In language, we use similes, so when a student does not understand something, he may ask his teacher to compare that thing which is new to him to another thing that he knows and understands. One of us may ask another, 'Do you

know such-and-such person?' If the answer is 'No', He would try describing that person, who is unknown to his addressee, perhaps by comparing him to the height, colour, etc. of another person he knows. This is one way one knows how a thing that had been unknown to him. Allah *the Exalted* gives us parables based on tangible matters so that we can understand abstract matters. Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates to us how a disbeliever is afflicted with confusion when he worships other deities besides Allah by saying: 'Allah puts forward this illustration: can a man who has for his masters several partners at odds with each other be considered equal to a man devoted wholly to one master? All praise belongs to Allah, though most of them do not know.' (*az-Zumar*: 29)

With this clear example, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies to us the state and end result of a slave who is owned by several partners who are not in agreement and, instead, are in discord with one another. Naturally, this slave will be under intense pressure. The same is true in the case of associating partners with Allah *Glorified is He*: a person in this state will be internally divided between those who possess him as a slave, especially when they will be rivals to one another. Contrarily, the state of a believer who embraces monotheism is illustrated with a different parable: '... a man devoted wholly to one master...' (*az-Zumar*: 29).

Out of His Mercy, Allah *Glorified is He* simplifies for us a spiritual concept by means of a tangible parable familiar to us all so that we can see that a slave owned by a single master and receives orders from him alone is spared confusion and pressure. In the same way, Allah *Glorified is He* sets forth an example of those who spend money on charitable works, but direct their intentions to other than Allah *Glorified is He*. No matter how much they spend, their spending is in vain. Parables Allah draws in the Noble Quran have to be analysed with profoundness. We need to look at the complete state represented by the parable to fully comprehend its meaning. Allah likens an idolater who associates partners with Allah to a slave who is owned by several disputing masters. To grasp the meaning, we have to look at the example given as a whole, and not take it literally. It is a parable intended to explain a certain concept, not to be considered identical to the state illustrated. Here is another example Allah *Glorified is He* gives: 'And propound unto them the parable of the life of this world: [it is] like the water which We send down from the skies,

which is absorbed by the plants of the earth, but [in time] they turn into dry stubble, which the winds blow freely about. And it is Allah [alone] who determines all things.' (*al-Kahf*: 45)

Is the life of this world really like water? No, but the story of life in its entirety bears resemblance to the story Allah *Glorified is He* sets forth as a parable, which is that of rain falling and mixing with the earth that then quickens and produces plants with beautiful flowers, which, in turn, become dry stalks. Such is the truth about this world and its transient adornment: the beginning is splendid, full of delights, vigour and wonder; and its end is characterised with pain and destruction.

Allah *Glorified is He* shows us an abstract concept, the meaning of this life by comparing it to flowers and plants, the end of which become dry stalks, blown about by the wind. In another verse of The Quran, Allah says: '...and We reduce it to stubble, as if it had not flourished just the day before. This is the way We explain the revelations for those who reflect.' (*Yunus*: 24).

Now, let us look more deeply into the aforementioned verse: 'And whatever they give away in this life will be nullified: a frosty wind strikes and destroys the harvest of people who have wronged themselves. It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.' (*Al-'Imran*: 117)

The verse contains the two components of a simile: the tenor, or the disbelievers who spend their wealth for other than Allah *Glorified is He* and the vehicle, or the tilth which is afflicted by a freezing wind. The resemblance between them is that both situations result in futility.

Does the wind differentiate between the righteous and the evil? Does it destroy the harvest only of the latter and not of the former? Those who wrong themselves are afflicted with this disaster as a punishment. They are like the owners of the garden whose story Allah relates in the Quran: 'We have tried them as We tried the owners of a certain garden, who swore that they would harvest its fruits in the morning and made no allowance [for the Will of Allah]: a disaster from your Lord struck the garden as they slept and by morning it was stripped bare, a desolate land.' (*al-Qalam*: 17-21)

Allah *Glorified is He* recompensed them for their wrongdoing, but have we never seen a man who did not wrong himself, and as a result, lose his produce

by a disaster? We indeed do see this happen, yet a man who does not wrong himself bears the loss patiently and, therefore, earns reward from Allah *Glorified is He*. Perhaps by means of such an affliction, Allah *Glorified is He* has erased some unlawfully earned wealth that the man had unintentionally obtained.

For a believer, affliction and suffering bring reward, or may be meant as a means to purify his wealth from any ill-gotten money unintentionally earned. For a disbeliever, contrarily, no matter how much he spends of his wealth in charitable works, there will be no reward for him since he does not direct his intention to pleasing Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* closes this verse by saying: ‘...It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.’ (*Al-’Imran*: 117) He *the Exalted* does not wrong disbelievers when He makes their spending futile in the Hereafter; rather, they wrong themselves, for they did not seek, by their spending, to please Allah *Glorified is He*. They wrong themselves by disbelieving in Him, so their deeds avail them nothing with Him, and this is the Justice of Allah, the True God *Glorified is He*. In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا بِطٰنَةِ مِّنْ دُوْنِكُمْ لَا يٰۤاَلُوْنَكُمْ
حُبًا وَلَا وُدًّا مَّا عَنِتُّمْ قَدَ بَدَتِ الْبَغْضَاءُ مِنْ اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَمَا تُخْفِي
صُدُوْرُهُمْ اَكْبَرُ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِؕ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾

You who believe, do not take for your intimates such outsiders as spare no effort to ruin you and want to see you suffer: their hatred is evident from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made Our revelations clear for you; will you not use your reason? [118]
(The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 118)

When Allah *Glorified is He* addresses believers with His words ‘You who believe’, know that what comes next is an obligation from Him *the Exalted and Almighty*. When Allah *Glorified is He* calls the attention of those who believe in Him, He means to give them a command; commands are not fit to be addressed to other than believers. As for those who disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* when He calls them to embrace faith, He incites their minds to contemplate the signs of His creation.

He calls them to meditate on the sky, the earth, and the wonders of the universe so that they may come to believe that the universe has One God: Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*. When one believes in Allah, the One God, only then does he become ready to receive His commands.

When Allah *Glorified is He* addresses believers by saying: 'You who believe', He is thus preparing them for an obligation, a duty. Allah *Glorified is He* does not address disbelievers with His commands; rather, He calls them first to enter the domain of faith: 'O mankind! Worship your Lord...' (*al-Baqara*: 21). When a person enters the domain of faith, Allah *Glorified is He* elevates him to the status of His believing servants by commanding him to do what is right and forbidding him from doing what is wrong.

As long as one believes in Allah, the All-Powerful, All-Wise, Ever-Watchful Creator of all things, he must then pay heed to what Allah *Glorified is He* ordains for him so as to live his life correctly. Sometimes, it appears that Allah *Glorified is He* is calling the attention of the believers only to command them to believe, as when He says, 'You who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger...' (*an-Nisa*': 136).

One might wonder why Allah calls the attention of believers only to order them to believe. This command is, in essence, for them to continue to adhere to faith and strengthen it by submitting to the ordinances of Allah and obeying His orders. When Allah *Glorified is He* commands believers to do something they already have been doing, it means He wants them to be firm and constant in doing that thing which He loves. In the aforementioned example, when Allah says, 'You who believe, believe in Allah...' (*an-Nisa*': 136), it is a command to believers to be constant in faith and adhere to it firmly because human beings are apt to change and deviate. We know that Allah *Glorified is He* has given us free will which some people misuse and forsake faith after they had believed. Therefore, it is not just about proclaiming faith, but holding fast to it through time.

When we recite the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'You who believe', we understand that a new command will be given. Allah *Glorified is He* has made obedience subject to our free will and has made this honouring call an introduction to every command: 'You who believe'. Do not, O, believer,

search for the reason behind every ruling, for your mind may be too limited to go that far. Do not engage your mind in a needless pursuit, trying to answer this question, 'Why, Lord, do you command this?' Allah *Glorified is He* gives His ordinance only to those who believe in Him. As long as you believe that Allah is All-Wise, Omnipotent and Just, then trust Him and obey His commands whether you understand the reason behind them or not.

I have given this example before, and I will still repeat it: A person who suffers from indigestion would go to a digestive system doctor to seek specialised treatment. Trusting the doctor, the patient does not bother to think of his illness. He has chosen a specialist who will carry out a detailed examination, order the necessary tests, diagnose the illness, and then prescribe medication. When a doctor writes a prescription for a patient, the latter would not say, 'I won't take this medicine until you convince me of its benefit!' Rather, he just obeys the doctor, trusting his expertise, even though he is just a human being who is subject to error. What, then, when it comes to *the Almighty Creator Glorified is He*? Does it not befit a believer to trust His handling of all affairs? Work of the mind should be limited to reflecting the signs of Allah in order to attain faith. Once you have believed in Allah *Glorified is He* and that He is the All-Wise, and then you accept His rule: His guidance is the best for you, for He is the One Who has created you and knows what sets your life right.

Allah *Glorified is He* commands believers to observe mandatory *salat* (prayer) five times daily, and they just have to obey and not try to investigate into the reason behind this obligation. Allah *Glorified is He* has enjoined *salat* on you, and when you observe it, you feel that your soul has found peace and serenity. That makes you realise that tranquility associated with devotion is the instant fruit we receive when we obey Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, we realise this reason behind every command when we obey it. Allah the Most-Bounteous clarifies to us this essential aspect of faith in His words: '...Be mindful of Allah, and He will teach you: He has full knowledge of everything.' (*al-Baqara*: 282)

When you are mindful of Allah *Glorified is He* and obey His commands, He guides you to the reason, the wisdom behind it and makes you feel the tranquility associated with faith. So understanding follows from obedience, not vice versa.

Allah *Glorified is He* might delay revealing the wisdom behind some of His commands for centuries. For example, we remained for fourteen centuries without knowing the reason why we are forbidden from eating pork. Should the believers have delayed submission to that prohibition for fourteen centuries until they had labs and scientific instruments to analyse and discover the harm associated with eating it– the harm that has been scientifically corroborated? No.

The believers did not delay obedience of the law of Allah *Glorified is He*; they did comply, and the later generations then discovered the harm. This should, in turn, encourage us to obey every law of Allah *Glorified is He* even when the wisdom behind it is unknown to us. The reason for some rulings and commands may well be beyond the scope of the human mind. However, things will arise that will explain some of the rulings that mankind did not understand before, which should make us trust the wisdom behind every other ruling eventhough still undiscovered. This teaches us that the criteria on which devotion should be based is simply true faith, by which Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the believers: ‘You who believe’.

With these words, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all of His believing servants: O, you who have believed in Me as the Only God, take from Me this obligation. I have already given the example of the doctor and patient, yet, of course, Allah *Glorified is He* is above all comparison. Since we trust a doctor as a specialist in his field, one would take the medicine he prescribes believing that he will be cured by the Will of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Suppose you visited a sick person and asked him: “Why do you take this medication?” The sick person would normally reply: “Because the doctor has prescribed it for me.” Shouldn’t we then trust what Allah⁽¹⁾ prescribes for us? In the same way we must follow what Allah has told us purely because He has prescribed it and that it is coming from Him. This is the course of action

(1) “The Islamic concept of “Allah” is not the same as the Christian and Jewish concept of “God”. However, the word “Allah” does not refer to a tribal god or God of Muslims alone, rather, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (Who has no son). Therefore, we prefer to use “Allah” rather than “God” as it has a unique character. For example, 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.”

of people of understanding compared to those who claim to have understanding, and the difference between the two is most certainly noticeable. Those who have true understanding consider the mind as a means that leads them to the Ultimate Truth and not as an authority in itself that can judge or prevail over this Truth. The mind should be the means that leads us to the belief in Allah, but it should not be allowed to go beyond its limits.

After calling the believers and attracting their attention, Allah addresses them with His command: “O’ believers, do not take as betanah (intimates) those who are not from you...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 118). For as long as you believe, guard your faith against the whispers and suggestions of Satan and the plots of the enemies. The way to do that is to be careful of taking as close friends those who secretly harbor malice and grudges against you.

A man’s *bitanah* are his close friends, his inner circle, those he keeps as close company and confides in. From a linguistic perspective, the word *betanah* literally means the inner lining of an item of clothing. A coarse piece of cloth requires a tailor to add a soft inner lining because it will be in direct contact with the body. Similarly the close friends of a person are just like this: they are the soft and gentle company that captures their heart with kindness. In praise of The Medinan Muslims, the Helpers (*Al-Ansar*), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “The Helpers (Medinan Muslims) are the inner soft layer, whilst all the others are the outer garment.”

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* likens the Helpers to the layer of clothing that is the closest to the skin, an endearing expression which is meant to pay them respect for their acceptance of his call with gentleness and affection. Just as the *bitanah* of clothes is the closest part to the body, the part that protects it from the coarseness of the outer layer, it also refers to the closest friends who enter one’s life and either do them great good or great harm, based on their traits and purpose.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was protected against sin by the Grace of Allah, received Revelations from Him, and had Companions that any believer would look up to as role models. Take a look at how the Companion 'Ali ibn Abu Talib describes this noble Messenger in a conversation with his son, Al-Hussain *Allah be pleased with them both*: “Dear father, tell me

about the gatherings of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*” ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib replied: “The Messenger of Allah would not sit down or stand up without glorifying the Name of Allah.” In another narration, Ali replied: “The Messenger of Allah would not stop remembering and glorifying Allah.”

Sitting down or standing up is the act of moving from one position to another. Standing after having been sitting, or sitting after having been standing, is an action, a movement that Allah has made our bodies capable of doing. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would praise Allah with every action and every moment, being grateful for the blessings and the abilities the Creator *Exalted is He* has endowed him with. One may ask himself: “How many muscles do I use in order to sit or stand?”

Suffice to say that it takes a large number of muscles to move in order to lift or lower the body, a number that is unknown to most. What is it that makes these deaf limbs understand a person's will, so much so that they enable him to stand up or sit down whenever he wants? When you lift your hand, you do not know which muscles are moving in order for your hand to be lifted. This miraculous creation has been eulogized in the words of poets: “Within you is a smaller version of this miraculous universe!”

It is as though the entire world with all its wonders has been wrapped up inside you! You sleep or wake up whenever you want and your body obeys you in whatever you wish to do. Allah has made your muscles and all that is in your body completely subservient to you. This blessing is most felt and appreciated when you see another person stripped of the ability to move an arm. It is not you have a hand so you can move it, simply. Others do have hands, but they are unable to move them. Therefore, we realize that any authority which one exercises over his body is only by the Will and Grace of Allah, Who has subdued that body to him for his service.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “When any of you wakes up, let him say: “Praise is to Allah Who has returned to me my soul, given strength to my body, and allowed me to remember and praise Him.”

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* intended to teach us to remember and praise Allah at every physical movement, whenever we stand up, sit down, or wake up, etc. He taught us that at every movement we

should remember the One Who has created us and created within us the ability to move and control our bodies.

Let each of us ask himself: How many muscles need to move for a person to scratch his back, for example? This is unknown to most of us. Therefore, we should show reverence and gratitude to Allah by glorifying His Name at every movement, for He has given us those abilities.

Let us return to what 'Ali ibn Abu Talib said about The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: “The Messenger of Allah would not sit down or stand up without glorifying the Name of Allah.”

A point of reflection is the way The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* treated his *bitanah*. His caution in dealing with his Companions is worthy of admiration. He would not specify certain places for particular individuals to sit in and forbade assigning preferences to anyone. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would sit in any spot that was vacant and so would each of his Companions. He kept no special place near him for any of them so no one would imagine that he was preferred over the others. He treated them all equally. We see it now that some would reserve certain places for themselves at the mosque and almost forbid others from approaching them, but this is forbidden in Islam. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with them both*, said: “The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade pecking like a crow (i.e. seeming as if you were doing so when prostrating too quickly in prayer), stretching like a kneeling lion (i.e. flattening the forearms entirely against the ground, while prostrating in prayer), and for a man to reserve a place for himself at the mosque like the way camels choose places to settle in.”

'Ali ibn Abu Talib *may Allah be pleased with him* also added this description of The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: “When he visited someone, he would sit wherever there was an empty space; he would sit on the floor, eat on the floor, sit down to milk an ewe and accept the invitations of slaves.”

He was the very model of politeness. He was the noble Messenger of Allah and would sit anywhere and would never ask to be given a special or privileged seat at any gathering. He gave us an example to follow and was keen that every

Muslim should mingle with more of his brothers on a daily basis by sitting next to one today and tomorrow being beside another. By this, gatherings of the followers of Islam can result in creating unions among them all and make all Muslims a united ummah (used to refer to Muslims collectively: a group of brothers or a congregation of people sharing the same faith).

'Ali ibn Abu Talib *may Allah be pleased with him* said about Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* : “The Messenger of Allah would give each of his companions their share of his company so none of them would think that another was dearer than him to the Prophet.” He would not prefer one over another with a look or a word. By this conduct, Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* wanted to teach us that the believers are equal and that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all humankind and not to a particular group of people. He divided his attention equally among his companions so much so, that each of them would feel as though Allah sent the Messenger to him in particular!

Such were the ways of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He meant to give us an example to follow and to teach us that too much attachment to one person in particular more than others may cause injury to the unity of the whole. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* warns the believers that they are being ambushed by the disbelievers who wholeheartedly wish to defeat them and defy their faith, and they would not rest until they dissuade them from belief. Beware, O believers that they will sure plot against you and try to infiltrate you.

We all know that when Islam came, most of those who believed had relatives and friends etc from amongst the disbelievers. Therefore, Allah warned with great caution regarding these ties so that no believer would be deceived in thinking that family ties, friendships or any kind of alliance or relationship would prevent the disbelievers from harming them. Consequently Allah draws the attention of the believers and tells them that brotherhood in faith prevails over all relationships. This is a warning to the believers so that they will not be deceived by those who approach them lovingly in the name of friendship as the gap between belief and disbelief cannot be removed or even narrowed. The disbelievers will not refrain from plotting against you and your religion in whatever way they can, and they will never tire of trying. For

this reason, Allah addresses the believers with His command: “Oh you who believe, guard your faith and do not take the disbelievers as close allies or friends or they will continuously attempt to dissuade you from belief. They would not sit back or give up the desire of destroying you. What will the disbelievers do if you take them as bosom friends? The answer is this: They “... spare no effort to ruin you...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 118) They will never stop plotting against you and will seek every means to corrupt you. Allah says: “Oh you who believe, allado not take for your betanah those who are not from you. They will spare no effort in ruining you and wanting to see you suffer. Their hatred has become evident from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made Our Revelations clear for you are you not then going to use your reason?” (*Al-‘Imran*: 118)

This is a direct command to the believers so as not to take the disbelievers as close friends or advisors. A believer has faith to discipline him, whereas a disbeliever adheres to no law that can deter him. Allowing the disbelievers to be your close allies will give them a chance to sow the seeds of corruption among you for which they will spare no effort. It always pleases them to injure the believers “... and [they] want to see you suffer...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 118), and Allah does not want to inflict distress or suffering on the believers, and in this regard He says: “... And if Allah had wished, He could have put you into difficulties. Truly, Allah is *The Almighty*, All-Wise.” (*al-Baqara*: 220)

If He *the Exalted* had so willed, He would have enjoined on you many things that would involve difficulty but He has made things easy for you, O believers. The disbelievers, in contrast, want to throw the believers into hardship and suffering.

Now, from where does suffering arise? A believer acts upon the command of Allah, and he does what He commands and avoids what He forbids. The disbelievers try to convince a believer in doing what his religion does not allow just so that he would be stripped of inner peace. Torment arises within when one’s actions conflict with his principles, a situation which causes overwhelming worry and confusion due to the uneasy feeling of one’s conscience.

We see this nowadays in the societies that enjoy the highest levels of economic prosperity. In a society where all material needs are answered, the old are provided

for with health and social insurance for everyone and high salaries, people should be contented. Nevertheless, we see many such societies where people are generally exhausted, suicide rates are soaring, and perversion is so rife. Loss of inner peace and failure to reconcile with conscience are to be held culprit for this suffering: Peace of mind cannot be attained unless one believes in his Creator and acts upon His guidance. For example, nothing stings the conscience of a man when he looks at his wife because his conscience is in harmony with his action. The contrary happens to him when he turns his eyes to a woman who is unlawful for him as he is afraid of getting caught, whilst doing so. If he is caught in the act, he would tremble and his conscience would be in turmoil.

To protect them from such conflict, Allah warns the believers about the dangers of taking close friends from other than themselves because they will never stop trying to cause them harm and suffering. Suffering comes when a disbeliever tries to get a believer to slide into deviation, confusion, and trouble of his conscience, taking advantage of family ties or friendship. It comes when a believer has to go against his religion to please his disbelieving relatives and friends etc. A believer cannot satisfy both what the religion requires from him and what a disbeliever wants him to do, therefore creating a gap that comes in between his conscience and actions, hence the suffering and trouble. The disbelievers would not miss any opportunity to corrupt the believers; they take advantage of every opportunity and use it against the believers.

“Oh you who believe, do not take for your *betanah* those who are not from you. They will spare no effort in ruining you and wanting to see you suffer. Their hatred has become evident from their mouths...” (*Al-'Imran*: 118).

As long as hatred has emerged from their mouths, how can we take them as close friends? When you surround yourself with a group of disbelievers and make them your close company or advisors, be aware that you are only among a group of hypocrites who are not in harmony with themselves and who will spare no effort to drag you to their confusion and misguidance. A hypocrite says with his tongue the opposite of what he harbors in his heart. Then, when he is among those like him, he scornfully passes on what the believers have said.

This is how powerful the hatred that comes from the mouths of the hypocrites is, who are neither one thing nor another, neither with one group,

nor with the other. They have no allegiance to either faith or disbelief. The amount of hatred that manifests itself before the believers is but a small pebble of the mountain their hearts conceal. The hypocrites would unveil such hatred only among themselves and would exchange words of scorn and mockery of the believers only in their absence. Still, Allah knows best what they mean and what they conceal, so He exposes them to the believers.

The Omnipotent Knowledge of Almighty Allah encompasses all secrets. The disbelievers and hypocrites should have known that Allah guards the faith of the believers and warns them against the subtlest dangers that might threaten it. However, the people of disbelief and hypocrisy were foolish and they were taught a lesson when Allah revealed His words: "...their hatred is evident from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse..." (*Al-'Imran*: 118). They had an opportunity to defend themselves had their hearts been free of the bitterness ascribed to them in the noble verse, but they came to realize that Allah was already aware of what was in their hearts. Hatred in the hearts of those malicious disbelievers appeared from their mouths, but who told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions of what was in the hearts of the disbelievers, which was even worse? Almighty Allah exposed them when He sent down His words: "... but what their hearts conceal is far worse..." (*Al-'Imran*: 118). Therefore, the believers have no excuse since Allah has guided and showed them how to protect their faith. He has explained to the believers that their enemies will never stop plotting against them to dissuade them from faith, so the believers have to be careful.

This is why Allah closes the verse by saying: "...We have made Our *ayat* (signs, revelation) clear for you so will you not then use your reason?" (*Al-'Imran*: 118) The signs sent down by Almighty Allah clarify this, and we have already learnt that the word *ayat* (literally meaning "miracles") can refer to either Quranic Revelations or signs of the creation. Both the Quran and the universe flourish in divine miracles. Let us consider what Allah says about this in relation to the Quran: "When We substitute one verse for another– and Allah already knows best what He reveals– they say, 'You are just making it up,' but most of them have no knowledge." (*an-Nahl*: 101)

In relation to the universe, He *the Exalted and Almighty* says: “The night, the day, the sun, the moon, are only a few of His *ayat* (signs). Do not bow down in worship to the sun or the moon, but bow down to Allah Who created them, if it is truly Him that you worship.” (*Fussilat*: 37)

So we understand that the word *ayat* denotes an amazing thing, a miraculous sign that we must heed from which to derive guidance. In this light, *ayat* (as in verses) of the Quran presents to us guidance from Allah and *ayat* (as in signs) of the universe bear testimony to the Truth of the Quranic verses. A believer should reflect on both in order to be guided to the Straight Path of Allah. The believers have indeed taken heed of the warning. The aforementioned verse has forbidden them from taking close friends or advisors from other than the followers of the faith and the following verse proves that they have understood the message and submitted to the command of Allah: “This is how it is: here you are, you love them, but they do not love you; you believe in all the Scriptures and when they meet you, they say, ‘We believe,’ but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in rage at you...” (*Al-'Imran*: 119).

هَآأَنْتُمْ أَوَّلَآءِ يُحِبُّونَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِبُّونَكُمْ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْكِتَابِ كُلِّهِ وَإِذَا
لَقَوْكُمْ قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَإِذَا خَلَوْا عَصَوْا عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ أَلَا نَمْلِكُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ قُلْ
مُوتُوا بِغَيْظِكُمْ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١١٩﴾

This is how it is: here you are, you love them, but they do not love you; you believe in all the Scriptures and when they meet you, they say, ‘We believe,’ but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in rage at you. [Prophet], say, ‘Die of rage [if you wish]!’ God knows exactly what is in everyone’s hearts [119] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 119)

Allah still addresses the believers on the issue of closeness and alliance with the disbelievers. The verse implies that the faith of the believers has remained firm so much so, that it was they who tried to dissuade the disbelievers from denying the Truth and have them taste the sweetness of belief. The efforts of the disbelievers were rendered fruitless. They did not manage to drag the believers to deviation or stop themselves from denying faith. The only choice left

for them, therefore, was hypocrisy, so they said to the believers: "... 'We believe'..." (*Al- 'Imran*: 119) The verse testifies that the believers have indeed grasped the admonition sent down to them by Allah, but why, then, does He say: "... Here you are; you love them, but they do not love you..."?

Love on the side of the believers was represented in their keenness to save the disbelievers from the tough outcomes of disbelief both in this life and in the afterlife. This is true love, but did the disbelievers reciprocate that love? No. They wanted to drag the believers into disbelief which proves the fact that they harboured nothing except hatred and grudges for the believers. The disbelievers, however, completely failed to achieve their purpose, so they resorted to lying by saying: "... 'We believe'..." (*Al- 'Imran*: 119) Since the believers remained absolutely firm and their faith was undeviating, the disbelievers had no choice but to cheat them through hypocrisy: "...and when they meet you, they say, 'We believe,'..." (*Al- 'Imran*: 119) Despair is what drove them to making that allegation despite their hatred already appearing from their mouths. In their perplexity and rage, they failed to let their words support their behavior. The Muslims already began to restrain their love for the disbelievers which ignited worries of the latter who feared that if the Muslims continued to be so constantly firm, their would be no chance for them to deviate or harm them. In order to avoid this, they claimed to have embraced faith and suppressed their grudges until they were alone to spell it out secretly, away from the believers. Nevertheless, Allah has exposed their real attitude to the believers by saying: "... but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in rage at you..." (*Al- 'Imran*: 119). What does it mean to "bite"?

Linguistically, the word "biting" means holding something between the jaws in order to tear it. The aforementioned verse makes use of the habit of "biting the fingertips" to depict the rage of the disbelievers. It is a forced nervous reaction that involves no thinking or control. No one wants to keep on biting their fingertips since it is a painful thing. Despite this, excessive rage would push a person to involuntarily bite their fingertips. It is as though the feeling of anger automatically prevails over the feeling of pain and almost eliminates it. Where does this rage come from? What ignited the disbelievers' rage was failure to dissuade the believers even slightly from adhering to the

guidance of Allah. Rather, the opposite happened; the believers tried to attract the disbelievers to the light of faith. The disbelievers attempted to infiltrate the believers in the name of friendship in order to spread corruption among them. Failing to achieve their purpose this made them fall into extreme rage. One would fall prey to rage when they are unable to vent their anger on their enemies, so if a believer wants to counter the grudge of his opponent, he should shower kindness and generosity to him, an act which will only increase their rage and bitterness. Islam teaches a believer not to repay an injury or injustice done to them and that two wrongs do not make a right. Instead, a believer's conduct and attitude should be based on the following narrative: "We do not repay those who disobey Allah with regard to us except by obeying Him with regard to them."

The Muslims' kindness to them strips them of their power to harm and therefore only hardens their grudge, rage, and bitterness against Islam. The Early Muslims behaved in this way and their faith was as firm as the mountains.

The enemies of Islam disobey Allah by the manner in which they treat Muslims, but it befits a dignified believer to offer kindness and generosity as a reward for this hatred and injury. Therefore seeing their plots rendered futile, rage and grudge eat into the hearts of the enemies of Islam. Once alone, they release their repressed rage so much so, that they bite their own fingertips which, as we know, is a forced nervous reaction spontaneously resulting from anger and failure to fulfill one's purpose. Every perceptual influence on the human soul causes an emotional response that manifests itself through involuntary physical reaction. Arouse someone's anger and they will immediately fall into a fit of verbal frenzy. Such an immediate response is usually associated with warm heartedness. As for a person who can stay composed at times of anger, he should be treated with caution. Such a person would continue to check his emotions and it is just unpredictable when anger and bitterness overpower him. As the saying goes: "Beware of the rage of a forbearing person," i.e. when emotions accumulate in a patient heart, no one knows when the dam will overflow.

So perception arouses emotions which a person responds to with a physical action. Islamic Law does not require a person to be a voiceless stone without ever reacting; rather, it simply requires a Muslim to be polite and reasonable

in his reaction. Allah guides the believers to this discipline by praising in the Quran those who: "...restrain their anger and pardon people– Allah loves those who do good." (*Al- Imran*: 134)

The Quran recognizes that some events will make a person angry and the one who never feels angry at all behaves in a way that is inconsistent with human nature. Allah wants the human being to remain a human being, with the natural emotions and reactions associated with his disposition; however, our Creator and Guide, wants to refine the reactions of this human being. We have the best example in The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by his reaction to the death of his son, Ibrahim. Upon hearing of this news, he said: "The eyes shed tears, and the heart grieves, yet we do not say except that which pleases our Lord. O Ibrahim, for your loss we are deeply saddened!"

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has struck a balance between emotions and faith. Cry we must. Grieve we must. We are not expected to remain feelingless in the face of hardship, but we are only required to react in a way that shows respect for Allah. The Quran requires a Muslim to be an upright person, yet it does not teach us that "upright" means to act like a creature made of iron or stone where nothing can change or affect him. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* describes the true believers by saying: "...people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers..." (*al-Ma'ida*: 54)

So a believer is not a creature who is set to always be humble or always be hard; rather he reacts differently to different circumstances, which is normal. When a situation demands humility and modesty, a believer should be humble; when a situation demands strength in the face of arrogant disbelief, a believer should be stern. Allah *the Almighty* says about the believers: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. You see them kneeling and prostrating, seeking Allah's bounty and His good pleasure..." (*al-Fath*: 29).

Therefore, a believer is not made to constantly be lenient or tough. Instead, he responds to events, so when a believer is among believers, he is compassionate and when he is confronting the disbelievers, he is strong and severe. Allah *Glorified is He* has not created a human being to remain continuously fixed to a single pattern of behavior. Allah just wants a believer to refine his behavior in

the face of events, so He says in praise of the believers: "...those who restrain their anger and pardon people— Allah loves those who do good." (*Al-'Imran*: 134)

He *the Exalted* also says: "If you [believers] have to respond to an attack, make your response proportionate..." (*an-Nahl*: 126). So Allah does not forbid a believer from punishing someone for their crime or to fight them in order to restore his rights which have been taken away from him. This is because Allah has created humankind and knows them best. He does not want us to act against our nature otherwise our very faith would be endangered. If a believer relinquished his rights, the disbelievers would give themselves free rein in corruption and evildoing. For this end, a believer should understand the rules of carrying out legal punishments even if it is against the believers who commit crimes. This is to make it clear to everyone that anyone who dares transgress the limits set by Allah must and will receive his fair recompense. Allah even encourages a believer to transcend revenge. Therefore, a believer may either execute punishment in proportion to the offense done or rise above recompense and heed the words of Allah when he says: "... but if you are patient, it will certainly be best for those who are patient." (*an-Nahl*: 126)

Allah has prescribed for the believers the rule of retribution but he also guided them on how to rise above revenge and commit themselves to patience. This way, Allah does not want to set human nature in a stone mould otherwise He would not have created this variable nature within us. He *the Exalted* explains to us that there exists the feeling of anger but that a believer should try to keep check on his anger and should not express it in an overdone manner. When a believer can overcome the frenzy of anger, it means he has managed to pass the test and transcend nervousness. So we've learnt that restraining one's anger means that the believer does not express his exasperation emotionally. That is, if someone insults you, you do not insult them in return. This suppression of anger means keeping emotions in the heart. If a believer rises above this and refrains from even getting agitated, he takes the rage out of his heart and truly rises above the situation. Allah describes him as having attained the rank of utmost devotion by saying: "and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)." (*Al-'Imran*: 134) Therefore, by using kind words, a believer treats the one who angers him better.

What would the attitude of the person who offended you be then, O believer, after you first restrained your anger, then forgave and after that -if you managed to take the rage out of your heart- you reached the third stage which represents the peak of faith '*ihsan*' (utmost devotion) as Allah says: "and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)." (*Al-Imran*: 134). The person who provoked your anger would certainly reconsider his action and regret what he has done.

Islam does not neglect human emotions when it requires believers to treat well those who treat them badly. Those who think deeply will see that Islam gives the believers the right to behave according to the human nature. This is evident in The Quran when Allah says: "And if you punish [an attacker, O believers], punish similarly to that with which you were harmed." (*an-Nahl*: 126). However, Islam elevates the believer to a higher level.

When we consider this, figuratively, as an economical issue (a matter of loss and gain) we will conclude that the believer has made a gain. For example, when a father sees that one of his sons has wronged the other, the father's heart will be with the one who has been wronged. Imagine that a person abuses one of Allah's servants?! Allah, as The Lord and Protector, will certainly be on the side of his servant who has been wronged. We know that a person once said to a man who was very close to Allah: 'How is it that you treat well those who harm you?!' The man replied: 'should I not treat well those who have been the cause of Allah being on my side?'

Let us now return to the rage of the disbelievers towards the believers. The disbeliever is offended because his rival, the believer, wishes him to have faith and has no malice in his heart whereas the disbeliever is full of enmity. It leads the disbeliever to nearly lose his mind. That is why the True Lord says: "but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in rage at you." (*Al-Imran*: 119)

The meaning of 'find themselves alone' is that when they are in a gathering composed entirely of disbelievers they openly announce their hatred for the believers. They bite their fingertips in rage in the absence of those who believe in Allah. If these disbelievers had an atom's weight of contemplation, they would have wondered how the Quran exposed them when they had carried out this action behind the backs of the believers.

Did their thoughts not lead them to the notion that these believers had a Lord who informed His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, of these hidden matters and that the Messenger then passed them on to the believers?

Despite this, they did not understand this exposure of their conduct: “but when they are alone, they bite their fingertips in rage at you.” (*Al-'Imran*: 119) Here, we should be aware that there are things that might cause rage, but a person might be too frightened to show his reaction. If someone makes you angry, you might go straight to him and be emotionally reactive or you might keep your emotions to yourself, which is known as ‘diversion of emotions’. An angry person’s heart is filled with rage. The opponent whom he would react wrathfully against might be powerful and influential. As a result he timidly avoids a fiery outburst against that person. So, he then vents his anger out on himself, by biting his fingertips. If this is the case, the True Lord says to His Messenger: ‘Say: “[Prophet], say, ‘Die of rage [if you wish]!’ Allah most definitely knows what is in everyone’s hearts.”’ (*Al-'Imran*: 119) What this verse is telling the disbelievers is, the rage that the believers cause within you, O’ disbelievers, will continue until you perish in your rage, so your attempt to draw the believers into disbelief is futile. ‘Say: “Die of rage!”’ (*Al-'Imran*: 119)

We know that when a person is commanded to do something that is not of his choice, such as dying, and he has to choose between this and something that he is capable of choosing such as rage, it means that the commandment has been issued to him to remain a prisoner of what is within his power, which is rage, until death comes to him.

When the True Lord says: “Die of rage” (*Al-'Imran*: 119), this means that the disbelievers would not be able to perish but would remain in a state of rage until they perish because they do not know when they would die. Therefore they would remain in a state of rage against the believers and for as long as the disbelievers are enraged by the believers; this indicates that the believers are implementing their religion correctly.

This verse is a conveyor of glad tidings to the believers and a severe warning to the disbelievers: “Say [Prophet], ‘Die of rage [if you wish]!’ Allah most definitely knows exactly what is in everyone’s hearts.” (*Al-'Imran*: 119).

The True Lord is telling us that He has full knowledge of what is in the hearts, i.e. the things that occur to the mind but have not yet been articulated as speech and He *Glorified is He* said before: “but what their hearts conceal is far worse.” (*Al-Imran*: 118)

As long as He is the True Lord Who has full knowledge of what the hearts conceal, He is able not only to requite them for the physical actions that they do, but is also able to requite them by exposing the actions that they conceal in their hearts. After this, He says:

إِنْ تَمَسَّكُمْ حَسَنَةٌ تَسُوهُمْ وَإِنْ تُصِبْكُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَفْرَحُوا بِهَا
وَإِنْ تَصِيرُوا تَتَّقُوا لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا
يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطٌ

They grieve at any good that befalls you [believers] and rejoice at your misfortunes. But if you are steadfast and conscious of God, their scheming will not harm you in the least: God encircles everything they do [120] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 120)

The Quran is the word of Allah, and He *Glorified is He* has absolute omnipotence and complete self-sufficiency. Several expressions for one meaning might actually differ because every situation has its appropriate expression. Allah selects the appropriate term with absolute accuracy. He *Glorified is He* says: “Man was truly created anxious. When misfortune touches him he is distressed but when good fortune comes his way he is stingy. Except those who pray and are consistent in their prayers.” (*al-Ma'arij*: 19-23)

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: “Anything good that happens to you [Prophet] is from Allah and anything bad that happens to you is [ultimately] from yourself. We have sent you as a messenger to people and Allah is sufficient as a witness.” (*an-Nisa*: 79)

Allah *the Exalted* sometimes talks about good and evil ‘coming’, and sometimes refers to what happens to mankind as the ‘befalling’ of good or evil. In the verse which we are currently examining, we find the two expressions, for He *the Exalted* says: “If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them; and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it...” (*Al-Imran*: 120). He did not refer to

both as 'coming to you', nor as 'befalling you'. This is the speech of a Wise Lord and when we examine the meaning closely, we will surely say: 'This is a speech that none but a Wise Lord would say.'

Let us now define the terms 'coming' and 'befalling'. Some scholars say they mean the same thing citing as evidence for this when Allah says: "Man was truly created anxious. When misfortune touches him he is distressed but when good fortune comes his way he is stingy. Except those who pray and are consistent in their prayers." (*al-Ma'arij*: 19-21)

However, we say that the word 'coming' (which in Arabic is "*mass*") and linguistically means 'touching') is the establishment of a connection between two components. If a man touches his wife, we say he needs to make the lesser ablution because he has only touched her. It is nothing more than a touch so he has no need to make the greater ablution. As for 'befalling', it means more than just touching. The one who strikes someone else might give them a bump on the head. The hand makes contact with the cheek and injures the temple (in Arabic the word for 'injure' is *isaba*), which is the same as the word for 'befall'). So, we see that there is a difference between 'coming' and 'befalling' and when the True Lord says: "If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them" (*Al-'Imran*: 120).

This means that the good fortune that comes is not much, not a great one but only some gain or a small amount of wealth. In our daily lives, we find people who are enraged simply because their rival earns ten pence more and someone might say to them: 'why do you not keep your rage until he earns one hundred pounds, for example?' This kind of anger at small instances of good fortune indicates that any good that comes to the believers will only cause annoyance and outrage to the disbelievers. By the mere coming of good fortune to the believers, the disbelievers are aggravated; what then, about bad fortune?

The True Lord says: "and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it" (*Al-'Imran*: 120). The disbelievers rejoice at any evil that befalls the believers, though, in accordance to human nature, those who hold grudges should become merciful in such a situation: It is enough of a calamity to befall a person that you see those who hate him show him mercy! That is, it is enough evidence that a person has been surrounded with calamity that those who had

previously held grudges against him show him mercy, and say: 'By Allah, I feel sorry for him!'

So, when the believers were encircled with difficulty, did this change the disbelievers' attitude? No. The disbelievers used to rejoice at the difficulties of the believers and when even the slightest bit of good fortune came to the believers, they were outraged. The True Lord says: "If good fortune comes to you, it grieves them" (*Al- 'Imran*: 120) and this refers to any slight good fortune that may come to them. Allah also says: "and if evil befalls you, they rejoice in it. But if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Allah, their deceit cannot harm you at all" (*Al- 'Imran*: 120). In other words no matter what they plot against you, they will never harm you.

What is required from you is to show patience in the face of their enmity, evil, their rejoicing at your discomfort and their grief in the good that comes to you. Have patience, and you will be invincible. Be patient, and their deceit will never affect you. Be patient and be pious to Allah. This will guarantee that Allah will be on your side. "But if you are patient in adversity and are conscious of Allah then their deceit will never harm you at all" (*Al- 'Imran*: 120).

What is deceit? Deceit is that you plot and plan to harm someone, whilst making it appear that it was someone else who plotted against them. It is planning to hurt others. The word deceit (which in Arabic is '*kayd*'), is derived from the two Arabic words '*kayd*' (deceit) '*Kabid*' (liver). Both words refer to one meaning because whatever harms the liver causes pain, as it is one of the strongest organs of the human body and if it is harmed, the person is injured and incapacitated. There is a saying in Arabic which says: 'So-and-so has reached the liver of the truth', i.e. he has reached the core of the issue about which he is speaking.

What does "plot by night" mean? They say: plotting is not evidence of bravery. When you see someone planning and engaging in plots, know that he is a coward because a brave person does not plot and plan behind one's back. Only those who are too weak to face confrontation do so. If you are patient in the midst of their plotting and are conscious of Allah then their deceit will never harm you because Allah will be with you.

The True Lord ends the verse with the noble words: "Verily, Allah encompasses all that they do" (*Al-'Imran*: 120). The word 'encompasses' explains to you that He has full knowledge and awareness of everything. Encompassment means that nothing escapes Him. This verse is referring to a specific event in the history of Islam about which Allah, the True Lord says with emphasis: "But if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Allah then their deceit will never harm you at all: for, verily, Allah encompasses all that they do" (*Al-'Imran*: 120). We must all keep in mind the truth of this statement.

Allah also says:

وَإِذْ غَدَوْتَ مِنْ أَهْلِكَ تُبَوِّئُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَقَاعِدَ لِلْقِتَالِ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢١﴾

**[Prophet], remember when you left your home at dawn
to assign battle positions to the believers: God hears and
knows everything [121] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 121)**

On this occasion (the battle of Uhud), the disbelievers were three thousand in number, whereas the believers were the minority, with only seven hundred warriors. The True Lord verifies the truth of His words when he says: "But if you are patient in adversity and conscious of Allah then their deceit will never harm you at all" (*Al-'Imran*: 120) ; and the meaning here is not a secret plot; rather, it refers to their open action, i.e. remember the truth of this matter, "when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning" (*Al-'Imran*: 121). Here it refers to 'Aisha's apartment because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was there at the time when the disbelievers of Quraysh wanted to avenge the dead and the captives of Badr. They gathered their hordes. Every individual from the battle of Badr had two horses and men. After the battle of Badr, their leader Abu Sufyan told them: 'Tell your women not to weep for the dead because weeping takes away sadness, as they used to refer to tears as the "cleansers of sadness" or the "dissolvers of griefs" and when a grieving person weeps, those around him say: 'leave him to find rest.'

If the women grieved and wept for those who died in the battle of Badr, the urgency of revenge would have subsided and so Abu Sufyan said: 'Tell them (the women) not to weep.' He wanted the rage over Badr to remain until revenge is taken. Three thousand warriors all assembled in the ranks of disbelief

at Uhud and The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sought the advice of his companions in the matter and sent for one of the leaders of the hypocrites, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul whom he had not called on before except in this battle. 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul and many of the *Ansar* (the people of Medina who supported The Prophet Muhammad) said: 'O Messenger of Allah, we have never gone out of the city to fight except that the enemy have caused us great loss and no enemy has ever entered upon us except that we have caused them great loss and so we think that you should not go out to them. If they stay, their plight will be wretched and if they enter, the men will fight them full on and the women and children will pelt them with stones from above and they will return home dejected.' Yet, other companions suggested going out of Medina to fight them, by saying: 'O Messenger of Allah, come out with us to our enemies, so they will not think that we are too cowardly and weak to face them.' The people who held this opinion did not leave the The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* alone until he had agreed with what they wanted.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered his house, put on his armour and took up his weapon. Those who had insisted that The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be better off going out to fight began to think that they had persuaded him into doing something that he did not agree with, so they regretted their actions and when he came out, they said: 'O Messenger of Allah, we have persuaded you, and it was not for us to do so. If you wish, stay.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: "It is not for a Prophet, when he has put on his armour, to remove it until he has fought."

So they went out to fight and it is this event that the Quran reminds us of to show the truthfulness of the previous verse: "But if you are patient in adversity and are conscious of Allah then their deceit will never harm you at all: for, verily, Allah encompasses all that they do". And [remember] when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to post the believers at their stations for the battle [of Uhud]" (*Al- 'Imran*: 120-121).

Notice the syntactic precision of the words of Allah when He says: "And [remember] When you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to

post the believers at their stations for the battle [of Uhud]" (*Al-'Imran*: 120), i.e. to identify a place to which they would return and remain. The word 'stations' here (*maqa'id*) means fixed positions, for war is composed of attacking, retreating, and standing. Allah makes firm those who fight in battle as though they are made to reside in their homeland. It is as though the Messenger's command to the troops includes that they should give no attention to anything except to their positions, which He *peace and blessings be upon him* had fixed and arranged for them. It is as if these stations have become their homeland and the future of their faith depends on this.

So, His words: "*Wa-idh ghadawta min ahlika tubawwi'o*" "And [remember] when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to post" (*Al-'Imran*: 121) i.e. to identify the stations for "the believers", and to say to them: 'your abode is now the position in which I have placed you'. the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* (God) *peace and blessings be upon him* took the archers, who numbered fifty, and appointed Abdullah ibn Jubayr as their leader, then, said to them: "Stay in your station here, and protect our backs. If you see that we have gained victory, do not join us; and if you see us being slain, do not come to our aid."

But they were unable to do this because they were inclined towards the battle-spoils, and Allah willed that experience to take place in the presence of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* *peace and blessings be upon him*, To show the believers, in every battle that followed, that abiding by the instructions of the leader is the basis of being in the military; and that if you disobey the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, you will surely be defeated.

Someone might say: 'Islam was defeated at Uhud.' The answer is: no, Islam was victorious; if the Muslims had been given victory at Uhud, despite the disobedience of the archers to the order of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, would the commands of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have been followed?

So, the Muslims who failed to obey the order were defeated, and they had to have this experience, whilst they were with the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When victory seemed destined for

the believers early on in the battle, the troops began to busy themselves with gathering plunder and spoils, and the archers said: 'Everyone will take the spoils, and leave us with nothing!' So they went down to take the spoils, and Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him*, who was still at that time on the religion of his tribe, took the opportunity to encircle them, and chaos erupted. The news of the death of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spread among the people, so they turned and fled, and the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* (God) *peace and blessings be upon him* began to call: "Come to me, servants of God!" until a group of his companions rallied round him, and he rebuked them for fleeing, when they said: 'O Messenger of Allah, 'Let our fathers and mothers be sacrificed for you! We heard news of your death, and our hearts trembled, and we turned on our heels!' An accurate chronicle of the battle of Uhud shows that it was neither a defeat nor a victory because the battle was undecided.

Afterwards the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* called upon those who were with him at Uhud to go and find the enemy. They overtook them at Hamra'a Al-Asad, and the disbelievers fled. Allah wanted to give the believers a lesson in the importance of following the orders of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. The True Lord said: "And [remember] When you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning to post the believers at their stations for the battle [of Uhud]" (*Al- 'Imran*: 120). The True Lord reminds us of the responsibilities of the leader, who appoints duties, and the ranks of the army; the right wing, the left wing, the forefront army, and the back army.

He ends the verse by saying: "and Allah is Hearing and Knowing" (*Al- 'Imran*: 121) so that the believers know that He indeed witnessed His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* placing the believers in battle array, and that He is All Knowing of what the intentions were because the purpose of the war was defending the faith: not just submission of outer forms, but submission of hearts, on the first place.

The True Lord then says: "When two parties among you were about to lose courage, but Allah was their ally... ".

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَّائِفَتَانِ مِنْكُمْ أَنْ تَفْشَلَا وَاللَّهُ وَلِيَهُمَا وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Remember when two groups of you were about to lose heart and God protected them – let the believers put their trust in God [122] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 122)

To 'lose heart' means to be afraid; and the two groups were Banu Haritha of Al-Aws, and Banu Salama of Al-Khazraj. They were the left and right flanks, and were on their way to battle, when they heard the hypocrite Ibn Salul say: 'There will be no fighting, for as soon as the troops of Quraysh see us, they will flee.'

The hypocrite Ibn Salul then said to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'If we knew how to fight, we would have followed you.' But 'Abdullah ibn Haritha said: 'I implore you for Allah's sake, and I implore you for the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*'s (God's) sake, and I implore you for your religion's sake!' And so they went to fight, and stood firm, after they had considered going back.

What does 'were about to' mean here? To be about to do something refers to the mind when it inclines to a certain action. This inclination then moves to the second stage, and becomes a firm intention. What they did was just an inclination to withdraw; but they stood firm. Why was this? By this, Allah wanted to emphasize that Islam is logical in its view of mankind. Many thoughts would occur to the mind of man. That is why the True Lord mentioned this issue in order to provide us with its remedy, saying: "when two groups of you were about to lose heart" (*Al-'Imran*: 122).

One person from amongst these two groups said: 'I am happy that I wavered because this confirms that I am one of those about whom Allah said: "but Allah was their ally" (*Al-'Imran*: 122), and Allah's alliance is sufficient to me.' He was happy because he had received a badge of honour: Allah's alliance.

Thus, we receive the lessons revealed in the noble verses concerning the battle of Uhud, and we know that this battle followed the great battle of Badr. The battle of Badr ended in victory for the Muslims, although they were fewer in number and preparations. At Badr, the Muslims did not go to battle to start a war; they only went to seize the wealth of Quraysh's caravan, in recompense for the wealth they had left in Mecca. Despite this, Allah willed

that they should not confront only a laden caravan, but that they should face the armed troops – and victory was theirs.

This victory, however, despite casting fear into the hearts of the enemies of the Muslims, also accumulated their fervor to muster their forces to deliver a blow which would regain the advantage for the side of disbelief. This is why the heads of Quraysh forbade their women from weeping for their dead, because weeping relieves an anguished soul, and they wanted to keep the sorrow fresh so that they could stir up a hateful grudge that would incite the people to seek revenge. From an emotional perspective, they wanted to keep emotions inflamed. From a financial perspective, they saved the money of the caravan they had managed to save, as means to plan for another battle in which their supremacy would be restored.

Before Uhud they tried to do something, but they were always sent back on their heels. For example, Abu Sufyan led a campaign of one hundred men to attack Medina; but when news of this reached the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he rushed with his companions toward them. Abu Sufyan heard of this, and fled with the rest of the raiders, casting off their possessions on the way to lighten the load of the animals so they would be able to move faster. This was known as the battle of ‘Suwayq’, because the raiders abandoned their rations, which was mainly a kind of food called ‘suwayq’ (fine flour).

Likewise, groups of disbelievers attempted to assault Medina several times after this, but every time, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to meet them at the head of groups of warriors. Sometimes they numbered one hundred, sometimes one hundred and fifty, and sometimes two hundred; every time, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dispersed them. It was part of his strategy *peace and blessings be upon him*, that when pursued people who he had heard were planning to invade Madina, that he would remain in their city and amongst their forces for long periods of time.

All this took place before Uhud; afterwards, they gathered to go out to the battle of Uhud, and things happened as they did. The verses that discuss this battle include allusions to what happened on the battlefield. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* arranged the troops in their battle array, and

ordered them to stand firm in their positions; but some of them left their places, and others were about to turn back, and then at last stood firm, and the disbelievers of Quraysh fled. In the course of the battle, many of Allah's great signs were manifested.

When Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* granted victory to the Muslims at Badr, though they were a minority, they had not gone out to fight in a battle, but had only intended to seize a caravan.

Perhaps some of them imagined that it was only their being associated with Allah and Islam would lead to constant victory, regardless of the means. So, Allah wanted to teach them that it is essential to make use of the means, attaching importance to preparations as well as numbers, and obeying the rules of the leader.

When they disobeyed, what happened had to happen. Their disobedience did not occur until they were on the brink of victory, and so sixty verses now follow concerning this battle, in order to fully explain all the lessons that we can derive throughout its proceedings. We know that those who are victorious usually feel prosperous; but the discourse here is concerned with the defeat of those who do not use the means Allah puts at their disposal. This matter needs to be considered, and so the Quran here gives us account of a part of the battle, that we can derive lessons and admonition from it. The first lesson is:

When they went out, the hypocrites, led by Ibn Ubayy, stayed behind; so the battle only came to purify, through trials, the true believers. Purification, through trials, puts the believer through intense struggle, and shows the worth of his steadfastness, and certainty. The True Lord only puts the believers to the test because they would be entrusted, throughout history until The Day of Judgment, with the protection of this creed, and none can undertake this task but the firm-hearted, those who are strong under pressure, and those with aspirations beyond the allures of this world.

After this, He considers the human soul, with its human status; for belief does not reside in the hearts of the Muslims by a proclamation of faith alone; rather, every occasion gives a new gush of the faith that all belief will consist of afterwards. For this reason, the True Lord explains to us that two groups

from amongst the believers were about to turn back, for they were only human; but did they act on this inclination, or did they return to Allah's command? They regained their resolve.

So, we see that, from amongst those people who claimed to have faith, some stayed behind from the outset, and others wavered, then, stood firm. The minds began to wander, but those people did not pay heed to their self-talk (misgivings), and stood firm to the end. Some of them were superficially firm, like the archers who at first saw victory. They were from amongst those who stood firm; they did not flee at the outset like Ibn Ubayy, and they were not from amongst those who were about to lose heart. They were from amongst those who stood firm, but at the first sign of victory, they longed for battle-spoils, and disobeyed the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Let us read Allah's words: "God fulfilled His promise to you: you were routing them, with His permission, but then you faltered, disputed the order, and disobeyed, once He had brought you within sight of your goal* - some of you desire the gains of this world and others desire the world to come - and then He prevented you from [defeating] them as a punishment. He has now forgiven you: God is most gracious to the believers." (*Al-Imran*: 152)

After this, another lesson can be derived, which is that we should never be deluded about any human being. Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* was the hero of the disbelievers at Uhud, and he seized the opportunity provided by the descent of the archers from their posts, and routed the Muslims army. Then, what was done was done; by Khalid *Allah be pleased with him* who had not yet embraced Islam at the time. Yet was he not present at the battle of the Trench? Indeed he was present there, and he was present at many battles, fighting on the side of polytheism; yet where was his genius at these battles? Human genius is in conflict with human genius; but no human genius can stand in the way of divine ordain. For this reason, Khalid *Allah be pleased with him* had no role to play at the battle of the Trench; but his role was apparent at the battle of Uhud because his opponents disobeyed the orders of their leader, and so it was a matter of two opposing human geniuses. Had they remained in the confines of Allah's guidance in their directions, the genius of Khalid *Allah be pleased with him* would never have been able to match his Lord's ordain.

An accurate chronicle by any military figures who study Uhud would lead them to say that there was no defeat for the Muslims, nor any victory for the disbelievers because victory entails one side forcing the other out of the battlefield, while the victorious party alone remaining there. Did Quraysh remain on the battlefield, or did they flee? Quraysh fled.

Victory also is manifested when a number of those on the losing side are taken captive. Did Quraysh capture a single Muslim? No. They knew that Madina was completely empty of believers and that only the hypocrites, and the weak, had stayed behind, along with the women and children; yet their superficial victory did not render them eligible to enter Medina.

So, they took no captives, took no spoils, did not enter Medina, and did not remain on the battlefield. How could this be called a victory? Rather, we say that the battle reached a stalemate, and the Muslims remained on the battlefield.

Here, true heroism was revealed because, as we said, victory creates an atmosphere of prosperity, and even those who did not fight valiantly seized the occasion and walked about proudly. Whereas, those who were defeated, and saw their leader *peace and blessings be upon him* injured, and too weak to climb the mountain, that Talha ibn 'Ubayd *Allah be pleased with him* had to bend his back for the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lean on so he could climb the rock; and the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was bleeding from where his tooth had been broken, and the rings of the helmet had been driven into his cheek. After all this, what happened? The cry even went up that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been killed.

Purification was behind it all; for those who could stand firm after all this were truly worthy to carry the sword to give victory to Allah's word until the rising of the Hour. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* missed one of the heroes of Islam who had been with him, who was named Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi'.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Which man will tell me what has become of Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi'? Is he amongst the living, or the dead?' A man from the Ansar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b said: 'I went to find news of him, and I saw

him; he had seventy wounds caused by stabbing of swords and striking and shooting of arrows and spears. When he saw him in that condition he said: 'the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sends you greetings of peace, and asks you: how do you find yourself, which means how are you?'

Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi' replied: 'Tell the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: May Allah grant you on our behalf, a reward higher than the one Allah has ever granted a prophet on behalf of his followers. And tell the Ansar (supporters) that they have no excuse before Allah if the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is harmed and there is still amongst them an eye that blinks!' Then, he passed away.

Notice his final actions! When he was wounded in the battle so that he could fight with his blade, he used the last strength in him to fight with his speech so that his words would reverberate in the ears of the Muslims, and they would know that those who inflicted wounds upon him did nothing more than to send him closer to meeting his Lord, and to paradise. Every believer wishes for such an end.

We also find that those whom the Quran, excused from participating in war still volunteered to fight! For example, Amr ibn Al-Jumuh was lame, and the lame are excused by Allah from fighting, along with the sick and the blind, for He *the Exalted* said: "the blind, the lame, and the sick will not be blamed. Allah will admit anyone who obeys Him and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Gardens graced with flowing streams; He will painfully punish anyone who turns away." (*al-Fath*: 61)

'Amr ibn Al-Jumuh had four lion-hearted sons who went out to the battle. Yet, he too requested permission from the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to go as well, saying: 'O Messenger of Allah! My sons want to keep me away from this source of goodness and from going out with you to it, but by Allah, I hope that I will enter paradise with my lameness!'

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him: "As for you, Allah has removed the duty of Jihad from you. He, then, said to his sons: "It is not for you to forbid him, for perhaps Allah will grant him martyrdom." And so he went out with them, and was killed.

Another believer said to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Messenger of Allah, I saw my son, who was martyred at Badr, in a dream, saying: 'Father, come to us!' 'So I hope that you will let me fight at Uhud.' He gave him permission, and he fought, got killed, and became a martyr. The splendour of faith and Islamic loyalty were manifested in Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman *Allah be pleased with him*. His father was a very old man and a Muslim, who took his sword and followed the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hoping that Allah would grant him martyrdom in His cause. He joined the battle without anyone noticing him. The Muslims killed him without recognizing him. His son Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'It is my father, by Allah!'

They swore by Allah that they did not recognize him, speaking the truth. Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* then said: 'May Allah forgive you, for He is The Most Merciful.' the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to pay his *dewyah* (blood money), and so Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'I give it to the Muslims as charity, O Messenger of Allah.'

The events that took place in the battle show us that the battle of Uhud had to be how it was, in order to purify the believers so that they would be worthy to carry Allah's word, and promote it throughout the earth.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: "And already had Allah given you victory at [the battle of] Badr, while you were utterly weak..."

وَلَقَدْ نَصَرَكُمُ اللَّهُ بِبَدْرٍ وَأَنْتُمْ أَذِلَّةٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

**God helped you at Badr when you were very weak.
Be mindful of God, so that you may be grateful [123]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 123)**

With this, Allah took them from a battle in which there was a suspicion of defeat, or a lack of clear victory, to a battle that they won, as though He wanted to say: 'Your affairs are in the hands of your God, who is watching you, aiding you, providing for you and taking care of you. Beware of relying on numbers and harness; rather, rely on the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* and on

whatever direction He wants for you, because Allah's succour is only provided for those who are prepared to receive it, not to those who are not.'

We know that there is a difference between an action and a response; an action is one thing, and the response to the action is something else. An example of this is that an action is one, but the response might differ. To make this clear, consider when you take a cup of tea, and find it too hot, so you blow in it to make it cool down; and in the winter, you find your hands are cold, so you blow on them to warm them up. You blow in one situation to cool down the tea, and in another to warm your hands. The action is one: blowing; but the corresponding responses are different. So, there is an action, and a response. Another example: the Quran is the word of Allah; and even if it were sent down upon the mountains, they would fall down in humility. Despite this, some people hear it, and Allah does not cover up their fault, but rather reveals it to us, by His divine might: "Some of these people listen to you [Prophet], but, once they leave your presence, they sneer at those who have been given knowledge, saying, 'What was that he just said?' These are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed, those who follow their own desires."(*Muhammad*: 16)

They did not react to the Quran, and when they said: 'What has he said just now?' It refers to the way they belittled what they heard. We find that the True Lord responds to this by saying: "These are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed, those who follow their own desires." (*Muhammad*: 16)

The action is one, but the responses differ. The True Lord continues His wise notification with His words: "Allah helped you at Badr when you were very weak. Be mindful of Allah so that you may be grateful." (*Al-Imran*: 123) So, Allah's aid to you only comes for a believing receiver; and if there is no one to receive it, there is no aid. If you are unable to receive divinely granted aid, we say to you: repair your means of reception because it is like a broken radio: the broadcast is being continually sent, but a broken radio does not receive it. So, if you want to receive from Allah, your means of reception must be sound. The True Lord *the Exalted* explains this further with His words: "Remember when you said to the believers, 'Will you be satisfied if your Lord reinforces you by sending down three thousand angels?'"

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمِدَّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ
بِثَلَاثَةِ آلَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنَزَّلِينَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

Remember when you said to the believers, Will you be satisfied if your Lord reinforces you by sending down three thousand angels? [124] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 124)

He *Glorified and Exalted is He* then explains how the means of reception can be rectified, in order that Allah's aid can be received, saying:

بَلَىٰ إِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا وَيَأْتُوكُم مِّنْ فَوْرِهِمْ هَذَا يُمِدَّدْكُمْ
رَبُّكُمْ بِخَمْسَةِ آلَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُسَوِّمِينَ ﴿١٢٥﴾

Well, if you are steadfast and mindful of God, your Lord will reinforce you with five thousand swooping angels if the enemy should suddenly attack you!' and God arranged it so [125] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 125)

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* gives us the example of patience and piety at Badr, when the believers were few, and still victory was attained. At Uhud, they were not patient, and when they saw the battle-spoils, they began to salivate, and did not show patience; and they were not conscious of Allah's command delivered through the words of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, which were to keep to their positions. So how could they be worthy of divine aid?

So, what determines aid? Allah is the one who gives aid; but who is capable of receiving it, and benefiting from it? It is the one who is able to be patience and conscious of Allah.

So, patience and consciousness to Allah are the harness of war, every bit of them is as important as numbers and preparations. For this reason, our Lord said to us: "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power" (*al-Anfal*: 60) "prepare for them what you think you need to defeat them with; no, you prepare what you are capable of, and when you have prepared what you are capable of, and have prepared all the means at your disposal, Allah, then, will complete your endeavor with victory.

Humans, by nature, are capable of doing this. For example (and Allah has the highest example, before and after), imagine that you are an important trader, and huge trucks come to you, laden with goods, big boxes and crates, and you sit, whilst the workers unload the goods. One worker comes to carry a crate to take it down, but it is too heavy for his strength. The moment you feel that he is about to fall, you rush without thinking to help and support him. This worker exerted all his efforts, but was still unable, for the one who is in charge stretched out his hand to help him. So what about the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*?

It is as though He is saying that we must strive, and utilize the means we possess; and if you see that your means are exhausted, and that the situation is too much for you to handle, know that it might be too much for you, but it is not too much for your Lord, who says:

وَمَا جَعَلَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بُشْرَىٰ لَكُمْ وَلِنُظْمِنَ قُلُوبَكُمْ بِهِ
وَمَا النَّصْرُ إِلَّا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَكِيمِ ﴿١٢٦﴾

As a message of hope for you [believers] to put your hearts at rest – help comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise [126] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 126)

Be careful of imagining that the aid of the three thousand, or five thousand, that Allah sent to aid you with, or the angels that are well trained for fighting etc... were in any way a condition on which depends the victory of Allah for you. He was indeed able to give you victory without your or the angels' participation; He is capable of granting you with victor without the participation of the angles, but it was a means of glad tidings for you, to comfort your human natures. When the believers saw such great numbers coming to their aid, although the disbelievers were greater, in number, than them, they were reassured and were confident of victory. So, the angels were only a means of glad tidings, and succour was from God, the Mighty, who cannot be defeated. All things enfold by His wisdom, which is unsurpassable. The True Lord then says:

لَيَقْطَعَ طَرَفًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَوْ يَكْبِتُهُمْ فَيَنْقَلِبُوا خَائِبِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

and in order to cut off the flanks of the disbelievers' army and frustrate them, to make them withdraw in total defeat [127] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 127)

Cutting down a section is determined by understanding what *tarf* (section) refers to? If it refers to a large number, then 'cutting down a section' implies that some of it would be killed. If (*tarf*) refers to an expanse of land, then 'cutting down a section' implies that some of their land would be taken. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: "Do they not see how We come to [their] land and shrink its borders? God decides - no one can reverse His decision - and He is swift in reckoning..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 41)

Every day, a part of the land of disbelief was lost to be added to the land of faith; this is in regard to the expanse of land. Supposing that (*tarf*) refers to wealth, the verse would mean that some of their wealth was taken in the form of battle-spoils. Then, there is Quraysh's stature, that the entire peninsula feared: the whole peninsula looked upon Quraysh with awe, and no tribe could threaten its caravans in the north or the south, because all the tribes knew that they would go to the Temple (*Ka'ba*) in the season of pilgrimage; no tribe would threaten them because they would soon be heading toward Quraysh. So, Quraysh had great power and authority. When the tribes learned that the men of Quraysh had been broken and routed, and that their trade route to the Levant had been threatened, they sought another faction to go to.

The cutting down of a section mentioned in this verse has many possible interpretations. If it refers to people, some of them were killed; if it refers to land, some of their land was taken and became the land of the faithful; if it refers to power and authority, they had been visited by defeat, and although their power had stretched throughout the peninsula, it was now wavering: "and in order to cut off the flanks of the disbelievers' army" (*Al-'Imran*: 127).

Notice that the True Lord said: "and in order to cut off the flanks" (*Al-'Imran*: 127). He did not say that He might annihilate; for Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* let some of the disbelievers survive because they had a role to play in faith. the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

was full of compassion, mercy, and tenderness for his community, and he *peace and blessings be upon him* had good expectations from Allah, in that He will guide them to the right path, and so there are several verses in the Quran that deal with this matter. The True Lord says: "Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow." (*al-Kahf*: 6)

And elsewhere in the Noble Quran, He says: "Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers. *If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility." (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4)

Allah said to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* *peace and blessings be upon him*: "You are only charged to deliver the message" (*Al-'Imran*: 20). The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* hoped to guide to faith every individual member of his community, and so the True Lord said:

لَيْسَ لَكَ مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ أَوْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْهِمْ أَوْ يُعَذِّبَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

**Whether God relents towards them or punishes them is
not for you [Prophet] to decide: they are wrongdoers [128]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 128)**

That is to say, it is not for you, O Muhammad except to rejoice if Allah accepts their repentance; and if He punishes them, you should not be saddened by this, for they are wrongdoers, and you are charged with nothing but delivering the message. As for them, they have wronged themselves by disbelieving. As we know, wrongdoing (injustice) is to take something from its rightful owner and give it to another; and the height of wrongdoing is to ascribe godhood to any but Allah, which is polytheism (*shirk*); and so the True Lord says: And so the True Lord said: "For, Indeed, attributing partners to Him is a terrible wrong." (*Luqman*: 13)

The True Lord says to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: "Whether Allah relents towards them or punishes them is not for you [Prophet] to decide: they are wrongdoers." (*Al-'Imran*: 128)

This matter is not out of Allah's dominion, for the heavens and the earth and all that they contain are Allah's dominion. It is said that, after the disbelievers covered his face with blood, when he only called them to their Lord, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to pray against them, but Allah forbade him, for He knew that there remained among them those who would believe, so He sent down His words:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ
وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٢٩﴾

Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God. He forgives whoever He will and punishes whoever He will: God is most forgiving and merciful [129] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 129)

Since we are talking about some features of the battle of Uhud, I wish to say: '*Allah be pleased* with mount Uhud: for we heard that a great scholar and knower of Allah, once said: '*Uhud may Allah be pleased with it...*' People were amazed at 'Abdullah Al-Zaydan, saying this, and when he noticed their amazement, he said to them: 'Did the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not address the mountain saying: "Be firm, Uhud, for upon you is a Prophet, a great-faithed one, and two martyrs!" and did the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad not say about it: "Uhud is a mountain that loves us, and we love it"? Do you wish for better companionship than this? Say: Uhud, *Allah be pleased* with it!'

We said previously: if your mind is confused about something, do not consider it according to your own standards; consider it according to the higher standards. We say this because science, now, moves at an incredible rate, seeking to uncover some of Allah's secrets of the universe; it has shown us that animals use their own languages to communicate, and they are now trying to decipher the language of fish. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* told us the story of the ant and Prophet Solomon *peace be upon him*, saying: "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers without [even] being aware [of you]" (*an-Naml*: 18).

This speech shows us that an ant came out to scan the horizons to protect those with her, then, returned to speak to her fellow ants. Our master Solomon *peace be upon him* heard her, and smiled at what she said. So, modern science is developing rapidly, confirming that every species has its own means of communication, and that every species has emotions, and every species has a means of multiplying. In light of this, the True Lord said, through our master Solomon *peace be upon him*: “O people, we have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given from all things. Indeed, this is evident bounty.” (*an-Naml*: 16) This was a special attribute that our master Solomon *peace be upon him* possessed. So, birds have their own speech. If we go deeper and consider inanimate objects, we hear the word of the True Lord *Glorified is He* about the people of Pharaoh, and see that the inanimate objects did not weep for them: “Many a garden and spring they left behind, *And crops and noble building, *many a thing in which they had delighted.* Thus. And We caused to inherit it another people. *And neither sky nor earth shed tears over them, nor were they reprieved.” (*ad-Dukhan*: 25-29)

Do the sky and earth weep? This is an extraordinary matter, for inanimate objects like the sky and the earth, do not only communicate, but they also have emotions because weeping only arises as an emotional response. This means that inanimate objects do not only talk, but that they also feel. The earth will cast off its burdens, and speak its news; how? This is because “...your Lord has inspired it to do.” (*az-Zalzala*: 5) And the sky and the earth approached Allah in complete obedience and humility: “Then He turned to the sky, which was smoke — He said to it and the earth, ‘Come into being, willingly or not,’ and they said, ‘We come willingly.’” (*Fussilat*: 11)

So, there is more than just communication: they also have emotions, just like you; and just as things make you sad, the earth too weeps. As long as it weeps, it must also be able to be happy; and Allah Almighty says, about the world of Pharaoh: “and neither sky nor earth shed tears over them” (*ad-Dukhan*: 29). If they did not cry for some people, this statement would not have any significance.

In this regard, Imam 'Ali *may his face be honored by Allah* said: ‘When a believer dies, two places weep for him: the place where he prayed because it

will be denied the blessings of faith; and the place where his good deeds rose up. One place is on earth, and the other is in the heavens.' So, we must be aware that everything has feelings.

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said: "When a believer dies, the earth rejoices in him; and there is not a single plot but wishes he would be buried therein." Why are we saying this now? We say it so that if it is confirmed scientifically that everything has its own language, and that every species in the universe has a means of communication, it should be said that there were people who were visited by the cool breezes of faith, and they perceived and felt this fact in the Quran; no one can claim that they invented it by themselves because it is in the Quran, even if we did not know the how of it.

This battle, the battle of Uhud, is mentioned over the course of sixty verses. We notice that Allah here says: "And [remember] when you, [O Muhammad], left your family in the morning..." (*Al-'Imran*: 121), and "When two parties among you were about to lose heart..." (*Al-'Imran*: 122). And "already had Allah given you victory at [the battle of] Badr, while you were very weak..." (*Al-'Imran*: 122). After this, He leaves the battle in its heat, and mentions other things, then, returns to finish the battle. Had this been just a scene from the battle, and had simply stopped here, and a new subjects had started, we would not have needed to search our souls. The battle is mentioned over sixty verses; so how could the speech about the battle end when it has given us nothing but the beginning of it, and after that, the Quran, would focus on a totally different subject? What makes Allah leave aside the battle, and say: You who believe, do not consume usurious interest, doubled and redoubled. Be mindful of God so that you may prosper – “beware of the Fire prepared for those who ignore [Him] - * and obey God and the Prophet so that you may be given mercy. * Hurry towards your Lord's forgiveness and a Garden as wide as the heavens and earth prepared for the righteous,* who give, both in prosperity and adversity, who restrain their anger and pardon people - Allah loves those who do good - “those who remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins if they do something shameful or wrong themselves - who forgives sins but God? - and who never knowingly persist in doing wrong.* The reward for

such people is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens graced with flowing streams, where they will remain. How excellent is the reward of those who labour! ‘”Allah’s ways have operated before your time: travel through the land, and see what was the end of those who disbelieved. *This is a clear lesson to people, and guidance and teaching for those who are mindful of Allah.” (*Al-‘Imran*: 130-138)

Why did the True Lord only give us a hint of the battle, and then move on different subjects, the first of which is usury; what is the connection between these issues and the battle? I say: may Allah have mercy on the author of ‘In the Shade of the Quran, commentary, Sheikh Sayyid Qutb, who was able to derive several important principles of faith from this change of subject; if the Muslims in every corner of the earth were only able to put them right in front of their eyes, not a single disbelieving nation would be able to overpower us.

We wish to understand these issues; why did they begin with the issue of usury? It is because one of the reasons for their routing, and their lack of clear victory at Uhud, was their desire for battle-spoils. Battle-spoils represent superfluous wealth, and usury is based on greed for superfluous wealth.

Since the Quran is making mention here of an event-based issue, and events come and go, Allah wants to preserve the event so that it has relevance to other than the time in which it occurs. If not, the event might disappear along with the lesson that can be learned from it, and become useless. When the soul is in the midst of an event, it is more receptive of it, because, as Sheikh Sayyid Qutb said, the event is still hot. When the Quran utilizes an event before it cools off, the issue upon which the lesson is based can easily touch the human soul. Allah did not want the events of Uhud to disappear with all its potential lessons without the noble Quran using them to confirm particular issues of faith that are prevalent in times different from times of war, and that can conform to times of peace. It is as if the verse of usury here has fallen into the middle of the texts that discuss the battle of Uhud.

People who consider it superficially might say: ‘What has made the Quran, go from talking about the battle of Uhud to talking about usury again, after it had talked about it before?’ To this, we say that the Quran, does not chronicle events. Rather, it uses events to simplify and explain the concepts

that give events their breadth, their length, and their depth; for every event that occurs takes up the amount of time that is appropriate to this event, and the event takes up a certain amount of time, like an hour, two hours, or a night. This is the event's length.

The events that Allah sets in motion have lengths that demarcate the length of time the event will last, and they have breadths, which give them their extents. After they were straight lines, they become areas, and the True Lord makes them applicable to many things; for He does not want events to flow in a straight line, He wants them to have a wide track, with an area, and a width. This width produces a terrain that contains many different things, yet this might also end with the event itself, and so Allah wants to give the event a third dimension, which is historical depth, which gives its own gift, just as we are now able to benefit from what we have been given by the event of the battle of Uhud.

So, events have sizes too, and this is what makes people stop to say: 'Maintaining the bond of kinship lengthens the lifetime'; and life has a limited time span, which is a straight line, yet there are those who increase the breadth of their lives so that instead of benefiting people in a small way, they work to give benefit over a wider area, making their lives cover a larger space.

Other people desire their lives to be even more powerful; what do they do? They give their lives depth, and so instead of working for the extent of their lives only, which will end however expansive they are, they increase their good works, leaving a legacy of knowledge or charity that will continue after their lives end, "as the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said:

"When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three things: ongoing charity, or knowledge that gives benefit, or a pious son who prays for them."⁽¹⁾

And so the True Lord said: "[Prophet], do you not see how Allah makes comparisons? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky, * yielding constant fruit by its Lord's leave - Allah makes such comparisons for people so that they may reflect." (*Ibrahim*: 24-25)

(1) Narrated by Abu Hurayrah-Muslim

It is but a good word spoken, yet it is like a healthy tree because it takes root in the ear of the one who hears it and becomes an action that conforms to the word, and every time the one who hears this word performs an action that results from its effect, some of the reward for it goes to the one who said the word, even if they have died. It is as though the one who said this word is still alive, and as though his life span has been extended by his good word. So, the good works of a person do not actually extend his life because life is limited to a certain span; but there are people who give their lives breadth and others who give it depth so that it will keep on giving until the Hour rises. It is as though they have given themselves an eternal life. It has been said that: '*Dhikr* (supplication to Allah) is a second life for a person.'

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* clarifies the useful lessons that can be derived from the battle of Uhud. The first incident of disobedience was the reason not behind defeat but, let us say, it was behind the failure to accomplish victory because they were victorious at first, yet the victory was not completely secured because of the act of disobedience. The motivation for this disobedience was that when they saw the battle-spoils, they rushed toward them. So, their motivation was seeking wealth unlawfully because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said to them: "Keep the cavalry from us, and let them not come upon us from your side. Keep to your posts, whether the tide of battle be for us or against us. Even if you see the birds pecking at us, do not leave your posts!" Thus, forsaking their posts became unlawful. It is deemed an unlawful act, when the self seeks something different from what the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded. The desire here was for money; and such is the case with usury.

The true Lord willed that the heat of the event as well as its effect result in the unaccomplished victory, and the Muslims' suffering. The cause of this suffering was that a few of them wanted to gain superfluous wealth in an unlawful manner. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted this to be a way of illustrating the evil affect of dealing in usury.

So, it is appropriate that we should find a verse dealing with usury here, for it illustrates the evil consequences of coveting superfluous wealth gained unlawfully. There are many positions in the Quran, where effects of actions

are illustrated in ways that appear to be unrelated, but on deeper reflection they actually are related.

We already discussed the words of Allah Almighty where He says: "Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer and stand before Allah, devoutly obedient. *And if you fear [an enemy, then pray] on foot or riding. But when you are secure, then remember Allah [in prayer], as He has taught you that which you did not [previously] know." (*al-Baqara*: 238-239)

A person who thinks superficially might say that the True Lord speaks about divorce before these two verses, when He says: "And if you divorce your wives before consummating the marriage but after having fixed a bride-gift for them, then give them half of what you had previously fixed, unless they waive [their right], or unless the one who holds the marriage tie waives [his right]. Waiving [your right] is nearer to righteousness, so do not forget to be generous towards one another. Indeed Allah sees what you do. *Take care to do your prayers/praying in the best way/ and stand before Allah in devotion...." (*al-Baqara*: 237)

The True Lord then leaves the issue of divorce and enjoins the preserving of prayer, saying: "Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer and stand before Allah devoutly obedient." (*al-Baqara*: 238)

After that, the True Lord returns to finish speaking about divorce and the separation of death, saying: "And those who are taken in death among you and leave behind their wives - for their wives is a bequest: maintenance for one year without turning [them] out. But if they leave [of their own accord], then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable way. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise." (*al-Baqara*: 240)

He speaks about divorce and death in two verses, yet He sends down a verse about prayer in between. Why? It is to show us that the Islamic way is a perfectly complete way. Be careful of saying, 'Divorce is different from prayer and death.' No, it is a complete way of life. It is also because He *Glorified and Exalted is He* wants to alert us to the fact that divorce is an action that comes when a person feels anger and when the husband, the wife and their families are in a disturbed

state. For this reason, the religion advises them, 'if you understood clearly, you would rush to prayer whenever these disturbing matters afflict you.'

When you are in a state of anger and worry, perform ablution, and pray because The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us that when something distressed him, he would stand and pray. So, when tension arises between a husband, his wife and their families, tell them, 'The situation has gone beyond our manipulations, so let us pray so that Allah will help us solve these difficult issues.' I challenge that there is no problem for which Allah will not provide a solution, if a Muslim turns to prayer.

Therefore, we understand that the True Lord says, "Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer" (*al-Baqara*: 238) because maintaining these prayers is the means to preventing disagreements. This is because Allah is not in your minds at times of stress and hardship and instead you submit yourself to the stress and hardship and forget the prayer, at the time when you need it the most. At times of stress and hardship, you must turn to your Lord. I give the example (and Allah has the highest example) of a boy whose friends beat him up and so he runs to his father for comfort and help. Likewise, if you make your wife angry, she will go to her family; how then can you not turn to your Lord at times of hardship and stress?

Hence, we find that what Allah says in this verse, "Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer"; (*al-Baqara*: 238) this comes in the right sequence and the same is true for the verse about usury; it is in its proper place, especially because He has mentioned usury beforehand. Then, comes the incident and its heat, and this noble word is sent down so that anyone who desires wealth that exceeds what Allah has made lawful would know that it would bring strife upon him and others; for the strife during the battle of Uhud affected everyone - the archers and everyone else.

As a result, the whole world suffers when the teachings of Allah are contradicted. If excessive and unlawfully gained wealth is not forsaken in obedience to the Laws of Allah, He declares war upon those who take it; a war from Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا الرِّبَا أَضْعَافًا
مُضَاعَفَةً ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

You who believe, do not consume usurious interest, doubled and redoubled. Be mindful of God so that you may prosper [130] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 130)

Usury is excess wealth; can it be gorged upon? Indeed it can because all financial matters are for the sake of the scraps that one eats; this is the origin. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: "Whosoever of you reaches the morning feeling secured among his 'flock' (i.e. his people, healthy in body, possessing provisions for his day, it is as if the world has been gathered for him."

We know that if any of us are in a place where there is not a single slice of bread, it will not help him to own a mountain of gold. "Do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied" (*Al-'Imran*: 130). The statement of Allah, "doubled" and "multiplied" are modern economic terms. Doubling, in Arabic is something which has increased that when it is compared with the original, that original appears to be feeble. For example, if the original capital is one hundred and an interest of twenty percent is added to it, the total will be one hundred and twenty. So, the one hundred and twenty makes the original one hundred appear feeble; this is what is understood by the word 'doubling'.

What about the meaning of "multiplied"? The one hundred and twenty will become a new capital and when another year goes by, interest will also be taken on the one hundred and twenty so that the increase will itself be increased upon. This is called 'compound interest'. Does this mean that it is acceptable for us to consume usury if it is not doubled and multiplied?! No, it is because the situation was like this at the time of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Someone might say: 'I understand from the Quran, that all that is prohibited is doubling and multiplying; if it is not doubled and multiplied, is it acceptable to make a simple profit in the form of an interest rate based on the original sum only?' We direct such a person to the words of Allah, "But if you repent, you may have your principal - [thus] you do no wrong, nor are you

wronged." (*al-Baqara*: 279) This wise statement confirms that repentance entails that a person returns to the limits of his capital and does not contaminate it with either plain or compound interest. When we find the words "doubling and multiplying," they have only been used to highlight the situation that was prevalent at the time.

After this, the True Lord ends the verse by saying, "but fear Allah so that you may be successful." (*al-Baqara*: 149) We always say, when we see the phrase "fear Allah", that it means 'to place a means of protection between yourselves and Allah'. Does this mean a barrier between yourselves and the majestic and beautiful attributes of Allah? No because protection is against those things that cause suffering and pain. Therefore when Allah says "but fear Allah" in this verse, it means to place a means of protection between yourselves and His attributes of majesty, such as The Compeller, The Subduer and The Avenger. When the True Lord says "but fear Allah" in this verse, it is akin to His words "And fear the Fire (of Hell)" (*Al-Imran*: 131) as the fire (of Hell) is one of the hosts of the majestic attributes of Allah.

When the True Lord says, "so that you may be successful" (*al-Baqara*: 149), we know that the word successful (or '*falah*' in Arabic) in this verse is meant to encourage those who believe in Allah and His Guidance. The word successful in Arabic is derived from the word farming (*'filaha'*) and Allah uses this word as it is something that can be felt and seen all the time as it is connected with our survival; you plough and sow and only reap the benefits afterwards.

Therefore Allah wants to show you that the hardships that come with ploughing, sowing, and watering show their results at the time of reaping. A farmer might take two measures of grain from his stores to sow a patch of land. When he does this, you do not say him that he has reduced the amount of grains in his stores because he has not taken from his stores except to increase this amount. The one who never takes from his stores and never sows, will have his head in his hands with regret when it is time to harvest, but regrets will not benefit him by then.

What The True Lord wants to say to us is, 'Even if the religion exhausts you and requires much action from you, you will gain benefit in return, depending on your intention and your dedication to your work. Allah gave us

an example by His words: "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 knowing." (*al-Baqara*: 261) The meaning is clear: we take one seed from you, which might reduce your supply but in return it gives you back seven hundred. So, when the seed is taken from you, do not say that you have lost something. Rather realise that you will have a profit of so and so. Allah draws this example for us of one of His creations, the land; the inanimate land. If you give this inanimate land one seed, it will give you back seven hundred. If one of the creatures of Allah, in this case the land, can give you back many multiples of what you gave it, can the Lord of this land not give it back to you doubled and multiplied? Allah is able to grant the finest of gifts and this is what true success is. After this, when He mentions the true success, He also tells you that you will not only gain success, but you will also safeguard yourself from the Fire.' The True Lord says:

وَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٣١﴾

**beware of the Fire prepared for those who ignore
[Him] [131] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 131)**

So, there are two issues here: the deprivation of harm and the obligation of benefit. He obliges the benefit of success on you, and deprives you of the harm of Hell. For this reason, Allah says: "And whoever is drawn away (and protected) from the Fire and is admitted into Paradise has most definitely attained the ultimate success". (*Al-'Imran*: 185)

This is because if he is drawn away from hell and is admitted into heaven, then this is the greatest success and this is why our Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* at the moment when the Straight Path is crossed, will lead us over hell so that we pass over it. Why? So that we realize how our faith has saved us from it. So, what is the means by which we attain success and avoid hell? The means to this is following the Guidance of Allah which He has placed on the tongue of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, as Allah says:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

And obey God and the Prophet so that you may be given mercy [132] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 132)

“Mercy” manifests in Allah not afflicting you with hardships whereas, recovery means that you fall into hardships and then, it is removed from you. For this reason, if we follow the guidance from the very beginning, we will receive mercy. Allah also says: “And We send down the Quran as healing and mercy.” (*al-Isra*’: 82)

Health here means eliminating the sin that we have become embroiled in and which the Quran heals. Mercy is manifested when we follow the religion from the beginning so no hardships afflict us.

The True Lord then says:

وَسَارِعُوا إِلَىٰ مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

Hurry towards your Lord’s forgiveness and a Garden as wide as the heavens and earth prepared for the righteous [133] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 133)

We know that ‘hurrying’ is different from ‘rushing’: hasting means to advance when it is appropriate, which means to do something in as little time as possible. An example of this is when a person drives from Cairo to Alexandria, trying to cover the two hundred and ten kilometres in the least amount of time possible. Instead of taking three hours, he drives faster so that it takes only two. So, ‘hurrying’ means advancing when appropriate and it is praiseworthy. It is the opposite of ‘dawdling’ which is blameworthy.

Rushing, on the other hand, means advancing when it is not appropriate and it is blameworthy. Its opposite is deliberation, which is praiseworthy. So, hasting is praiseworthy and its opposite, dawdling, is blameworthy; and rushing is blameworthy, and its opposite, deliberation, is praiseworthy. One popular proverb says: In deliberation lays safety and in rushing lays regret.

The True Lord says: "And hurry to the forgiveness from your Lord" (*Al-'Imran*: 133) i.e. seek forgiveness and Paradise as quickly as you can because you do not know how long you will remain in this world. Beware of putting off a good deed or an act of charity because you do not know if you will stay alive to perform it or not. Your life is a chance, so take it and seek forgiveness and paradise. This is the meaning of the well-known proverb: 'work for this life as though you will live forever, and work for the Afterlife as if you will die tomorrow.'

People perceive reality in accordance to what matches their psychological needs. For example: 'work for this life as though you will live forever' is understood by them as: 'gather as much as you can in this world so you are provided for until the Day of Resurrection'; but this is not a correct understanding. The correct understanding is that whatever passes you by of worldly things today, consider that you will live long enough to get it tomorrow; as for the affairs of the Hereafter, you must be quick where they are concerned.

"And hurry to the forgiveness from your Lord and a garden that is as wide as the heavens and the earth." (*Al-'Imran*: 133) We know that area is comprised of length and width because something with an equal length and width is a square, and something with a smaller width and a longer length is called a rectangle. When the True Lord says "as wide as the heavens and the earth" (*Al-'Imran*: 133), we know that width is the lesser of the two dimensions, i.e. it is wider than we can see. It is as though He has compared the smallest dimension of paradise with the widest dimension that we know, the heavens and the earth combined together, thereby giving us something much wider than we can see. If its width is greater than we can imagine then what about its length? It is an extent that we cannot comprehend.

Someone might ask why does Allah mention its width, saying "as wide as the heavens and the earth" (*Al-'Imran*: 133), without mentioning its length? To this, we say: do the heavens and the earth alone comprise the entire universe? Allah *Glorified is He* says: "His throne (i.e knowledge and power) extends over the heavens and the earth." (*al-Baqara*: 255)

In addition, The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: "The heavens and the earth and what lies between them are akin to nothing more than a ring thrown by a king into an empty desert. Is it not Allah's dominion?"

And so we see that this paradise has been prepared for those who are conscious of Allah. The meaning of “prepared” is formed and made, and that is that. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confirmed this, by saying: “Paradise was shown to me; and had I wished to bring you a fruit from there, I would have.” Why? Because mere information about a thing might mean that it does not yet exist, but will exist later; but a thing’s existence negates the possibility that it might not exist because its existence has become a reality. When Allah says: “Prepared” in this verse, it means that Allah has finished its creation and He will not take the raw materials of this world and wait until the world develops under your watch and then use the means and materials that you have developed to prepare Paradise. No.

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us about it saying: “There will be bounties which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has ever perceived.”⁽¹⁾ Allah had created paradise in its entirety with nothing more than the word “Be!” When He says: “Prepared” in this verse, this means it is something that is finished and done with. As long as this is the case, the matter of the final journey to it or to its counterpart, has also been settled. Paradise has been made ready for those who are fearful of Allah; but who are they? Allah says:

الَّذِينَ يُفْقُونَ فِي السَّيِّئَاتِ وَالصَّالِحَاتِ وَالْكَاظِمِينَ الْغَيْظَ
وَالْعَافِينَ عَنِ النَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

**who give, both in prosperity and adversity, who
restrain their anger and pardon people – God loves
those who do good [134] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 134)**

These are some of the attributes of those who fear Allah an example of those who restrain their anger can be found in the battle of Uhud.

Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him*, the master of the martyrs, and the uncle of our master the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was killed. If only it was just a killing but further than that he was mutilated.

(1) Narrated by Sahl bin Sa'd Al-Bokhari

His liver was taken out and Hind (bint Otbah) chewed on it. This is more than just a killing. This is the fruit of vile malice.

When the news of the killing of Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him* reached the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and they told him that Hind had taken his liver and chewed upon it before spitting it out as Allah had made it hard for her to chew, he said: "Allah would not torment any piece of Hamza in Hell". This is because Hind was destined for hell and if she had eaten the liver, it would have formed part of the cells of her body, and so if she entered hell, then a part of Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him* would enter with her. Therefore, her Lord made her body tremble and prepare to vomit, so she spat out the morsel of liver that she had bitten off.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* considered the death of Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him* as the most abominable thing he had ever encountered, saying: "If Allah grants me victory over Quraysh in any place, I will mutilate thirty men of their dead!"

But then the matter of restraining anger became necessary for the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, on the occasion of the death of one of the most beloved people to him, an event that angered him more than any other. Allah then sent down His words: "And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], then punish them with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed with. But if you are patient then it is better for those who are patient." (*an-Nahl*: 126)

This was in order that we know that our Lord, His the Most High, does not react to anything because reaction is a trait of temporal beings and this is His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and so He *Exalted is He* sent down to him the words: "And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], then punish them with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed with" (*an-Nahl*: 126), and this is a command to withhold anger, which He sent down specifically in relation to the Messenger and the event of the battle of Uhud. After this, He makes it a general principle, applicable to times of peace as well as war and applicable to all people, not just the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* as it already applied to Him.

"And who restrain their anger" (*Al-'Imran*: 134). We know that all abstract concepts are derived from material ones. The word for restraining anger (in Arabic '*kazhm*') is derived from the word which refers to filling a water skin (a leather pouch used for transporting water). When the bag was full of water, its neck would be tied tightly so that no water could spill out. This action; of tying the bag was called '*kazhm*'. The water skin was soft and if it were put on the back of a man or a beast, it might spill water because of its softness, so it needed to be tied well to prevent water spillage.

In the same way, anger stirs in the human soul. Allah does not forbid the arousal of anger in the soul because it is a natural reaction and if Allah did not want natural reactions, He would have prevented their causes when creating the human being.

Rather, He wills their existence for certain reasons. For example, the sexual instinct: He wills that it exists in order to preserve the species, and He subjected it to legislation just to refine it. The same is true for the natural reaction of anger: Islam does not want the believer to be poured into an iron cast, with no emotions; rather, Allah *the Exalted* wants the believer to react to events, but in an appropriate manner, with a gracious, productive reaction and not a destructive one. For this reason, the True Lord says: "Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. You see them kneeling and prostrating, seeking the bounty of Allah and His good pleasure." (*al-Fath*: 29)

So the believer is not supposed to always be stern or always merciful; the situation is what should determine human emotions. The True Lord *the Exalted* says: "people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers." (*al-Ma'ida*: 54)

Is anyone humble and mighty at the same time? We say: It is the guidance of faith that makes a believer such: humble to his brother, and mighty before the disbeliever. So, Islam does not cast the believer in a mould so that he does not react to events.

Another example can be found in the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when his son, Ibrahim, died. Did he react? Indeed he did and he wept and grieved. Allah does not want the believer to be made of stone; He wants the

believer to react to events but in a way that corresponds with the event in question. And so our master, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, said upon the passing of his son: "The eye weeps, and the heart grieves; but we only say that which pleases our Lord."⁽¹⁾

At the time of reacting, we should not say something that will displease our Lord. Our reaction should be properly directed. The believer requires anger when he is provoked into defending the religion of Allah, but the believer must restrain this anger, i.e. he should not allow his reaction to prevent him from behaving well and considering his actions. Restraining anger (of '*kazhm*' in Arabic) as we have seen is derived from something tangible. Another example for this is in the case of camels and other beasts that have two stomachs, one for storing food, and the other for rumination.

When a camel ruminates, it regurgitates the food from the extra stomach and chews it. When the camel stops rumination, the Arabic verb for this is '*kazhama*', derived from the same root word as '*kazhm*' (restraining anger). The True Lord *the Exalted* says: "who restrain their anger and who pardon the people" (*Al-'Imran*: 134) and we said that there are different types of reaction. A reaction might be suppressed and held in check, meaning that a person is able to turn it into a physical reaction but refrains from doing so. As for 'pardonning', it means that the anger is removed from the heart, as though the incident never happened. This is the second level. The third level is that you give a corresponding reaction, i.e. you do not stop at this limit, but rather, you repay the bad deed with a good deed. So, there are three stages: Firstly, suppressing anger, secondly, pardonning and forgiving, and thirdly going beyond these two in repaying the ill turn with a good one.

This is the development along the stages of certainty because if you do not hold your anger in check, and instead react, the other person is also capable of reacting in a way that matches your reaction, and directing his rage and anger towards you. This rage might then continue to grow, passing from generation to generation. If you suppress your anger however, the other person might be ashamed of himself and the issue might be closed.

(1) Narrated by Anas - *Al-Bukhari*

"And who pardon the people" (*Al- 'Imran*: 134). The verb 'afa' (to pardon) is derived from 'afa 'ala al-athar' (the wind blowing away the tracks someone leaves in the desert sand). The True Lord finishes the verse by saying: "and Allah loves those who do good (to the extent of perfection)." (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

We have previously discussed the philosophy of this. We said that we are all the creation of Allah and all creatures are dependent on Allah. As long as we are all dependent on Allah, if one of us wrongs another, Allah will be on the side of the one who is wronged and will shower him with His mercy, pardon, and compassion. In this way, the one who is wronged gains; so should they not treat well the one who wronged them?

Yet the human intellect abandons its intelligence at times of anger and so if someone wrongs a person, he considers him an enemy. We must understand however that those who wrong us only put Allah on our side, so their poor treatment of us gains for us more than what it takes from us. For this reason, you must have strong faith and treat well the one who wrongs you.

The True Lord then adds to the attributes of the residents of paradise:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَجِيئَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَمَنْ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَلَمْ يُصِرُّوا عَلَى مَا فَعَلُوا وَهُمْ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

those who remember God and implore forgiveness for their sins if they do something shameful or wrong themselves – who forgives sins but God? – and who never knowingly persist in doing wrong [135] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 135)

An immorality means a vile sin. Does this mean that when the archers at Uhud left their posts, they abandoned their faith? No, it was only a mistake, but it was a grievous sin on the part of those who encouraged the believers to descend from their positions and a minor sin on the part of those who were persuaded to descend from their positions.

It is, therefore, appropriate to say: "And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah" (*Al- 'Imran*: 135). In this verse, The True Lord wants us to "remember Allah" as a reminder to us that those who commit shameful deeds and wrong

themselves do so because they forget Allah and when they perform their sin, Allah is not on their mind. What allows a person to dare to sin in order to satisfy his passions is that he does not consider Allah or His reward and punishment in the Hereafter. Were he to envisage this, he would not sin.

In the same way, the one who is careless in obeying Allah does so because he does not think of Allah and how He rewards the pious. If he remembered Allah and how He rewards the pious, he would not be too lazy to obey Him. And so the True Lord says: "(They) remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins" (*Al-'Imran*: 135). If someone prays for his sins to be forgiven, he has surely remembered Allah.

The scholars differ over the meaning of '*fahishah*' (immorality). Some say it means an enormity (a grievous sin), whereas wronging oneself is a venial (minor) sin. Other scholars say that '*fahishah*' means fornication because the Quran mentioned it explicitly and that everything else is a minor sin.

However, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: "There is no grievous sin when forgiveness is sought; and there is no minor sin when there is persistence."

So, it is not permissible for someone to disregard his own sins, saying: 'This is only a minor sin, and that is only a minor sin...' because the accumulation of minor sins causes them to become grievous sins. When we consider the word of Allah: "And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression]" (*Al-'Imran*: 135), we find that the one who committed the shameful deed has also sinned against himself because he has gained for himself a fleeting pleasure, but has earned himself eternal suffering.

In that case, why did the True Lord not simply say: 'and wrong themselves...' with 'and' instead of 'or wrong themselves'? It is because He wanted to show us the difference between an immorality and a sin against the self.

The one who performs an immorality only gains for himself the satisfaction of a lust or desire, even if it is only fleeting. The one who sins against himself, however, performs a sin without gaining any benefit for himself. For example, the one who gives false testimony does not gain any benefit for himself because the benefit goes to the one who is falsely attested to. The bearer of false

witness sins against himself because he fulfils the fleeting need of another person, but does not save himself from the punishment of the Hereafter. As for the person who performs an immorality, he takes some pleasure in this world, then, faces recompense in the Hereafter.

However, the one who sins against himself does not benefit himself, but hurts himself. It is an evil thing to sell your religion for a worldly gain; for you only receive the pleasure of this world, and the life of this world is short.

The True Lord did not forbid the pleasures of this world, but He says: "Say (O Muhammad), the enjoyment of this world is little" (*an-Nisa'*: 77). There are also those who sell their religion for the sake of another person's worldly gain, receiving nothing in return, and only sinning against themselves.

The True Lord says: "and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah?" (*Al- 'Imran*: 135) The meaning of 'sin' is the contravention of the directions of the religion: the religion gives an order, but the order is not followed; the religion gives a prohibition, but the prohibition is not heeded. Nothing is called a sin until Allah tells us that it is a sin; this is divine ordinance. In the sphere of human ordinance, we say: 'There is no prohibition without a text (that contains legislation); and there is no punishment without prohibition.'

This stresses the importance of clarifying what constitutes a crime so that a crime can be properly punished; and nothing is a crime unless it is confirmed with a text, i.e. it is criminalised before it is allocated a punishment. So what about the law of Allah? He first tells us what sins are, and then allocates the punishment that those who commit them merit.

Consider the words of Allah when He says: "and those [who] do not persist in what they have done, while they know." (*Al- 'Imran*: 135). Therefore, asking for forgiveness is not to follow a sin by saying 'I seek the forgiveness' of Allah; whenever you fall into a sin; fall forward and say, 'I seek Allah's forgiveness' and be persistently keen not to do it again.

This does not mean that you never commit a sin again. Actually, you might commit it, but when you seek forgiveness, you are firm not to repeat it. The sin might occur again, but without premeditation to commit it, such as saying to yourself: 'I will commit the sin and, then, seek Allah's forgiveness afterwards.'

In this manner, you are only mocking your Lord. More dangerous, indeed, is that Allah might not allow you the time to seek forgiveness after the sin. When Allah says: "They do not persist in what they have done [of sins], while they know" (*Al-'Imran*: 135) which makes it clear for us that there is no penalization without a clear criminalization declared in the [*Shari'a*] texts.

Before anything else, Allah informs us about the meanings of the sin and punishment and the proper way to seek forgiveness. Then, the True Lord says: "These are the ones whose reward will be forgiveness from their Lord and gardens with flowing streams underneath; therein they will abide forever. What a blessed reward for the workers!" "These" is a demonstrative pronoun that refers to the preceding Quranic verse in His saying: "And hurry with one another to attain to your Lord's forgiveness and to a paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious" (*Al-'Imran*: 133)

Allah also sets out the attributes of the God-Conscious in His words: "Those who spend [in His way] in time of ease and hardship, and who restrain their anger and pardon the people. Surely, Allah loves those who do good". (*Al-'Imran*: 134)

They spend at times of ease out of gratitude and at times of hardship because they are really humble and mindful of their Lord. Evidently, when the blessings are abundant at the times of plenty, thanksgiving must be shown for them. Similarly, when the blessings are given at times of hardship, one shall express humility before Allah to relieve the doers of good from trials and hardships. As such, they keep spending whether they are in hardship or in ease.

At times of ease, many people forget about the Divine blessings imagining that these blessings have come from their own endeavours. Other people are too distracted by their blessings to feel the pains of others; they are only concerned with their own pains. But the believers never forget their Lord and His Commandment that they spend at times of hardship and ease. Because of this, they say about a generous person 'S/He never refrains from giving, neither on days of joyful happiness nor on days of sorrows.'

Let us continue the description of those who are conscious of Allah: "And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by

transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and those [who] do not persist in what they have done, while they know." (*Al- 'Imran*: 135)

This is kind of reassuring the believer about the changes of his soul; if he once submits to the Satanic temptations, this does not remove him from the fold of *taqwa* (God-consciousness), for Allah has made the repentance from sins as one of the attributes of the God-conscious. The shameful act is instigated by the Satanic temptations. As such, the true servant is immediately mindful of Allah and beseeching Him for forgiveness with a sincere intention not to repeat it, which keeps them within the company of the God-conscious. Indeed, Allah is the All-Forgiving: "for who but Allah could forgive sins..."? They are informed about that, for the True Lord never declares anyone guilty without a definitive text and never punishes anyone without a crime. And of this Allah says:

أُولَٰئِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ مَّغْفِرَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَجَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَنِعَمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

**The reward for such people is forgiveness from their
Lord, and Gardens graced with flowing streams,
where they will remain. How excellent is the reward of
those who labour! [136] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 136)**

It refers to those endowed with all of the previous characteristics. Notice that the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* has promised two rewards for those who mindfully act upon *taqwa* (God-consciousness): The first promise He declared in His words: "And hurry with one another to attain to your Lord's forgiveness and to a paradise as wide as the heavens and the earth, which has been readied for the God-conscious" (*Al- 'Imran*: 133).

The second promise speaks of their final abode: "These are the ones whose reward will be forgiveness from their Lord and gardens with flowing streams underneath" (*Al- 'Imran*: 133).

The first mention of paradise stimulates emotions that yearn for paradise. Then, Allah mentions the characters and categories of people declaring paradise as a reward. "What a blessed reward for the workers!"

The 'reward' usually refers to what a person takes in exchange for a service rendered. The workers take this reward for their work dependent on the evaluation of the employer himself. A pay increase or decrease is determined by the judgement of the employer or the employee. For example, if many employers request the services of one worker, s/he may ask for a pay increase; if no one wants him, he will accept the first pay offer he finds.

As such, the entire matter is determined by the need of employers or the need of the workers. When it comes to the dealings of the hereafter, it is with Allah *the All-Sufficient* Who is in no need of your works. Yet, He has offered a reward for them.

How to understand this issue? He has no need for your works and rewards you for them, saying: 'This is the minimum reward but I can double it and even give you more and more.' How many are the stages here? They are three. Although, He benefits nothing from the work, He provides three levels of reward for it.

Apparently, the need here is on one part only: it is on your part, O servant. You are in need of your Creator, but He is in no need of you. Yet, the One True Lord not only rewards you what is equal to your work but actually gives you much more than that. Your employer in this world may pay you a limited wage enough to provide for a day, for example, or a day and a half. Nevertheless, when you take the reward from Allah, He gives you an endless reward; He says: "What a blessed reward for the workers!" This is the reward worthy of praise, such as saying: 'What an excellent reward! It is not a reward for my work but rather greater and greater than all I did. It also comes from the One Who has no need for my work.

He *the Most High* has blessed me at the beginning and blessed me at the end. In other words, the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* guides you that when you do a good deed, O servant, the effect of this deed returns to you, yet despite this He rewards you for it.

We have previously explained that these Quranic verses came in the midst of the accounts of the battle of Uhud to provide a practical guidance and shed further light on the events of the battle. As such, if a person lives through the

events in imagination, the events come back fresh and the lessons and morals taken from them reach the soul easily. Evidently, they have direct contact with real events, which confirm and emphasize them. After this, the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* says: “[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time. Go, then, in the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth” (*Al-‘Imran*: 137). In other words, you are not the first to experience these matters. “Passed away” here means ‘gone before’ i.e. they were real events that took place in the past times before revealing this statement.

Usually, one’s speech may be true or false, but this issue is not open for probabilities because the current reality does not belong to the future. The reality has already taken place. Therefore, the speech on reality needs nothing to confirm the veracity of the statement because it has already taken place. Allah *the Most High* says: “[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time...” (*Al-‘Imran*: 137).

‘Ways of life’ (*sunan*) refer to the ways in which Allah *the Most High* orders His universe for the good of the creation to guarantee the benefit of mankind as the masters of this universe. The benefit of mankind comes true when the Truth dominates human life, by their free choice; in the same manner the Truth dominates the universe without choice.

We previously said that the universe has no free will. Inanimate objects, plants, and animals have no free will to benefit you or not. No one ever went to a fertile plot of land and sowed seeds in it to find the land refusing to produce plants saying: ‘I will not give you anything.’ The earth never said about a person: ‘He is a disbeliever, so I will not give him any provision.’ The earth is subdued for the service of mankind; as long as man utilises its means, it will give to him/her. Likewise, animals are subdued for your service, not by your choice or power, but only because Allah has subdued them to you.

We said: a person may have an animal, as some farmers do, which s/he sometimes uses to carry piles of manure made of the farm animal waste. The farmers may then decide to use the animal as a mount. As such, beautiful saddles and bridles, comfortable life and cleanliness are all possible favours from the farmers to their mounts.

In this case, did the animal at first refuse to carry the manure or later refuse to carry the person? No. You can lead it wherever you wish, for it has no freewill. Likewise, plants have no freewill, nor do the inanimate objects or the animals have. Only the human beings have the freewill.

Truly, Allah has controlled man's will by some elements to which s/he submits so that they never think that they are absolute masters or have an intrinsic power. In His dominance of man, the True Lord makes some things inevitable to keep humans submitted. Meanwhile, He leaves other things to man's freewill. If we look at the universe, we find that things devoid of the freewill follow a very perfect system without any trace of chaos or clash. Only things left to man's interventions suffer imbalance. Why? Clearly, man's choices may go contrary to the way of the Creator. As such, when the free man seeks a well-balanced life, they shall follow the guidance of Allah.

When your choice follows this way, you have harmony similar to the rest of the creation and your affairs will be in order. If we compare things in which mankind have freewill to those in which they do not, we find that the latter things are completely well-organised without the least bit of disorder, whereas the former matters fall into chaos and disorder.

For example, the animals used for transportation, such as camels, horses or donkeys move about; they walk in a straight line and meet one another in opposite directions without ever crashing into each other or killing their riders. Animals avoid one another and keep out of each other's way, even if the rider is asleep. No matter how crowded with animals a street is, they never crash because this is part of the plan of Allah for the control of animals.

Let us now consider man's invented modes of transport. Mankind have produced many kinds of car which people drive; yet despite the fact that they drive them, many accidents and crashes occur because of man's intervention in the matter.

The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* wants to show you that things created and put under control by the Commands and Guidance of Allah never become a source of corruption. Corruption only comes from those things left to man's freewill. In conclusion, endeavour to make your decisions according to the Guidance of Allah. When the True Lord commands or prohibits, you

must believe and obey. Evidently, when the True Lord puts things under the control of mankind, they are all in perfect order. Likewise, when you obey Allah, the affairs of your life will proceed with ease. For this reason, we said before that people never complained of a 'sun crisis', or a 'wind crisis'; so why do they complain of 'food crisis'? It is simply because man interferes with the production of food. Everything left to mankind must follow the Divine Law: "Do that and Do not do that."

The universe is really created in harmony; everything in the universe performs its duty in line with the Divine Plan. Similarly, when mankind live up to their imposed responsibilities, everything would be in order and harmony. When mankind neglect their duties and follow their delusive choices, they turn to the ways of falsity and the result is nothing but false things, whilst the universe is based on the truth. Allah says: "We did not create them (the heavens and the earth i.e. the universe) except with the truth, but most of them do not know" (*ad-Dukhan*: 39). The True Lord *the Most High* fixes the universe on some certain firm laws so that nothing can infringe upon anything else. It is mankind's choice that brings about the opposite of truth that is falsehood. For this reason, Allah preserves the universe in such a way that He makes it clear that the truth is in conflict with falsehood, but the truth will eventually survive and dominate, whereas falsehood will vanish and disappear. Allah shows us this in front of our eyes with His words: "And say: "the truth has now come [to light], and falsehood has withered away: for, behold, all falsehood is bound to wither away!"" (*al-Isra'*: 81)

As such, the statement of Allah: "[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time..." intends to guide people to reflect on the past conflicts between the truth and the falsehood; the falsehood did not dominate the truth because it is ever withering away.

As such, we see many practical examples of the defeat of falsehood, not only in the conflicting relationships of individuals, but in the conflict of falsehood with the Divine Truth as well. The Divine Truth is represented by the Prophets and their Divinely revealed messages. Indeed, every Divine Truth revealed by Allah was opposed by the people of falsehood.

Why? Simply, the Divine intervention only comes when corruption has become widespread. This means that there are people who are befitting from this corruption. The people who benefit from corruption and falsehood will defend it. Consequently, the powers of the Divine Truth rise to challenge the falsehood and its advocates. Such is the moment of the battle. Allah *the Most High* says: “[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time...” (*Al-'Imran*: 137). This statement declares that falsehood is ever vanishing. Actually, whenever the people of the earth battle the Divine Guidance, the Divine Truth always proves victorious. In the chapter of (*al-'Ankabut*: 29), Allah explains this fact to us in several illustrative examples; Allah *the Most High* says: “And to [the people of] Midyan [We sent] their brother Shu'aib, who said: “O my people! Worship Allah alone, and look forward to the Last Day, and do not act wickedly on the earth by spreading corruption!” However, they belied him. Thereupon, an earthquake overtook them and they lay lifeless, in their very homes, on the ground.” (*al-'Ankabut*: 36-37)

This was the first example, then the second follows: “And the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud, [too, did We destroy] as should have become obvious to you from [whatever there remains of] their dwellings. [They perished] because Satan had made their [sinful] evils seem goodly to them, and thus had barred them from the path [of Allah], despite their having been endowed with the ability to perceive the truth” (*al-'Ankabut*: 38).

Now, look at their remnant dwellings to show you the punishment that befell them. Then, the third example is given: “And [thus, too, did We destroy] Qarun (Korah) and Pharaoh, and Haman: to them had come Moses with all evidence of the Truth, but they behaved arrogantly on earth [and rejected him]. Yet, they could not escape [Us]” (*al-'Ankabut*: 39).

When we hear “Yet, they could not escape [us]”, it implies that something was chasing them. Clearly, when someone chases another, the latter tries to escape. As such, they tried to escape, but never succeeded. Then, the ways of life are clearly presented.

Allah also says: “We took each by his sins. Some of them We sent upon violent winds; and some of them were overtaken by a sudden blast; and some of them We caused to be swallowed by the earth; and some of them We

caused to drown. And it was not Allah who wronged them, but it was they who had wronged themselves” (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

As such, the conflict between truth and falsehood occurred in the past nations before you. Their dwellings still exist, and you can visit them for confirmation if you so wish. The cities of Prophet Saleh stand as a witness and so are the remains of the Tribe of 'Ad. Indeed, every place has some relics of the past. That is why Allah *the Glorified* informed you of it and whoever believes in Me shall believe My word. As for the unbelievers and other seekers of certainty, Allah *the Most High* says: “Then, go about the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth!” (*an-Nahl*: 36)

The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* illustrates the conflict between the firm truth and the falsehood. This kind of conflict occurs even among the creatures that have no freewill. It is the Divine plan the struggle takes place between the truth and the falsehood even among the creatures with no free will, for people to benefit. Allah has placed this struggle between things beyond the realm of mankind for the service of mankind as seen in material matters. For example, in the area of values, Allah says: “He sends down water from the sky, and [once-dry] river-beds are running high according to their measure, the stream carries scum on its surface; and, likewise, from that [metal] which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils, [there rises] scum. In this way does Allah set forth the parable of truth and falsehood: for, as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on earth. In this way does Allah set forth the parables” (*ar-Ra'd*: 17).

Allah *the Most High* sends down rain which runs into the valleys. As we know, a valley is lowland between two mountains. When rain falls on high ground, it flows to low ground and runs in the valleys. Valleys are fertile places because the mud and silt that flow down from the mountains with the rain and then settle become fertile spoil from which crops grow. Every valley takes water to its full capacity and the rest of water finds its way to other paths or to the underground. This scene was well known in the Arabian Peninsula; when it rains, the valleys are filled with water each to its full capacity. “The stream carries scum on its surface...” (*ar-Ra'd*: 17) as we see

in the fields and we call it the 'froth' which refers to the filmy matters that accumulate on the surface of water. What happens to this froth? It is accumulated to form a layer on the surface before turning to the sides. Have you ever seen a pan of boiling meat overflowing? We see the foam floating on the surface.

This foam contains matters that have come out from the substance in the pot. Heating the pot by fire lets it come out to the surface. As such, man either removes it and cleans the pot or leaves it to solidify on the sides to its end. Where does this froth come from? It comes from the earth. Many things are kept in the earth, such as the roots of plants, and the remains of what the wind carries. They all seep into the earth and then hinder the growth of small roots preventing them from absorbing the nutrients from the soil. When Allah sends down rain, the water carries these things which begin to float on the surface. So the small roots find their way to nutrition and grow.

Allah sends rain to wash the soil, which makes foamy things float because they are scum. Indeed, the scum always floats. When the scum floats, do not imagine that it is going high. It is rather, the rise to death. Such is the case with outbursts of falsehood. Do not think that the useless is useful or that the rising froth is higher than the rest of the pot. No, it is a purgation of the substance in the pot. So, the True Lord says: "the stream carries scum on its surface..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). If all traces of the scum do not disappear with the wavy movements of the water, they will disappear one way or another. Consider the filthy things cast into the sea; they all wash up on shore after a while "And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except He" (*al-Muddathir*: 31). It washes up on the shore for those in charge of cleaning to collect. If not, how could the water remain pure? Allah *the Most High* has made the movement of the water a means for the water to clean itself. Therefore, when rain falls and flows in streams, it cleans the soil from the impurities that impede the nourishment of the primary roots. Some people might not feel satisfied with this example, so Allah gives us another example: "...and, likewise, from that [metal] which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils, [there rises] scum. In this way does Allah set forth the parable of truth and falsehood: for, as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on earth..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 17).

We see this every time any metal is put into fire. The metal melts and becomes soft like dough, and then bubbles emerge from it, which we call slag. When the slag is taken from the metal, it becomes strong. So, the fire melts the metal, and removes the harmful or dysfunctional waste from it. I might make a strong suit of armour from iron or refine steel from it. These activities require us to melt the iron with fire and remove the slag in order to make it stronger. The same goes true for gold and silver; when we want to rid them of these impurities, we melt them to remove extraneous matters mixed with them.

Why, then, does the Lord use these visible examples of water? As for *Al-Hilyah* (ornaments), it refers to what is unnecessary whereas *Al-Mata'* refers to the necessary needs. He *the Most High* says: "In this way does Allah set forth the parable of truth and falsehood..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

Truth is similar to water and fire. Water carries the scum far from the pores of the earth and fire removes the scum and slag from metal which qualifies it to the jobs required. In this way, Allah sets forth the examples of truth and falsehood: "for, as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 17), i.e. it is cast aside and rejected "but that which is of benefit to man abides on earth..." (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). This is a material example that Allah presents for the struggle between truth and falsehood over principles and morals. It is wondrous that He draws the example using two opposites which perform the same function: water and fire. When you see opposing matters, do not think that they are working against each other. Indeed, each of them is necessary for a certain task.

Allah *the Most High* says: "[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time..." (*Al-'Imran*: 137) to alert us to the struggle between truth and falsehood. At times, we might see falsehood dominating and in control. Yet, it is only the scum on the riverbank. This is one of the Divine Norms in life. If you wish to confirm this, look at the precision of the True Lord's words: "...Go, then, in the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth" (*Al-'Imran*: 137).

Here are two observations; one is general and the other is specific: The general observation is that we understand the statement (go in the earth) to mean that we travel on the earth; but this is according to our own limited

perspective. However, when Allah speaks, His perspective is wider, for He is the Creator of this universe. We are still ignorant of many facts about this universe and have only known some of them very recently. The Creator of the universe is the One Who knows all of its secrets.

We used to say that we travel on the earth in belief that there was nothing on this earth except us. Then, science discovered that were it not for the existence of the air on the earth, there could be no life. When the earth turns, the air around it turns with it; they call this the 'the atmosphere.' The atmosphere is a part of the earth with huge expansion. When man travels, s/he travels in the earth, but the one travelling on the earth is the one who walks over the atmosphere. The one who travels on the land with the atmosphere above him is travelling in the earth, not on the earth.

The issue at hand is still one of ways of life that have gone, but Allah wants us to consider them saying: "Go, then, in the earth": how should we go? Either we go by travelling, or we go by means of reflection because someone might not have the means to travel leaving that job to travellers. The travellers, for instance, went to the south of the Arabian Peninsula and saw the valley of Ahqaf where they discovered that a single sandstorm had buried an entire caravan.

Storms have buried many things; one storm alone buried a caravan. How many storms have raged throughout the centuries? The True Lord *the Most High* tells us about City of Pillars, Iram when He says: "Are you not aware of how Your Lord has dealt with the tribe of 'Ad, [the people of] Iram, the town with great columns, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land? And Thamud who carved the rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles? [It was they] who transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein: and therefore Your Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering" (*al-Fajr*: 6-13)

He *the Most High* tells us that the like of Iram was never created in the land, i.e. it surpassed the ancient civilisation of Egypt, which is full of wonders; so where are they now? As long as a single sandstorm could bury an entire caravan, how many sandstorms passed over these lands? Simply, we all dig under the ground to uncover the artefacts. Why do we have to dig when these artefacts were originally above the ground? Sandstorms buried them.

An example to illustrate this: if you leave your house for a month and come back, you find that the inside of the house is covered with dust even though the windows were closed. How much dust would you find if you left the house for a year, two or three years, even if all the windows and doors are closed and sealed? Dust would creep in and cover the furniture and the floor. If this happens in our own homes, what about the places exposed to hurricanes and sandstorms? Could whole cities be covered or could they not? Indeed, some entire cities and civilisations were buried under sand. As such, when we search for artefacts, we dig under the ground. This is another way of going through the earth for discovery and contemplation. When Allah says:

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا
 كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكْذِبِينَ ﴿١٣٧﴾

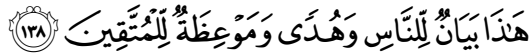
God's ways have operated before your time: travel through the land, and see what was the end of those who disbelieved [137] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 137)

What does 'the end to those who gave the lie to the Truth', mean? When a nation established a great civilisation, the True Lord says in this concern: 'Are you not aware of how Your Lord has dealt with the tribe of 'Ad, [the people of] Iram, the town with great columns, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land? And with Thamud who carved the rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles? [It was they] who transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein. Therefore, Your Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering' (*al-Fajr*: 6-12).

Were those who established this civilisation not able to ensure its safe survival? How could these great civilisations come to an end and fall into oblivion? It is undoubtedly true that this could only happen because of an even greater power. Despite the awesome development of these civilisations, they were unable to protect themselves from annihilation. It was a superpower higher than them. As such, we understand Allah's words: '...behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the Truth.' (*Al-'Imran*: 137) It was the All-Sustaining, Who sees all the creation, so those who go beyond

limits and spread corruption will eventually meet the same fate. Consequently, Allah's words are absolutely true: '[Many] Ways of life have passed away before your time. Go, then, in the earth and behold what happened in the end to those who gave the lie to the truth.' (*Al-'Imran*: 137)

Next, the True Lord says:



This is a clear lesson to people, and guidance and teaching for those who are mindful of God [138]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 138)

Consider the phrase, 'This [should be] a clear lesson unto all men...' (*Al-'Imran*: 138). When the clear lessons come, they take their force and authority from the power of the one who issues them. When a revolution takes place in a given society, the whole world is shaken by the first declarations of the new power. This is a declaration issuing from a human being; so what about a declaration issued by Allah?

It is a clarification from Allah that He will not take us suddenly: 'This [should be] a clear lesson unto all men, and a guidance and an admonition unto the God-conscious.' (*Al-'Imran*: 138). The guidance, as we know, means the way that leads to the desired end. The 'admonition' is defined as forcing one's self to do what is good and avoid what is evil, either by encouragement or fear. This is the 'admonition'.

All these matters are mentioned in the course of the Quranic verses dealing with the battle of Uhud, after we have taken the moral lessons from it, whilst the event is still fresh in minds. As such, before He completed for us the account of Uhud, Allah encouraged our souls by this issue and presented to us these material and moral issues to guide therewith in our lives. So, the story of Uhud did not finish and people miss the lessons drawn from it.

Given this fact, those who fought in the Cause of Allah are the soldiers of truth, who are assured of the truth by receiving Allah's support when His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was with them as a bearer of the miracle proving his veracity, the events of Uhud should not

weaken you. Simply, you know how Allah supports the truth and strengthens it, and campaigns against the falsehood. We have clarified to you the ways and set out the clear lessons. In light of this, Allah *the Most High* says:

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

**Do not lose heart or despair – if you are true believers you
have the upper hand [139] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 139)**

His saying: 'Be not, then, faint of heart...' (*Al-'Imran*: 139) means 'do not be weak.' It particularly refers to the weakness of bodies because many were injured at Uhud to the extent that some of them were unable to stand. Even the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was unable to climb the mountain. Talha ibn 'Ubadillah *Allah be pleased with him* had to support him on his back to stand. For this reason, Allah says: 'Be not, then, faint of heart...' (*Al-'Imran*: 139) because when you remember that you are a believer, you know that Allah will not let the forces of falsehood overcome you. You are on the side of truth, and the truth is from Allah Who is the Lord of Truth, Who never leaves His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his people fall to their enemies. If you remember all this, never be weak. Indeed, the weakness essentially signifies a lack of physical strength.

'And grieve not...' Grief is an emotional sentiment in the heart. They grieved because many of them had died; seventy-five martyrs in all, of whom five are from the Meccan migrants and five from the Helpers of Medina. It was very difficult and distressing. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grieved for the martyrs and was deeply moved by the death of Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* saying: 'I will never suffer any painful loss graver than your loss! Nothing has ever angered me more than this!' Then, he said: 'If Allah gives me victory over Quraysh, I will mutilate thirty of their men for your sake!' Allah then says: 'And grieve not!' Why? That is because you must always view events in the light of their ends.

It is true that the killing was hard and repulsive to the soul, but consider the ultimate end. Then, consider what is left behind. The martyrs have gone to an immortal life with their Lord, which is quite unlike the life in this world.

Our worldly life has its laws, as does the life with our Lord. Is our status higher than His? No, of course not; it is not.

Considering the case of martyrs proves that they have a life higher than the world they left behind. Therefore, do not grieve for them but rejoice for their ultimate happy end. To epitomise, the martyr has a shorter life span in this world but the ultimate end is to reach Allah's mercy and win the life of Heavens. S/He is happy enjoying his/her Lord's company. In this world, when we are on a journey to a certain destination, we are pleased if someone shortens for us the time to get there.

Rather than going to Alexandria on foot, I go there on horseback or by car; and the well-off person goes by plane. If you wish to reach a certain destination, then something makes your journey shorter, why would you grieve? S/He is martyr. Beware of saying: 'Allah denied me his/her strength to support the religion.' Allah has indeed provided further powers and aids for the victory of the Truth; when hearing that a person has given himself to Allah, you must be aware that the ultimate end is tremendous. As such, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* sent the members of his own family first at the battle of Badr, because he knew where any of them would go, if killed. He loved his family greatly beyond the limits of this world. Some people also love their families, but their love is confined to the worldly affairs.

'And Grieve not' for the battle-spoils missed or for the victory lost. Why? That is '...for you are bound to rise high....' Practical illustration soon came in the words of Abu Sufyan who proclaimed the glory of his idol saying: 'Glory to Hubal!' That means their idol 'Hubal' had been victorious. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his Companions: 'Will you not answer them?' They said: 'How should we answer them?' He said: 'Say: Allah is *the Most High* and Most Exalted.' In reply, Abu Sufyan said: 'We have al-'Uzza, while you have no 'Uzza.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his companions: 'Answer him'. 'What to say?' they asked. He said, 'Say: Allah is our protector and you have no protector.' Then, Abu Sufyan said: 'We will meet you at Badr next year.' In response, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said to one of his companions: 'Say, yes, we shall meet. You have our pledge.'

Therefore, 'you are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers.' So long as you have faith, you will be the uppermost. If you want to know the true meaning of 'bound to rise high', compare the battle of Uhud to the battle of Badr. They killed your men at Uhud and you killed their men at Badr. However, you took some of them prisoners at Badr and they took no prisoners from you at Uhud; You took spoils at Badr but they took no spoils at Uhud. You are in the superior position because Allah protected your city, even though it had no military protection. This shows your higher position when we consider the results of the two battles. If we consider the battle of Uhud alone, leaving aside Badr, in the light of Allah's words: '...for you are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers' (*Al-'Imran*: 139), we see this fact confirmed; when you were truly believers, as conditioned by obeying the commands of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who only speaks by Allah's leave, you were splendidly victorious. You killed more than twenty of their leaders including the standard bearer, in the first phase of the battle. However, when they disobeyed the commands of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* the faith in their hearts was shaken.

The events that unfolded confirmed the truth that '...you are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 139). They first had the superior position but when they disobeyed, there followed what followed. As such, there came true the truth of Allah's words: '...for you are bound to rise high if you are [truly] believers' (*Al-'Imran*: 139).

Furthermore, if you consider the battle, you note that the enemy did not remain on the battlefield. Only, the Muslims remained there. Where did the enemy go? Did they go to another place to gain victory and success? There was nothing left but Medina which was entirely vulnerable as left without defence. However, the enemies did not go there. Instead, they took their way to Mecca. As such, they escaped.

In the aftermath of the battle, the caller of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* announced that they should pursue the enemies to cast fear into their hearts and demonstrate that the Muslims still had strength to fight; the afflictions they suffered had not weakened them.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to pursue the enemy. He did not mobilize battalions of soldiers, who had not witnessed the battle.

Rather, he called upon the believers: 'Come to me, O servants of Allah.' Seven hundred men attended the battle, of whom many were injured and seventy-five were killed, including Hamza, Mus'ab ibn 'Umair, 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh, Shammash ibn 'Uthman, and Sa'd *Allah be pleased with them* the ally of 'Utba. These five are from the Meccan emigrants whereas the rest of martyrs were from the Helpers of Medina. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* accompanied the rest of his army after losing the support of this number of martyrs who first attended the battle. He did not take anyone in their places from his followers in Medina, of those who offered to go with the army in pursuit of Quraysh. Rather, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* preferred to go only with those who first battled the enemies, leaving behind, of course, those martyred or injured.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not accept anyone who did not attend the battle except one man, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* who did not go to the battle of Uhud. He explained to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that his father 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Haram had ordered him to stay behind and look after his seven daughters saying: 'Son, it is not appropriate that you and I should leave these women without a man, and I am not leaving my position in support of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to you. Stay behind with your sisters.' So, he stayed to look after them and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* accepted his excuse and allowed him to accompany him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* pursued them to Hamra' Al-Asad. As for his father 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, he was martyred at Uhud. Despite the martyrdom of his father, Jabir asked the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* for permission to go to Hamra' Al-Asad. It reminds us of Allah's words: 'And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except He' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31).

In the wake of the battle of Uhud, there passed by the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* one of the idolaters who was fully

trusted as one of the ardent allies of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and whose name was Ma'bad Al-Khuza'i, who said: 'O Muhammad, by Allah, your afflictions grieved us deeply.' Then, he met Abu Sufyan ibn Harb and those with him at Ar-Rawhaa'. They had decided to go back for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to his Companions. Abu Sufyan said to him: 'What is the news behind you, O Ma'bad?' He said: 'Muhammad has come out along with his companions to pursue you with huge numbers of hosts I have never seen the like.' He did not leave them until Abu Sufyan and those with him were dissuaded taking their way back to Mecca in fear and hurry. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* arrived at Hamra' Al-Asad where he found no one; so he camped for three days. In other words, it was Quraysh who fled the battle. Thus, you are bound to rise above but be carefully mindful of the condition: 'If you are [truly] believers' (*Al-'Imran*: 139). Allah then consoled the believers saying:

إِنْ يَمَسُّكُمْ فَرْحٌ فَقَدْ مَسَّ الْقَوْمَ فَرْحٌ مِّثْلُهُ، وَتِلْكَ الْأَيَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَيَتَّخِذَ مِنْكُمْ شُهَدَاءَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

if you have suffered a blow, they too have suffered one like it. We deal out such days among people in turn, for God to find out who truly believes, for Him to choose martyrs from among you – God does not love evildoers [140]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 140)

We have spoken before about the meaning of 'Al-mass, i.e. touching.' We said that it is to contact with someone or something without feeling it; it touches you, but you do not feel, for example, any warmth or softness. Unlike the word '*lams*' in Arabic, it means that you come to contact with something and feel it, which requires contact for a certain length of time. In the case of al-Mass, you almost do not feel anything. *Al-Qarh* 'misfortune' here means 'injuries'. It is also pronounced "*al-qurh*" which refers to the pains of injuries. Every word has its own specific meaning.

You might sometimes see words and think they have the same meaning, but actually each word has its own meaning. For example, the words '*ra'a*, *nazhara*, *lamaha*, *ramaqa* and *rana*', all indicate sight. However, each word

has its special meaning: "*Ramaqa*" is to glance stealthily by the far side of one's eyes whereas "*Lamaha*" is to glimpse taking a brief look for a short moment from a distance. As for "*rana*" it is to take a long look, and so on. Another example is '*jalasa*' and '*qa'ada*', both of which generally mean 'to sit down'. Yet, the more precise usage reveals that '*jalasa*' takes place after the posture of 'reclining', while '*qa'ada*' takes place after standing i.e. to 'sit down'. The two verbs result in the same end. The same goes true for *qarh* and *qurh*. They have their own meanings. For example, people say that lions have many names in Arabic: *Al-asad*, *Al-ghadanfar*, *Ar-r'ibal*, *Al-ward*, and *Al-qaswara*. Truly, these are all names of the lion. However, each of them has its own specific meaning. For example, *Al-Asad* is the name of the genus; *Al-ghadanfar* identifies the lion with a sprouted mane; *Al-ward* is a lion whose backbone has stretched out. Every posture of the lion has its own specific name.

As to Allah's words: 'If misfortune touches you, [know that] similar misfortune has touched [other] people as well...' (*Al-'Imran*: 140), notice that the speaker here is Allah, so understand His speech as carefully as possible. In the conditional sentence, as we know, the condition comes first, and then the result follows. For example, we say: 'if you study hard, you will succeed.' Success is the result of that condition, which is hard studying.

As to His truthful statement: 'If misfortune touches you, [know that] similar misfortune has touched [other] people as well...' (*Al-'Imran*: 140). Does this conditional sentence mean that the misfortune touched the disbelievers at Badr for the misfortune that touched the believers at Uhud? No, it could not be a result of that condition because if it were, the Lord would rather have said: 'If misfortune touches you, similar misfortune will touch the other people.' However, He did not say it in this like manner. Simply, the misfortune that afflicted the disbelievers at Badr happened before the misfortune that befell the believers at Uhud.

These words of Allah mean: If misfortune touches you, do not be downcast, for similar misfortune has touched your opponents as well. The final clause in the previous sentence is not the main clause in the conditional, but a complementary clause that explains and justifies the meaning of the main clause. This analysis is essential to eliminate any misunderstanding of the verse.

By this justification, Almighty Allah, means to console the believers and reassure them. Suppose someone has experienced a disaster, so we may tell him by way of condolence: 'Let it suffice as solace that your adversary has undergone the same disaster.' This can be a sort of condolence. Likewise, Allah means to console the believers by reminding them that even though a wound has touched them, they should not be downcast. Rather, they should find solace in the fact that their enemies suffer a wound, too. This should hearten them and help them overcome their hardship.

Do we offer condolences based on events that had already taken place, or events yet to take place in the future? Sure, we offer condolence by reminding the distressed of events that did occur and this is what Allah has done with the believers:

'If you have suffered a blow, they too have suffered one like it...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 140).

After this, Allah in the same verse states a general law He has established among people: '... We deal out such days among people in turn ...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 140). What does that mean? It means to transfer a person from one state to another; to take a thing from one person to another. Let us consider here the two battles of Badr and Uhud. Muslims won undisputed victory in the Battle of Badr. As for the Battle of Uhud, none of the two parties can be said to have been victorious or defeated. This explains the words of Allah: '... We deal out such days among people in turn ...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 140). It means that even if the disbelievers are roughly considered to have won victory in the Battle of Uhud (although they did not), then know, O believer, that it is the law of Allah to give people victory and defeat in turns.

Do not let it escape you, however, that victory was only taken from you, O believers, when you disobeyed the instructions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. By disobeying divine guidance, the believers are thus stripped of the advantage they have over their enemies, and material power is then to determine victory.

Since they have turned thus equal in terms of spiritual power, material power can give one of them victory on a day and defeat on another. Such is how Allah deals out days among people. There is something particularly

worthy of notice in the noble verse: Days are dealt out in turns among people so long as they are thus equal, but if the believers hold fast to divine guidance, victory is impossible to be apportioned to the disbelievers. And ponder the words of Allah: ‘...We deal out such days among people in turn...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 140). Allah says, ‘among people’ and not ‘among the believers and disbelievers’.

The word ‘days’ here does not refer to the common meaning of the period of time encompassing the day and night; rather, ‘days’ here refers to victory and predominance that take turns with people through time. We say: ‘The day was his,” which means victory was his. So ‘...We deal out such days among people in turn...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 140) does not mean victory is apportioned between the believers and disbelievers; rather, when the believers were occupied with the battle-spoils, their faith wavered, so they lost their advantage as ‘believers’ and Quraysh roughly won victory over them. If they had remained steadfast, they would never have been deprived of victory, but they deviated from their Lord’s guidance, and in doing so, became no better than the disbelievers. So long as such is the case, it is normal then for days of victory to be appointed in turns between one party and another; this is absolute justice.

We must bear in mind the condition Allah states, not for avoidance of defeat, but for superiority and outright victory: ‘...you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 139).

In stating the law of apportioning days among people, Allah means to remind the believers whose faith has wavered that, as long as they are equal to their enemies, by losing the advantage of faith they have over them, victory will be given them and their enemies in turns; it will be for those who are the most tactful and powerful, for material power will then decide who the winner is.

If Muslims leave aside the guidance of Allah, they become human beings facing other human beings, without the spiritual power that gives them superiority over their opponents. Given this law, when the archers failed to obey the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the genius of Khalid ibn Al-Walid who was the commander of the disbelievers’ army, then overcame the genius of the Muslim warriors.

The words of Allah are so clear. '...We deal out such days among people in turn...' (*Al-Imran*: 140). Victory is not apportioned between the believers and disbelievers, but between 'people' where each party has no special power or assistance to aid them. So long as they leave aside divine guidance, people become all equal, and victory is then determined by material power: the best in this realm is the one who gain victory.

What is it then that guarantees victory for the believers regardless of material power? It is faith: if you have Allah on your side, no creature can be able to face Him in a battle. I have given this example before, and let me repeat it again: If a little boy's peers bully him, and he takes refuge with an adult man, they will all leave him alone. They cannot face the man, but if the child strays far from him, they can harm him then. How about having Allah on our side? He is above all comparison and such is the case of the believers with the disbelievers.

The disbelievers can achieve victory only when the believers stray from divine guidance; Allah will not succour those who do not follow His guidance. If He were to do so, this would render the issue of faith completely devoid of meaning. Exalted is He above all that does not befit His Majesty! Let us consider the Noble Quran; any statement made about people who deviate from the guidance of Allah confirms that the outcome of such deviation is misery. For instance, Allah says: 'By the declining day, man is [deep] in loss...' (*al-Asr*: 1-2). Humankind would have been wholly doomed to loss and misery, but what is the only way that can save them? Here is the answer offered to us by Allah: 'Except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness.' (*al-Asr*: 3).

This truth is confirmed in another context in the Noble Quran, where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Man was truly created anxious: he is fretful when misfortune touches him, but tight-fisted when good fortune comes his way. Except those who pray...' (*al-Ma'arj*: 19-22).

So, every general statement in the Quran about humankind denotes that we are generally doomed to misfortune. What then is the only way for us to be saved? It is abiding by the guidance of Allah.

Thus, the Words of Almighty Allah: ‘...We deal out such days among people in turn...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 140) imply mild blame to those who have proclaimed faith yet disobeyed the commands of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

At the end of the same verse Almighty Allah says: ‘...for Allah to find out who truly believes, for Him to choose martyrs from among you– Allah does not love evildoers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 140)

At times of victory, everyone, even those who has not participated in the battle, wish to include themselves among the victorious. At times of defeat, however, people are differentiated. Only the truthful would share the burdens and difficulties of defeat, even those who have not directly engaged in the battle, and would not try to evade responsibility, whether they blame or excuse those who have directly caused the defeat. Someone might wonder: ‘Did Allah need to “find out” who truly believes’? He *the Exalted and Almighty* certainly knows who the believers are whether battles occur or not. However, we do not know what the Omnipotent Knowledge of Allah encompasses. Therefore, unless Allah unveils to us the truth about something, it cannot be held as evidence against us. When Allah makes manifest to us the truth that He eternally knows, it becomes a proof and an argument in favour of those who believe and against those who disbelieve. This way, no one would claim that he had been ready to proclaim faith if only he had been granted the chance!

Therefore, we are tested through trials and tribulations: so that we can know ourselves, and for our attitudes to stand for us or against us. Accordingly, Allah has absolute, eternal Knowledge of all things, but they do not represent evidence against us unless we are made to know them. Someone might claim that if a great battle were to take place, they would stand up and fight with perseverance; still, it is only when the battle actually takes place that the valiant are differentiated from the cowardly. Let us give an example of this (and Allah has the Highest Example). The dean of a college may ask one of the teachers to run an exam to assess students and give prizes to the best. The teacher may reply that there is no need for an exam and he can just tell who the best students are. By experience, the teacher may classify the students in order of excellence. The dean, however, would insist on holding the exam so no one

will have an excuse, and would choose another teacher to carry out the exam. The results would come out, and the expectations of the first teacher would turn out to be true, but now his knowledge is proved by unquestionable evidence so none of the student would be allowed room to object to or deny the truth.

If human beings can have knowledge and tell truths by experience, what about Allah Who has the absolute, omnipotent Knowledge? Allah, with His Omnipotent Knowledge, knows everything; His Knowledge encompasses all that was, is, will be, and would have been. Still, He does not say to us, for example: 'I know if you entered a battle, you would have done such-and-such.'

This would have allowed deniers of the truth a chance to argue for themselves and make unfounded allegations. To prevent this, Allah has willed that a battle must take place and the truth, which He already knows, to be thus proven to people so none of them can have an excuse. So, Allah does not need to 'find out' anything; He just makes His Knowledge known to us to remain a standing proof for or against those who witness it.

The True Lord says: '...for Him to *yattakhidh* (choose) martyrs from among you...' (*Al-Imran*: 140). The Arabic word *yattakhedh* denotes selection of a person or thing in preference to others. For example, Almighty Allah says: '...Allah *ittakhadha* (took) Ibrahim (Abraham) as a friend.' (*an-Nisa'*: 125) This means Allah has singled Ibrahim (Abraham) out and exalted him with His Love. The word '*yattakhidh*' means selection of a person or thing based on preference to elevate them to a special status. Accordingly, ponder these words of Almighty Allah: '...for Him to *yattakhidh* (choose) martyrs from among you...' (*Al-Imran*: 140). The classical meaning of the Arabic word *shahid* is one who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed in the battle, yet he remains alive and amply provided for up there with his Lord.

Here is a common misconception. Some would say: 'If we open the grave of a martyr, we will find dust and bones, which means that his life has been taken from him'! No, Allah has given him a new life up with Him, not in the world of people. If someone were to open the grave of a martyr, they indeed would find bones and dust, for Almighty Allah has given the martyr a life with Him, not with us: '[Prophet], do not think of those who have been killed

in Allah's way as dead. They are alive with their Lord, well provided for.' (*Al-'Imran*: 169). The martyrs have with their Lord a life we do not know the nature of. When we open their graves, we are dealing with a material issue, but the life of martyrs is not in the material world, but up with Allah as He has told us. The Arabic word *shaheed* (literally: "martyr") also conveys "to bear witness"; martyrs will testify to the truth the battle was fought for. Everyone wants the best for themselves, and if those people had not known that to expose their lives to death in the cause of Allah was better for them than their staying alive, they would not have done so.

In this way, each martyr bears witness to the Truth for which they have lost their lives. The word *shaheed* (literally: "martyr") can also mean they struggled to deliver the Message of Allah to the last drop of blood. Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...Allah does not love evildoers' (*Al-'Imran*: 140).

This implies an emphasis that the battle must be fought under the banner of truth. As we have said earlier, as long as both opponents contradict divine guidance, Allah will not wrong any of them in any way; He will let material power determine victory in the battle, since none of the fighting parties has any nonmaterial advantage over the other. Despite Allah's aversion to disbelief, He will not be on the side of the believers if they do not hold fast to the requirements of faith. It is only in this case that the disbelievers can defeat the believers. Nevertheless, if the believers hold fast to their faith, Allah guarantees victory for them. Then, Allah says,

وَلِيُمَحِّصَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَيَمْحَقَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤١﴾

**For Him to cleanse those who believe and
for Him to destroy the disbelievers [141]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 141)**

To "cleanse" something means to render it pure by removing only harmful elements; it is unlike destroying which means to remove the thing in its entirety. The reason for this process is then clarified in the following verse where Allah says:

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ
 جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٢﴾

**Did you think you would enter the Garden without God first
 proving which of you would struggle for His cause and
 remain steadfast? [142] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 142)**

Faith is not simply a word that is spoken; you must go through a test to prove your faith is true. It is not just proclaiming faith that can constitute sufficient evidence that you are true bearers of the Message. If you are truthful in your claim, you must stand up for the Truth to be predominant when the party who holds it is short of power. When the Truth is victorious and its people are strong, it has no need for anyone to stand up for it. Only at times of weakness does the Truth need to be consolidated by sincere believers. Attaining Paradise is subject to a test that a believer must pass.

Allah says: ‘... before Allah tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those of you who are patient?’ (*Al-'Imran*: 142). We must be aware that Allah has known from eternity those who strive in His cause and those who are patient. He only makes His Knowledge evident to people through events so no one can deny the truth. In the following verse, Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ تَمَنَّوْنَ الْمَوْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَلْقَوْهُ فَقَدْ رَأَيْتُمُوهُ وَأَنْتُمْ نَظَرُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾

**Before you encountered death, you were hoping
 for it. Well, now you have seen it with your own
 eyes [143] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 143)**

Those who missed the honour of participating in the Battle of Badr wanted to make amends for that by participating with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Battle of Uhud. Therefore, Allah addresses them by the aforesaid verse. Did you think that longing for confrontation with enemies would alone bring victory? Did you think that every battle the believers enter must end in their victory? If you think victory is so easy, it means you have embraced faith with only auspice, ease and victory in your mind. However, Allah has willed to make plain those who have embraced faith with readiness to give their lives for His cause.

If victory were so easily attained, everyone would embrace faith, and this is why Allah says: 'Do you think that you will enter Paradise before Allah tests those of you who fought (in His Cause) and (also) tests those of you who are patient? (*Al-'Imran*: 142). Did you think Allah would admit you to Paradise before He makes plain to all what He has eternally known, before He manifests through events what is in your hearts to be a proof for or against you? No one is to attain Paradise unless Allah reveals those who strive in His cause and patiently endure adversity for the sake of the Truth.

Allah says: 'Before you encountered death, you were hoping for it. Well, now you have seen it with your own eyes.' (*Al-'Imran*: 143). That which you had longed for in the past (dying in the cause of Allah) was right in front of you, so if you are sincere, you should be eager to sacrifice your lives as you are eager to remain alive. After this, Allah says:

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ
 انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا
 وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone. If he died or was killed, would you revert to your old ways? If anyone did so, he would not harm God in the least. God will reward the grateful [144] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 144)

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the name of the final Messenger of Allah. He has another name which is mentioned in the Quran as well as the Bible; namely, Ahmad. 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said, 'Children of Israel, I am sent to you by Allah, confirming the Torah that came before me and bringing good news of a messenger to follow me whose name will be Ahmad.' Yet when he came to them with clear signs, they said, 'This is obviously sorcery.' (*as-Saff*: 6). 'Muhammad' is mentioned in the Quran four times and 'Ahmad' only once.

The verse we are dealing with now mentions the name of 'Muhammad': 'Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been

and gone...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 144). Let us recite these words of Allah: 'Muhammad is not the father of any one of you men; he is Allah's Messenger and the seal of the prophets: Allah knows everything.' (*al- 'Ahzab*: 40). And His words: 'And (as for) those who believe and do good, and believe in what has been revealed to Muhammad, and it is the very truth from their Lord, He will remove their evil from them and improve their condition.' (*Muhammad*: 2)

Let us recite this noble verse as well: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other. You see them kneeling and prostrating, seeking Allah's bounty and His good pleasure..." (*al-Fath*: 29).

A name is a word given to a thing or person to distinguish them so that when the name is spoken, the mind envisages that thing or person. In case the same name is given to two things, a description must be added to differentiate between them. If two people in the same family are named 'Muhammad', a description has to be added to tell who is who. In the country, they would say, for example, 'the eldest Muhammad' and 'the youngest Muhammad'.

The words 'Muhammad' and 'Ahmad' are both derived from the same Arabic root *h-m-d* which denotes 'praise'. Still, the morphological pattern of each results in a difference in meaning. When a word is used as a name, it is stripped from its linguistic meaning and turns into just a word by which a person or thing is distinguished.

A black slave-girl may be called Qamar (literally: 'the moon'; in the Arabic culture, a beautiful girl is likened to the moon), or a miserable slave-boy may be called Sa'id (the Arabic for 'Happy'). When a word becomes a name for a person or thing, it loses its original meaning and becomes more like a label distinguishing the named person or thing. However, when people give their children names, they hope that the meaning of the name will be manifested in the character and conduct of the child.

Perhaps one who names his plain girl Qamar (literally: 'the moon') wishes her to have the beauty of the name, since she lacks outward beauty in reality. As we said, the Arabic root *h-m-d* denotes 'praise'. The derivative Muhammad means 'highly praised'; someone or something profoundly praised and admired by others. It means someone highly esteemed and honoured by others.

As for the derivative Ahmad, it means someone who pays high homage to someone or something else. So, he is the one who offers high praise and not the one who receives. Now, let us examine the two names of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Muhammad and Ahmad. Both are derived from the root *h-m-d* (praise). As for Muhammad, it means a person who receives high praise and admiration from others. A near synonym to it is Mahmoud which means 'praiseworthy', but Muhammad means highly and profoundly praiseworthy and extolled, so the latter is stronger in meaning.

As for Ahmad, it means someone who offers high praise to another person or thing. The word Ahmad is a comparative form; it means someone who offers praise to someone or something more than others do. A near synonym to it is Hameed which also conveys offering praise to someone or something, but not so highly. Thus, Ahmad is an intensified form of Hamed; it denotes offering a great deal of praise to someone or something, and Muhammad is an intensified form of Mahmud; it denotes receiving a great deal of praise from others.

Hence, Allah has granted His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* a combination of two commendable attributes: He is highly praised by Allah and he is also a devout servant of Him who praises Him highly. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been granted his elevated status in two forms: He is the choicest servant of Allah who is Muhammad (highly praised) by Him, and he is also the most devout of His servants who is Ahmad (praises Allah more than anyone else does). So, we are dealing here with two sublime stations granted to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I am Muhammad, Ahmad, Al-Muqaffi (the Final Prophet), Al-Hasher (the Gatherer), the Prophet of Repentance, and the Prophet of Mercy.'

There is much to be said about this point, but now let us return to our main topic: the Battle of Uhud. After the archers disobeyed Prophet Muhammad's orders *peace and blessings be upon him* the idolaters of Quraysh seized the chance and launched a counter attack. The Companions ran here and there, fleeing, and the idolaters were able to approach Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the extent that Ibn Qami'ah was able to strike the noble Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with a stone that broke his

tooth! The two rings of Prophet Muhammad's Helmet pierced his cheeks, and he took to bleeding. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* tried to climb a rock of the mountain to stand on top of it, but he could not, so the Companion Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah *Allah be pleased with him* supported Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from beneath and lifted him on the rock. The noble Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was thus subject to hardship and suffering like any human being. Was it not in the Power of Allah to protect the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from all this? Undoubtedly, Allah has power over everything. Still, He did not want to deny His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the honour and pleasure of fighting and suffering in His cause. Also, Allah wanted the believers to understand why He has sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a Messenger to all humankind. Allah *the Exalted* did not send Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as His Messenger to spare him the inevitable human struggle; rather, He wanted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be a role model for every believer who wants to taste the sweetness of faith and struggle in the cause of Allah. In the Battle of Uhud, some warriors fled from the battlefield, and the winds of defeat almost blew upon the believers. The Companion Abu 'Ubaydah ibn Al-Jarrah hurried to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and found the helmet rings penetrating his cheeks. As Companion Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* tried to take them out, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* felt pain, so Companion Abu Ubaydah said: 'O Abu Bakr, spare yourself the trouble. I beg you to let me do it'! Companion Abu 'Ubaydah bit down on one of the rings and pulled it from Prophet Muhammad's cheek and in doing so lost one of his front tooth. He did the same with the other ring and lost another front tooth. It marked the noble Companion ever after that his two front teeth were lost, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* honoured him with this testimony: 'Every nation has a trustworthy guardian, and the trustworthy guardian of this *ummah* (all Muslims collectively) is Abu 'Ubaydah ibn Al-Jarrah'. Prophet Muhammad's blood was flowing. Allah inspired Fatema Az-Zahra' *Allah be pleased with her* to take a piece of a straw mat, burn it, and use its ash to cure the wound. Allah did not want to deny His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* the honour and pleasure of struggling in His cause.

Mean, while, Anas ibn an-Nadr saw a group of the noble Companions, including 'Umar Al-Khattab and Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah *Allah be pleased with them* sitting, having thrown down their weapons. Companion Anas asked them: 'What makes you sit back'?! They replied: 'The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been killed'. He said: 'Then, what will you do with life after him?! Stand up and die for the cause the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* has died for'! He resumed fighting against the polytheists until he was martyred.

Those were true believers; their firm faith would not have been revealed if the battle had not occurred. Hence came this message from Allah: 'Muhammad is only a messenger...' (*Al-'Imran: 144*). Allah willed to teach the believers that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a human being like them; he was sent as a Messenger from Allah just as Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and all the Messengers have been sent. They were all human beings, all mortals, and death must come to them. 'Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone. If he died or was killed, would you revert to your old ways?...' (*Al-'Imran: 144*)

O believers, did the followers of the previous Messengers forsake faith when their Messengers passed away? How can you be of less mettle than they were? Suppose Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, would you not undertake to deliver the timeless Message he has passed on to you so it would reach people until the Day of Resurrection? If a man's good deeds die with him, does it mean he truly established something? No, one's struggle is successful only when its fruits outlive him.

Unsuccessful leaders, eventhough remarkable in themselves, are those who die and leave people desperate for good leaders after them. They are those who leave their subjects baffled and wondering why their late leader did not pass on his wisdom to anyone. They continue to lament his loss and wish he had prepared an able successor to take control after him. This is why Allah says: 'Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone...' (*Al-'Imran: 144*).

When we hear the statement: 'Muhammad is only a messenger', we feel the emphasis placed on the meaning intended. Allah emphasizes that Prophet

Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* status is elevated only in the sense that he is a Messenger. This implies that some of his contemporaries perhaps believed him to be more than a human messenger and believed he could not die. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is but a messenger before messengers have been and gone: Allah gives no one an eternal life in this world.

Were people heedless of this plain truth? Yes, they were; even after this verse was revealed, eventhough they would recite it day and night along with the other verses of the Quran, we find that Companion 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* himself seemed to almost forget it. He had faith just as firm as mountains, a disposition perfectly in harmony with the revelations of Allah, and a mind inspired by His guidance.

Despite that, once he heard the news of Prophet Muhammad's death *peace and blessings be upon him* he said: 'By Allah, the Messenger of Allah is not dead, and he will not die until he destroys a lot more of the hypocrites'! The shock of Prophet Muhammad's death stunned Companion 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, *Allah be pleased with him*. Deep anguish drove him to say that as if he had forgotten that verse. Hence, Companion Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* reminded him of the truth: 'If you worship Muhammad, know that Muhammad has died, and if you worship Allah, know that Allah is Ever-Living and He never dies'! Then, he recited these words of Almighty Allah: 'Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone. If he died or was killed, would you revert to your old ways? If anyone did so, he would not harm Allah in the least. Allah will reward the grateful.' (*Al-Imran*: 144) Commenting later on this circumstance, Companion 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'It was as though I had never recited this verse until that day'.

After Muslims pledged allegiance to companion Abu Bakr as caliph, Companion 'Umar said: 'Yesterday, I said something that has no truth in it. By God, I have found nothing to support it in the Book of Allah [the Quran] or in any covenant His Messenger [Muhammad] *peace and blessings be upon him* has made with me. Indeed, I had hoped that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would outlive us all, but Allah the Exalted and Almighty has

preferred for His Messenger His Company above your company. Hold fast, then, to the Book by means of which Allah has guided His Messenger, and follow its guidance just as Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* had followed it."

This momentous event teaches us two things: First, we learn from it how ardently the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* loved him. Second, we know that faith is our safeguard. Our love for someone must not prevail on our love for Allah and our faith in Him. Listen what 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said afterward: 'When I heard Abu Bakr recite this verse, I saw the truth of it. [Conscious of the situation at last,] My legs would no longer carry me, and I fell to the ground.'

Thus, we understand what Almighty Allah means by His words: 'Muhammad is only a messenger before whom many messengers have been and gone...' (*Al-'Imran*: 144). It is a message to the believers: 'Do not raise him, due to his prophethood, higher than I Myself have raised him'.

Allah says in the verse: '... If he died or was killed, would you revert to your old ways?' (*Al-'Imran*: 144). The Arabic expression rendered here as 'revert to your old ways' is literally translated as 'turn back on your heels'. Accordingly, it may mean 'to retreat before their enemy' or 'to return to disbelief after having proclaimed faith'. As for the words of Allah: 'If he died or was killed', it is a clear statement. Earlier, we have considered death and murder, and we said their end result is the same, which is the end of someone's life. However, murder necessarily involves damage to the physical form that hosts the soul which makes it unfit to host it anymore. The word 'death' is different in the sense that it means the end of one's life without damage to that physical form; death would come upon any person without necessarily being preceded by physical harm, illness, etc.

Destruction of the body that leads to loss of one's life is 'murder' or 'killing'. The soul cannot reside in a material form unless it has certain characteristics, and if these characteristics are deformed, the soul leaves. On the other hand, when the soul leaves without destruction of the body, this is the classical meaning of 'death', unlike 'murder' or 'killing'.

In the verse we are dealing with, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... if he died or was killed...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 144). In the battle of Uhud, word spread that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been killed. Some would wonder how the Companion believed such a rumour whereas Allah says: ‘...Allah will protect you from people...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 67).

The answer to that is: Do you know whether this verse was revealed before or after the Battle of Uhud? Do you think Companions always had every verse of the Quran flashing into their conscious minds? Do you not see that the rumour of his death threw them into extreme confusion that they started fleeing? Even ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* the revered Companion, almost forget about this verse upon the news of Prophet Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* death: ‘... if he died or was killed...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 144). It is also possible that the protection Allah granted His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was protection against their mischief and their degradation.

In this way, Allah has willed that all those who had proclaimed faith would be tested so what each harboured in his heart would be revealed. ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy, for example, retreated from the battle and took with him one third of the army. Two other groups were about to lose heart, but Allah has willed to make their hearts firm, so they remained steadfast with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; the archers also had their own part to play at the Battle of Uhud.

They saw victory close at hand and lure of the battle-spoils dazzling, so some of them craved the spoils, and they were split in dispute. Commander of the archers, ‘Abdullah ibn Jubayr, and few archers insisted on obeying the orders of Prophet Muhammad, so they fought until they were martyred. Those were the ones who yearned for reward in the Hereafter. The rest of the archers yearned for the spoils. When the rumour of Prophet Muhammad’s murder spread, the remaining archers fled the battlefield along with others, while Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was calling out: ‘Come back to me, O servants of Allah! Come back to me, O servants of Allah’!

It was a severe trial through which Allah has willed to reveal the true colour of all those who had proclaimed faith. The stand each one took

unveiled what was in their hearts, and those whose stand was contrary to the ordinance of Allah were obviously exposed. Meanwhile, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* experienced a sharp decrease of his human strength to such an extent, as we have said, that he was unable to climb the rock by himself, so Companion Talhah ibn 'Ubaydullah lowered his back for the Prophet to mount and ascend the rock. In such a state of physical weakness, Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* willed to give His Messenger strength sufficient to enable him to stand firm before one of the tyrants of Quraysh who was threatening him.⁽¹⁾

If it had been a moment of strength for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then, it would have been no wonder that he should triumph over his tough opponent. However, Allah wanted to show us His support and assistance of His Messenger at a moment of weakness and exhaustion. That tyrant of Quraysh was Ubayy ibn Khalaf Al-Jamhi. He had a horse that he sarcastically mentioned to the Messenger of Allah, saying: 'I feed this horse many measures of corn every day [so it can bear the burden of your corpse!] and upon it I will slay you'! Full of certainty that his Lord would not let him down, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: 'No, it is me who will slay you by the Will of Allah'.

This man did not dare approach Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he enjoyed full strength. Rather, he took chance of his severe injuries, his broken tooth, his cheeks pierced with the rings of his helmet and his blood pouring. In a tone of groundless defiance, Ubayy ibn Khalaf Al-Jamhi said: 'Where is Muhammad? Let me perish if he survives'! The Companions said: 'O Messenger of Allah! Should one of us confront him'? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* signified to them to remain silent. He knew Ubayy showed such boldness only because he knew the Messenger of Allah was physically almost powerless. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took up a spear and struck Ubayy who fell off his horse, bellowing like a bull. The companions of Ubayy exclaimed: 'No harm has been done to you, O Ubayy! What a fine fellow you are! It is only a scratch'! By that scratch, Prophet Muhammad killed the man on whom the

(1) *Khawater As-Sha'rawi, Voulme Three*

Wrath of Allah was severe. It has been reported on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas: 'The Wrath of Allah was severe upon him. The Messenger of Allah killed, with his own hand, for the cause of Allah, and the Wrath of Allah was severe upon those who made the face of the Messenger of Allah bleed'.

Those who harboured enmity toward Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were driven by arrogance and stubbornness, not by beliefs firmly ingrained in their hearts. They believed him to be truthful and believed what he delivered was indeed the Message of Allah. This is what Allah reveals in the Noble Quran: 'But when Our enlightening signs came to them, they said, "This is clearly [just] sorcery"! They denied them, in their wickedness and their pride, eventhough their souls acknowledged them as true. See how those who spread corruption met their end!' (*an-Naml*: 14)

Deep inside, they did know Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told the Truth, and how this conviction manifested itself in the case of Ubayy ibn Khalaf Al-Jamhi. As we have said, companions of Ubayy told him: 'What a fine fellow you are! It is only a scratch'! Ubayy replied: 'By Him Whose Hand is my soul, were my injury to be distributed among the entire population of Hejaz, they would surely all die'! His companions, however, again reassured him: 'You are fine, Ubayy. it is only a simple scratch'. However, Ubayy replied: 'No. By Allah, I know that blow will kill me, for he told me in Mecca: "No, it is me who will slay you by the Will of Allah". By Allah, had he only spat on me, he would have killed me!' Ubayy died on their journey back to Mecca.

That was a sign from Allah: He willed that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should kill that die-hard Qurayshite idolater despite his physical weakness and injured body. That constitutes a clear proof that material human power is not the criterion to determine victory. Allah, by His Power and Might, aided Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and granted him victory despite his lack of physical strength then. That aid bore testimony to the Might of Allah Who sustains and protects His servants, independent of their material means. Were victory to come at a time of predominance and power, people would simply say: 'They are strong, so they won victory, naturally'.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* struck that Qurayshite tyrant and killed him despite his physical weakness. That was a sign from Allah, and other signs followed to consolidate confidence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers in the fact that he was the Messenger of Allah and supported by Him. One of those signs was that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before that battle already knew what would happen there, for he said: 'By Allah, I have seen a good vision: I have seen cows being slaughtered, a crack at the tip of my sword, and I saw myself placing my hand in fortified armour that I interpret to be Medina'. He *peace and blessings be upon him* also said: 'I have seen myself [in a vision] on the day of Uhud and no creature near me except Gabriel on my right and Talha [ibn 'Ubaydullah] on my left'.

So, the battle and all its events had already been revealed to him, and despite that he was eager to fight it, which testifies that Allah had immunized and prepared him for all that would occur. So, on one level, Allah supported Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by those visions that revealed to Him those future events. On another level, events of the battlefield afforded miraculous signs as well. We know that martyrs are not washed before burial, yet Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about one of those who were martyred at Uhud: 'The angels are washing your companion' by which he referred to the martyr Hanzhalah. The believers knew that this was contrary to the usual case with martyrs. Later, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers found out why this was the case with Hanzhalah. That Companion Hanzhalah was washed, did not represent a breach of the law of martyrs except that they were the angels who washed him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* witnessed that exceptional scene, and when he went back to Medina, he asked the family of Hanzhalah about him. He discovered that he had only consummated his marriage when he was called for battle. Eager to answer the call, Hanzhalah had no time to perform ritual ablution after his intercourse with his bride. The story thus told by his own wife revealed the one reason why Companion Hanzhalah was washed by the angels. That incident was another sign, another reassurance from Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* that He

did not abandon them at the time of weakness and need. Rather, the events of the battle all happened for a reason.

Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to send Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* signs to prove to himself that he was the Messenger of Allah. Let me remind you of a story I have related before. Some of the Companions went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him Companion Jabir ibn 'Abdullah was indebted to a Jew and repayment was due upon harvest of dates. The produce of Jabir's dates decreased that year because of some infection or the like. Consequently, they asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask the Jew to grant Jabir respite for repayment of the debt. The Messenger of Allah went to the Jew and asked him that, but the Jew refused. 'No, Abu Al-Qasim'!

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* repeated his request, but the Jew said: 'No, Abu Al-Qasim'! The Messenger repeated his request a third time, but the Jew insisted: 'No, Abu Al-Qasim'! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the confidence of faith in Allah, asked Companion Jabir to take him to his garden. He went to the garden, walked among the palms trees, then went to the arbour where Jabir would sit, and, reclining, he said: 'O Jabir, harvest your dates and repay your debt'! Jabir reported: 'I harvested the dates and the profits yielded were enough to repay the debt I owed to the Jew, and moreover the amount that remained exceeded what I ever had at times when I had no debts to repay'.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard this, he said: 'I testify that I am the Messenger of Allah'! Allah *the Exalted* thus willed to give His Messenger clear signs to show him that he was truly the Messenger of Allah. The Jew did not accept the Prophet's intercession, so Allah gave him a sign to be both solace and evidence. At times of weakness or inability, Allah would not leave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* without reassurances and aids. Some of Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* opponents wanted to insult him. We have learnt that his name Muhammad literally means 'highly praised'. His enemies wanted to insult him and curse him, but Almighty Allah did not allow them even to insult the name, let alone the person of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah has encompassed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His protection, so He even prevented his enemies from associating any insult with his honoured name, Muhammad. Instead, He inspired them to fake another name that did not belong to the Prophet: Mudhammad (literally: “disgraced”). Thus, the Prophet’s noble name, Muhammad, was never associated with an insult in one sentence! Rather, the fake name they had invented, Mudhammad, was the one that bore the burden of the impudence! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* laughed when he heard what Umm Jamil, the wife of Abu Lahab, said: ‘Mudhammad we have defied! His call we have rejected and his religion despised’! She was alluding to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by these verses. The ‘firewood-carrier’ (as Umm Jamil is referred to in the Noble Quran) passed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was sitting at the Sacred Mosque, by the *Ka’ba*, along with Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*. As she stood before them, Allah blocked her vision so she would not see Prophet Muhammad. With a stone in her hand, and seeing only Abu Bakr, she addressed him: ‘O Abu Bakr, where is your companion? I was told that he has affronted me, and by Allah had I found him, I would have struck his mouth with this stone! By Allah, I am a poetess [and can compose poetry to affront him too]’! Then she said the abovementioned verses.

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Does it not surprise you that Allah has prevented Quraysh from associating my name with an insult [in one sentence]? They curse Mudhammad (literally: ‘disgraced’; a name Qurayshite idolaters have faked for the noble Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him*) and they insult Mudhammad, but my name is Muhammad [literally: “highly praised”; thus Allah has protected Prophet Muhammad's name from their insults].’⁽¹⁾

Thus, we see that out of the mouths of those who hated the messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he was protected by Allah’s will, and Allah even preserved his name from being cursed, and the named one himself *peace and blessings be upon him* was neither insulted nor cursed.

(1) Narrated by Abu Hurayra – [Al-Bukhari]

The events of the battle of Uhud were a primary lesson for the Companions of the messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and a confirmation of the truthfulness of his divine message. The battle depicted and embodied this, and so when we examine the battles that followed, we do not find a single instance where the believers were defeated because they were purified and educated so that each one of them became aware that Allah knew whatever he concealed, and that if he did not excel in times of trial and struggle, Allah would reveal what was in his soul, and announce it. So, every believer from amongst them entered every battle prepared to strive, and every battle after Uhud brought victory and safety.

The True Lord teaches us here that sticking to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the way to salvation and victory; and He warns us that the believer should never turn back on his heels. He said: 'So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will never harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful.' (*Al-Imran*: 144)

'And he who turns back on his heels...' (*Al-Imran*: 144) is a kinetic, physical, and visual image. Some of the companions turned back on their heels at the battle of Uhud, and fled to Medina. The meaning of "turn back" is when somebody faces the enemy in a battle, and then gives the battle his back to flee. The expression is congruent to another one in the Quran, when Allah says: 'turned their backs [in flight]' (*al-Fath*: 22).

Yet, the expression in the verse: 'you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]' (*Al-Imran*: 144), has a tangible connotation. It has a moral connotation too, which refers to deviation from the fundamentals of the religion. The True Lord informs us that after this incident, and after the assumption, of killing the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had spread, what the hypocrites said was different from what the people of weak faith said. The hypocrites who were more evil than the disbelievers, said: 'If he was truly a Prophet, he would not have been slain; go back to your brothers and your former religion'. As for those whose faith was weak, they said: 'We will go to Ibn Ubayy and seek amnesty from Abu Sufyan'. Anas ibn An-Nadr stood firm, and said: 'O Allah, I absolve myself from what these people (the

hypocrites) have brought, and I seek your pardon for what these people (the weak of faith) have said’.

He divided it evenly; he absolved himself from the hypocrites who said: ‘They will return to their former religion’, and sought pardon and forgiveness for those who were weak of faith. Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And he who turns back on his heels will never harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 144). Why? It is because Allah, before creating anything, is eternally endowed with attributes of absolute perfection; and none of these attributes can be affected in the slightest by any of His creatures. He created the universe and all in it because He is Omnipotent, Wise, All Knowing. Thus, the creation of the universe did not add to Allah’s attributes. When He created you, and formed you, He gave you guidance so you would be an upright, well-balanced creation. The benefit returns to us, creatures, and so we must understand that the revealed ways of guidance sent by Allah give no benefit to Him, but benefit us. That’s why the verse continues: ‘but Allah will reward the grateful.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 144) This is because a person only gives thanks for blessings: the blessings of purification, teaching, and the clarification of the true rank of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the sight of his Lord. The believers are aware that Allah deserves thanks from them for these blessings.

After this, the True Lord bids us consider a general matter, which applies to all humanity:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تَمُوتَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ كِنَبَأٌ مُّوَجَّلًا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا
نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ يُرِدْ ثَوَابَ الْآخِرَةِ نُؤْتِهِ مِنْهَا وَسَنَجْزِي الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

No soul may die except with God’s permission at a predestined time. If anyone strives for the rewards of this world, We will give him some of them. If anyone strives for the rewards of the Hereafter, We will give him some of them: We will reward the grateful [145] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 145)

‘It is not for one to...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 145) means ‘should not’. In our daily life we say: ‘It is not for you to strike Zayd (Arabic name for males)’; we

mean you should not strike him. Allah says: 'No soul may die except with Allah's permission...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 145); this might make us wonder: 'Is death a voluntary action?' No, but the True Lord's expression here suggests something, because if you say: 'It is not for so-and-so to do such-and-such', this means that they can choose whether to do it or not, and that the person can either do it or not. No one can describe Allah's power in these terms, however.

We understand from this that even if someone were to expose themselves to destruction, they could not die except by Allah's leave. If this is the case, what about it if someone does not expose themselves to destruction?

So, if a person seeks death, it will not visit them unless Allah allows it. In our daily life, we find many different manifestations of this. We find that some people cannot cope with this life because their faith is not sufficient to deal with its trials and tribulations, and so they commit suicide, wanting to flee from that which they cannot control. As for someone with strong faith, no matter what trial or difficulty befalls them, they say: 'I have a Lord, and whatever He decreed for me, He is the Wise, the Sustainer who knows what is good for me better than I know myself. Perhaps this tribulation will efface my sins for me'.

This is the opposite of the one who flees from what he cannot control, and so kills himself; all of us have seen or heard of those who attempt this, but are saved by someone who reaches them in time to carry out Allah's will in saving them, for example by pumping the stomach of the one who takes an overdose, or putting out the fire on the somebody who tries to burn themselves to death. The one who attempts suicide wants to die, but if Allah does not give His leave, He will not allow them to do so. A person might attempt suicide by shooting himself, but the gun does not fire; someone might attempt to hang himself with a rope from the ceiling, but it breaks. Why? That is all because no one can take life except He who gives life.

Someone might say: 'But what about those who are killed by another person'? The popular adage says: 'If the killer were patient enough to leave his victim alone, he would die of his own accord'. The moment when the soul leaves the body is assigned to a fixed time. Sometimes it arrives without any cause, and a person dies suddenly, his friends saying: 'He was with us a short, while ago'! They forget that he died because his death was ordained for a specific time.

For this reason, we find that a person might seek to improve his health by undergoing a certain operation, and during the operation, he dies. Ahmad Shawqi Allah *rest his soul* said:

Death sometimes overwhelms, and sometimes is expected, and every man is hostage to the closing of his book;

He who dies by the claws of a lion is akin to he who dies by a bite from its teeth.

If death sleeps from you, all medicine is helpful; But if it sleeps not, medicine is one of its henchmen!

If the book is closed, then, it is the end. If a person comes face to face with a lion, it makes no difference whether he is killed by its teeth or its claws. If death leaves a person alone, he might be cured of his illness by a pill or a tonic; but if it awakens, medicine and treatment might ultimately cause death or become an instrument of death. What the murderer is capable of is destroying the body of the one he kills; and this is for what he is punished.

So, the True Lord says: 'No soul may die except with Allah's permission at a predestined time.' (*Al-'Imran*: 145) This is a general fact of life. The expression 'pre-ordained term' is sometimes used to mean the entire life span, and sometimes used to mean the absolute final moment of life, which is true death. When the murderer destroys the body of the one he kills, he is only doing so in accordance with the term ordained by Allah. But why, then, is the murderer punished? We punish him because he has destroyed another person's physical body.

The True Lord says: 'No soul may die except with Allah's permission at a predestined time.' (*Al-'Imran*: 145) Notice His words; 'except with Allah's (God's) permission' (*Al-'Imran*: 145). This shows us that Allah is the One Who gives permission. Permission is given to the angels for implementation. Because of this, we find that when the Noble Quran addresses this issue, it sometimes ascribes this act to Allah, and so He says: "Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes], while they sleep. He keeps hold of those whose death He has ordained and sends the others back until their appointed time. There truly are signs in this for those who reflect." (*az-Zumar*: 42)

Elsewhere, the Quran ascribed the act to one angel: Say, 'The angel of death will take you who has been entrusted with you. Then to your Lord you will be returned.' (*as-Sajda*: 11) Elsewhere, the True Lord ascribes the act to envoys who aid the angel of death: 'He is the Supreme Master over His subjects. He sends out recorders to watch over you until, when death overtakes any of you, those sent by Us take his soul - they never fail in their duty.' (*al-An'am*: 61).

Every proclamation issued by the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* is the absolute truth because every commandment that sets the pre-ordained term is not subject to the will of the one entrusted with carrying it out; it is by leave of Allah Almighty, who ordained it. As long as every commandment issues from Him, it is He who causes death, and then the angel of death, Azra'il, passes on the commandments that issue from Allah to his helpers, each of whom carries out their mission. So, the bringing of death ultimately goes back to Allah.

The bringing of death being delegated to the angels is the meaning of Allah's permission, and 'permission' requires someone to be given it, which in this case is the angels, who are given permission by the angel of death, who is given permission by Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*.

The True Lord then says: 'If anyone strives for the rewards of this world, We will give him some of them.' (*Al-Imran*: 145). Whoever wants the rewards of this world asking for recompense for his work therein, will receive it even if he is a disbeliever: 'If anyone desires [only] the fleeting life, We speed up whatever We will in it, for whoever We wish; in the end We have prepared Hell for him in which to burn, disgraced and rejected.' (*al-Isra*': 18).

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* also says in the Noble Quran: 'If anyone desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall increase it for him; if anyone desires a harvest in this world, We shall give him a share of it, but in the Hereafter he will have no share.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

This prevents us from saying: 'the disbelievers are in a better position than we are: they are advanced, and we are behind.' Was there not a time when the believers were highly advanced? There was a time when the believers were advanced, and for a thousand years they led the world, whilst at the same time

the disbelievers described themselves as living in the 'Dark Ages'. Why did you ignore this!? It is because history is written and misrepresented by them (the disbelievers), and so we say to them: we used to be the advanced, and you and history attest it.

We said before that those who believe in Allah must be eager for Allah's means, and must not leave them to those who disbelieve in Him. Will the disbelievers utilize Allah's means, and you, the believer, leave those means for them? No, because those who believe in Allah have more right to the secrets of His creation, and if we leave the disbelievers to take advantage of the secrets of science, and we refrain from competing with them, we are being negligent.

'If anyone strives for the rewards of the Hereafter, We will give him some of them: We will reward the grateful.' (*Al-'Imran*: 145) Notice that the True Lord used the word 'grateful' twice, and the Quran emphasizes this point. Allah, exalted be He, gave us means, and if these means will aid us in this world, this merits gratitude; and if, in addition to the means, we are assigned with a task, this responsibility will bring us reward in the Hereafter and this also merits gratitude.

After this theoretical statement, 'No soul may die except with Allah's permission at a predestined time.' (*Al-'Imran*: 145) Allah confirms that this has been manifested during the life of the believing nations that preceded us; for there is a difference between speech and the actual occurrence of what the speech entails, and the truth of this statement indeed occurred before us. Allah says:

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ نَّبِيٍّ قَاتَلَ مَعَهُ رِبِّيُّونَ كَثِيرٌ فَمَا وَهَنُوا لِمَا أَصَابَهُمْ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَمَا ضَعُفُوا وَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٤٦﴾

Many prophets have fought, with large bands of godly men alongside them who, in the face of their sufferings for God's cause, did not lose heart or weaken or surrender: God loves those who are steadfast [146] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 146)

They say that '*Waka'ayyin*' (and how many) is to suggest large numbers, like 'how many'. For example, if a person asks you: 'Why do you shun me?' and you reply: '*Kam*' (How many times) have I visited you?' When you said:

'How many times have I visited you?', it may have seemed like a question, but you do not really want him to tell you how many times you have visited him, what you really mean is: 'You are the one who should answer your question because when you do, you will recognize that I have visited you many times!' Thus the answer will match what you actually did.

You asked 'How many times have I visited you?' because you are sure that were he to answer, he would say: 'You have visited me many times.' If you were not sure of this, you would not have asked it to begin with. So, when you ask: 'How many times have I visited you, and how often have I been good to you, and how often have I supported you, and been kind to you?' Your words 'how many' are like the '*Waka'ayyin*' used to suggest a big number. We say *yama* (a word in Egyptian dialect) so and so happened. '*Yama*' means the same as '*Waka'ayyin*' (in the verse); both mean 'how many'.

A friend might ask you: 'How could this have happened?' You may respond: *ka'ayy* (Like any) one who does this or that, then, so and so happens to him.' You mean that the matter is not unusual, and that it happens a lot. When you say *Kam* or *kam min* (how many times), both are correct. The meaning is that how many a prophet [fought and] with him fought people who believe in his message, just like what happened in the case of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. The True Lord's word '*ribbiyyoona*' (men who are devoted to Allah) means people who are experts and knowing the ways of war, it also means followers who fight, and it could also mean people who follow divine guidance.

Allah's words: 'But they never lost heart' (*Al-Imran*: 146) mean that they did not become weak. Allah shows us the role model, as though He were saying: 'Why did you become weak, in attitude, at the battle of Uhud, when you were fighting with the Messenger of Allah? It had been better for you to have more eagerness in fighting with him than that of other followers of other prophets because he is the Seal of the Prophets who is establishing the principles that will live on until the Final Hour, and none will come after him; so it was necessary that you strived with eagerness, for you are the best "*ummah*" (followers of Islam) brought out for mankind, and I have chosen you for that purpose.'

The True Lord was giving them an example which refers to them indirectly, admonishing them and teaching them too. Allah says: 'And how many a prophet', i.e. many Prophets, 'with him fought many religious scholars. But they never lost heart due to what afflicted them' (*Al-'Imran*: 146), i.e. they did not become weak, which implies that they were afflicted in the course of fighting with something that usually weakens people. 'But they never lost heart' (*Al-'Imran*: 146), i.e. they did not suffer a decline of faith as you did. 'Nor did they weaken or submit.' (*Al-'Imran*: 146) The words 'they never lost heart', 'nor did they weaken' and 'or submit' come here in their proper order because losing heart is the first sign of weakening; it takes place in the heart and then spreads to the limbs.

What does *istakanu* (submit) mean? It is derived from *sukoun* in Arabic, which means 'stillness', the opposite of movement. War necessitates movement, and whoever comes to war needs to be able to advance and retreat. The one who does not move stays still because he does not have the power to move. The verb *istakan* (to submit) begins with the three letters 'i-s-t' which denote a request. When you say *istafhama* (to elicit), you are requesting or asking for comprehension. These three letters (i-s-t) denote a request for the meaning that the rest of the word shows, like in the Arabic word *ista'alama* (to inquire) which means that you are asking for the information you want to know. The word *istakhbara* means to ask for news; *istakan* means literally 'to seek existence' as though they had lost heart and weakened to the extent that they sought only to have some kind of existence because the manifestation of existence is movement, and movement had ended. This is the meaning of *istakanu* (to submit).

This implies that the word here is indeed of, what the Arab grammar scholars call, the '*istaf'ala*' pattern. The word *Istakanoo* is derived from *kawn* (existence). However, the word may not follow the '*istaf'ala*' pattern. If so, the first three letters *ist* in *istakanu* do not denote a request. Instead, the 's' is original in the word, and the word is actually derived from '*sakan*' (stillness) on the *ifta'ala* morphological pattern. Does this mean that they sought stillness? No, for they were already still, so the more suitable meaning is that they sought only to exist, and this is what I am inclined to and prefer. It is also said that it means that they did not yield or humiliate themselves.

'But they never lost heart due to what afflicted them in the cause of Allah, nor did they weaken or submit. And Allah loves those who are patient in adversity.' (*Al-Imran*: 146) Whatever afflicts the servant is a trial from Allah. The Prophetic Hadith says: 'If Allah loves a people, He sends tribulation upon them.' – *narrated by Anas ibn Malik*. All of this losing of heart and weakness should not have distracted them from the battle, for if had borne their adversity with patience, Allah would have sent them His aid because when the means of creatures run out and end, there comes the aid of the Creator.

With the end of this verse, the True Lord draws our attention by saying: 'And Allah loves those who are patient in adversity' (*Al-Imran*: 146), i.e. it is enough reward for patience in adversity that one becomes beloved to Allah because, as we have said before, we might love Allah for the blessings He sends us, but what is pivotal is not that you love Allah, but that you, by following His guidance, become beloved to Him. Someone once said: 'Have you not seen so many who loved but they were not loved?!'

You love Him for His blessings, but you also want to be loved by Him, because your love for His blessings is not enough, for the disbeliever enjoys these blessings too; therefore, something else is required. There is something ready to hand, and something delayed until later: the blessings of life are ready to hand, and all humanity shares in them, believers and disbelievers alike, but what is delayed is Allah's reward in the Afterlife, which is the principal one.

So, if people reflected on Allah's words: 'Allah loves those who are patient in adversity' (*Al-Imran*: 146), they would, whenever they were tested with adversity say: 'Patience is sufficiently rewarded with Allah's love.' Truly, adversity did not make them faint at heart, weak or abased, and this means that they enjoyed the absolute certainty of conviction in Allah, and the absolute certainty of conviction in Allah made them worthy to receive Allah's aid. All you have to do to know Allah's aid is to patiently bear your afflictions. Allah's aid and support is not truly manifested except in times of weakness because when you are strong, you might behave as did those whom the Quran describes thus: 'When man suffers some affliction, he cries out to Us, but when We favour him with Our blessing, he says, "All this has been given to me because of my knowledge" it is only a test, though most of them do not know it' (*az-Zumar*: 49).

Yet the believers, when they were afflicted ‘did not lose heart’ (*Al-'Imran*: 146) because they were certain of an issue that concerns faith: Allah does not leave you to your own devices except when you leave Him. They asked themselves: ‘Why did this happen to us?’ They did not say: ‘Lord! Help us so we can emerge from this weakness!’ Rather, they thought deeply about the reasons why they had reached such a state:

وَمَا كَانَ قَوْلُهُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي
أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

All they said was, ‘Our Lord, forgive us our sins and our excesses. Make our feet firm, and give us help against the disbelievers’ [147] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 147)

It is as if what happened was the result of the sin that had preceded it, and so, they discovered the cause. They were in a battle, and this battle had made them struggle and grow exhausted. True, they did not weaken, yet in such a state, one might suppose that they would say ‘Our Lord, give us victory’, before saying anything else. Instead, they said ‘We have to know the reason for the initial reverse.’ The reason behind this reverse is that Allah does not leave anyone to their own devices unless they forget Him.

‘All they said was “Our Lord...”’ (*Al-'Imran*: 147). Consider the wording of their call: ‘Our Lord!’ They could have said ‘O Allah’, but they chose to say ‘Our Lord!’ Why is that? It is because the the servants’ relation with the Oneness of Allah’s Lordship precedes their relation with the Oneness of Allah’s Divinity. The Oneness of Allah’s Divinity is binding, for ‘the Divine’ means ‘He is worshiped’, and as long as He is worshiped, there is an obligation to obey Him, and this obligation is what comes next. He has Lordship over all mankind before He obliges them with His commands. As long as the Lord is the One who attends to the nurturing of his subjects, it is more fitting that they say ‘Our Lord!’ This expression ‘Our Lord!’ means: ‘You are in charge of our affairs and You sustain us.’

‘Our Lord, forgive us our sins...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 147). It is as though they said: ‘Nothing afflicts us except as a result of committing a sin due to heedlessness.’

Whoever truly understands the meaning of the word 'sin' will never fall into committing it because the word, in Arabic, '*dhanb*' is derived from the word '*dhanab*' (tail or end of something). The '*dhanb*' (sin) has an end result, which is punishment. So the uttering of the word itself inspires the fact that a result will follow; and if you call to mind the punishment for a sin, you will not commit it.

'Forgive us our sins and our excesses' (*Al-Imran*: 147) because every sin represents the breaching of the boundary of what Allah made permissible, and an unlawful overindulgence, even if it is of the same type of something that Allah made permissible, nevertheless it exceeds the requirements of your life. Allah allowed us to marry and raise children, but if we seek what marriage grants us from persons other than our spouses, we are being immoderate. Allah gives us wealth in accordance with the effort we exert, but if we covet the wealth of others, we are being immoderate.

Acting immoderately means to take something which is not necessary for you to live. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'Say: [Thus speaks Allah:] "O you servants of Mine who have transgressed against themselves! Despair not of Allah's mercy: indeed, Allah forgives all sins – for, verily, He alone is the Forgiving, the Merciful.'" (*az-Zumar*: 53)

He *the Exalted* clarifies: 'I have made a category of women permissible for you, so what has made your eyes swerve to what Allah has not permitted for you? I permitted for you whatever your hands earn, and if you are poor, you can receive charity; so why have you acted without moderation?' Thus, excessive gratification of anything that is beyond the requirements of preserving life is called 'immoderation'. 'Forgive us our sins and our excesses. Make our feet firm' (*Al-Imran*: 147). They began to enter the truth, but in the beginning they saw falsehood, and falsehood is one of the causes of the True Lord's not succouring us to begin with, but when He forgives sins and immoderation, we become worthy of receiving His aid and being granted steadfastness.

'Make our feet firm' (*Al-Imran*: 147). Why does the True Lord say this when it is clear that in battles, feet do not remain firm? Battles require people to be in constant swift motion. So what does the term: 'make our feet firm' mean? The True Lord's words: 'Make our feet firm' mean 'do not make us flee from the battlefield, and make it so that we never leave it'. For this reason, we have said

that after what the disbelievers had done, they did not remain on the battlefield, but rather left it and dispersed. Even though the believers had been routed, they remained on the battlefield for a time, and then gave chase and pursued their enemies. Eventually, humanity realized this. In France, there is a medal of honour called the 'Medal of the Fly'. Why does it have this name? It is because no matter how many times you wave a fly away from a place, it will return; the same is true for a leader who has withdrawn from an area: he must be prepared to return to it, and so they award him the 'Medal of the Fly'.

So His words 'make our feet firm' mean that in any area and any battle, we must not desert our posts because leaving them is the first step towards defeat, and the enemy will use this opportunity against us.

'Make our feet firm, and give us victory over the disbelievers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 147) The 'give us victory over the disbelievers' part (*Al-'Imran*: 147) is relative because as long as they said 'give us victory over the disbelievers' (*Al-'Imran*: 147), they were believers, true believers. In light of this, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah *be pleased with him* made his famous statement: 'You will defeat your enemy by obeying Allah; if you and they are equal in disobedience, they will defeat you with their superior equipment and numbers.'

Faith, therefore, requires that you, first, carefully consider your own weaknesses which caused your afflictions. That is why you truly did not weaken nor surrender, though the battle brought pain and exhaustion upon you. The True Lord is showing us that they realized this, and began with inspecting their status, spoke of their sins, sought forgiveness, spoke of their immoderation, and then they spoke about the battle. What did Allah then bestow upon them? The answer follows:

فَإِنَّهُمْ لَمَّا أَلَّ اللَّهُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا وَحَسُنَ ثَوَابُ الْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤٨﴾

**And so God gave them both the rewards of this world and
the excellent rewards of the Hereafter: God loves those
who do good [148] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 148)**

In other words, whoever wants this world, Allah will give it to them of battle spoils and the like. We should notice that when the True Lord speaks here about this world, He does not describe it as being good or as anything

else; He simply mentions 'the rewards of this world' (*Al-'Imran*: 148). When He speaks about the Hereafter, however, He says 'the goodliest rewards of the life to come' (*Al-'Imran*: 148). This is the beauty that we must truly long for because however long the life of this world lasts, it is nothing, but a brief pleasure, a fancy, and a passing delight. However blessed you are in this world, you still await one of two things: either the blessings will leave you or you will leave the blessings.

The True Lord ends the verse with His words: 'Allah loves those who do good.' (*Al-'Imran*: 148) They did well when they called on their Lord after He tested them. They asked forgiveness, asked that their immoderation be forgiven, asked that He made their feet firm, and that He succoured them against the people of disbelief. They saw that their own human strength, without Allah's aid, was nothing but dust in the wind; it had no power.

'Allah granted them the rewards of this world, as well as the best rewards of the life to come; for Allah loves the doers of good' (*Al-'Imran*: 148). We have said before about patience that 'Allah loves those who are patient in adversity' (*Al-'Imran*: 146). To become beloved to Allah is sufficient for the believer as a reward for his patience as well as his 'ihsan' (doing good to the extent of proficiency).

Next, the True Lord says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَطِيعُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾

You who believe, if you obey the disbelievers, they will make you revert to your old ways and you will turn into losers [149] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 149)

As long as you are believers, and they are disbelievers, how could you ever obey those who disbelieve? First of all, you are different from them, for you are believers and they are disbelievers. Disbelievers and hypocrites will take advantage of any weakness in the Muslim's faithful heart and try to sneak into it. As we have already mentioned, a group of the hypocrites said: 'Muhammad got killed, and we no longer have a messenger, so let us return

to the religion of our fathers!’ The believers who were in a moment of weakness said: ‘Let us go to Ibn Ubayy (the leader of the hypocrites in Medina), ask him to mediate between us and Abu Sufyan and take an amnesty from him.’

And so the True Lord has said: ‘You who believe, if you obey the disbelievers, they will make you revert to your old ways and you will turn into losers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 149) If you need patronage, do not seek it from the disbelievers; seek it from the One in whom you believe. Allah then has said:

بَلِ اللَّهُ مَوْلَاكُمْ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ النَّاصِرِينَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

No indeed! It is God who is your protector: He is the best of helpers [150] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 150)

Did Abu Sufyan not say: ‘We have Al-‘uzza, and you have no ‘uzza!’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them to say to him: ‘Allah is our Protector, and you have no protector.’ When Abu Sufyan said: ‘One day for another (i.e. Uhud for Badr), war sways to and fro’. ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* replied: ‘It is not the same, for our dead are in Paradise, whilst your dead are in Hell!’ How, then, could they be alike, and how could war sway to and fro between them?

‘No indeed! It is God who is your protector; He is the best of helpers.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 150) We understand from Allah’s words: ‘He is the best of helpers’ that Allah creates men, whether disbelievers or otherwise, who could help you in a superficial way, yet it is not real help; true help is what comes from Allah alone. Why? Because as soon as help comes from Allah, you can rest assured that you are true and sincere to Allah because if not, help would not have come to you. When Allah’s help comes, be assured of your faith and that you are with Allah. Allah’s words: ‘He is the best of helpers’” show that help could come by human means. The believers said: ‘O Lord, we are now weak, and if we do not go to someone to protect us, what will we do?’ The True Lord has clarified for them that they should stand as the forces of faith against the forces of disbelief, and they should not turn to those who disbelieve in their Lord because those are not trustworthy. If they wanted to know what Allah would do “We will strike panic into the disbelievers’

hearts.” If He cast dread into the hearts of the disbelievers, what could their equipment and numbers avail them?! Their equipment and wealth would pass on to the believers in the form of battle spoils.

سَنُلْقِي فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الرُّعْبَ بِمَا أَشْرَكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَهُمْ
يُنَزَّلُ بِهِ سُلْطَانٌ وَمَأْوَهُمُ النَّارُ وَيَسْ مَثْوَى الظَّالِمِينَ

We will strike panic into the disbelievers’ hearts because they attribute partners to God although He has sent no authority for this: their shelter will be the Fire – how miserable is the home of the evildoers! [151] (The Quran, *Al-’Imran*: 151)

The True Lord indeed did cast dread into their hearts. When they told Abu Sufyan that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was coming with a great army from Medina, with additional forces which had not yet fought, to meet him at Hamra Al-Asad, what did Abu Sufyan and his people do?

The word ‘*sanulqi*’ (to cast) is derived from the word (*ilqa*) and it is only used for material things. The Quran makes this clear to us when Allah says: ‘And He threw (cast) down the tablets...’ (*al-A’raf*: 150) A tablet is a material thing. Allah says: ‘And he threw down the tablets [of the Law] and seized his brother’s head, dragging him towards himself. Cried Aaron: “O my mother’s son! Behold, these people over-powered me!”’ (*al-A’raf*: 150)

This is a material thing. We say: ‘he cast the stone’, i.e. he threw it. The True Lord says: “They threw their ropes and staffs, saying, ‘By Pharaoh’s might, we shall be victorious.’” (*ash-Shu’ara*: 44) They were ropes, i.e. material things. He, *the Glorified the Exalted* also says about the inspiration revealed to the mother of Moses *peace be upon him*: ‘We inspired the mother of Moses saying “Suckle him, and then, when you fear for his safety, put him in the river; do not be afraid and do not grieve for We shall return him to you and make him one of the messengers.”’ (*al-Qasas*: 7)

So, to cast is a physical action, as though Allah wanted to make the emotion of dread absolute by saying: ‘I will collect dread and place it in the heart so that its effect will be physical.’ If dread takes root in the heart, lassitude soon follows; and when lassitude takes root in the heart, it spreads

exhaustion throughout the body. Allah says: 'Into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth We shall cast dread.' (*Al-'Imran*: 151). It is as though He symbolized dread for us, and dread is an emotion that means to become fearful of everything. Therefore, He explains that He will bring dread to them and cast it into their hearts, where it will remain to produce lassitude and exhaustion.

'Into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth, We shall cast dread...' (*Al-'Imran*: 151). Observe the expressions that Allah uses. He uses the plural of majesty in the word '*sa/nu/lqi*' (*nu* in the middle of an Arabic word means We); notice that when the True Lord speaks about a matter that requires an action, He refers to it with the plural of majesty: 'Behold, it is We Ourselves who has sent down the Quran and We Ourselves will guard it [from all corruption].' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

As sending down the Quran is a mighty act, Allah uses the plural of majesty, seeing that He will send it down with might, wisdom, knowledge, hearing, sight, sustenance, contraction, and expansion. So He says: 'Behold, It is We'. The plural of majesty is used in the Arabic words '*Inna*' (We) '*nahnu*' (for people, ourselves; for Allah, ourselves), but when He speaks about His own Being, He says: 'Indeed, I am Allah...' (*Ta Ha*: 14) He does not say 'We are Allah', but on the subject of divine revelation, He says: 'Behold, from on high have We bestowed this [divine writ] on the Night of Decree.' (*al-Qadr*: 1)

This is because these actions are mighty. So, the plural of majesty is used to describe actions, and these actions require the manifestation of many divine attributes. As we said, before you begin any action, you should say: In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy'; why? Because the action you will perform requires the power to perform it, and it also requires knowledge and wisdom, i.e. it requires many attributes, and so you should begin the action with the name of the fully capable Who can give you power, the All Knowing Who can give you knowledge, and the Wise, Who can give you wisdom.

All of these attributes will work together to bring out the action so that He has mercy on you even when He aids you. He does not ask you to invoke all

the attributes required to perform your action, for there are attributes of which you are unaware. Rather, He says to you: 'Here is the name that embodies all of these attributes of perfection, say: "In the Name of Allah"'. By this, all the attributes of perfection are brought together.

Now you notice that when we see the plural of Majesty represented in the letter '*nun*' (the '*n*' sound in Arabic words like *sanulqi*, *inna* and *nahnu*), you say 'we' to refer to a group of people. A single person also uses it when he magnifies himself. We find it even in our human sphere. Do royalty not say 'We, the king...'? This 'we' in the case of Allah is not a plural, it is a symbol of majesty, majesty that combines all the attributes of perfection that any action requires. And so Allah says: 'Into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth We shall cast dread.'" (*Al-Imran*: 151) Every heart in which there is disbelief will have dread cast into it. So, the plural of majesty comes to overwhelm these disbelieving hearts.

Allah does not impute guilt unjustly to them by casting dread into their hearts; it is they who deserve to have dread cast into their hearts. Why? 'Because they attribute partners to Allah.' (*Al-Imran*: 151) Associating partners with Allah is what has brought dread to them because Allah acts, whilst these 'partners' do not act. If these partners were real, they would not have abandoned them; so why do they not bring their partners to succour them? Dread visited them because they had no protector, and if they had any powerful gods, as they claimed, they would have said to these gods: 'The Lord of Muhammad does such-and-such to us, so why do you not stand up to Him, O lords of ours?' However they associated with Allah that which can neither help nor harm, yet is closer to harming than helping.

'Because they attribute partners to Allah although He has sent no authority for this' (*Al-Imran*: 151). The 'authority' is power, proof, and evidence. The Arabic word (*sultan*) is derived from the root s-l-t. We say that someone '*tasallata*' (dominates over) someone else, which means 'to overpower'. They say that someone is *saleet Al-lisan* (sharp-tongued) to describe someone who is capable of verbal abuse. Hence '*sultah*' (authority) means power and force that impose action or in its abstract sense it means proof and evidence. The

believers always have authority from Allah because when they have a material victory, this is the authority of power; when they are defeated materially, they still have the authority of truth and evidence. We have mentioned before that Iblis (Satan) will come forward on the Day of Resurrection and say: 'Yet I had no power at all over you: I but called you – and you responded unto me. Hence, blame not me, but blame yourselves'" (*Ibrahim*: 22).

We said that this authority is of two kinds: either a power that forces us to commit sins or a piece of evidence and proof that motivate us to commit sins. The difference between an overwhelming power and the authority of evidence is that an overwhelming power forces you to do something against your will, whereas the authority of evidence convinces you to do it, so you do it willingly. Thus, sometimes 'authority' means a force that compels you to do something unwillingly; and the authority of evidence and proof will convince you to do it. Satan will come to testify for himself in the Hereafter saying that he 'had no authority over you', i.e. 'I had no power to force you to sin and I had no evidence to convince you to sin'. So what happened then? 'Yet I had no power at all over you: I but called you – and you responded unto me.' (*Ibrahim*: 22) That is, 'you obeyed me, and answered my call without any authority of power that would enable me to compel you to do anything, or any authority of evidence that would enable me to convince you.'

The True Lord ends the verse by saying: 'their shelter will be the Fire—how miserable is the home of the evildoers!' (*Al-'Imran*: 151); i.e. their final destination is hell. A shelter is the eventual location to which one retreats. It is as though there was an integral part of the self of someone who disbelieves that pushes them into hell, which then becomes their shelter and sanctuary to which they retreat. For this reason, we must pay attention to the fact that the True Lord sometimes says: 'and that they will return to Him' (*al-Mu'minun*: 60); other times He says: 'and to Him you will be returned' (*al-Baqara*: 245) and 'How miserable is the home of the evildoers!' (*Al-'Imran*: 151) That is, an abode from which there is no escape because we can leave any abode, but the abode where the evildoers will eternally remain is hell, the worst of abodes. Next, the True Lord says:

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُمْ بِإِذْنِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَشِلْتُمْ
وَتَنَزَّعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِمَّا أَرْسَلَكُمْ مَّا تُحِبُّونَ ۖ مِنْكُمْ مَن
يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَن يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ
وَلَقَدْ عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۖ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٢﴾

God fulfilled His promise to you: you were routing them, with His permission, but then you faltered, disputed the order, and disobeyed, once He had brought you within sight of your goal – some of you desire the gains of this world and others desire the world to come – and then He prevented you from [defeating] them as a punishment. He has now forgiven you: God is most gracious to the believers [152]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 152)

We know that the sentence 'Allah fulfilled His promise to you' (*Al-'Imran*: 152) contains two objects (in grammar), the first (second person pronoun in Arabic) is "you" in the word '*sadaqakumu*' (fulfilled to you), and the second is '*wa'dahu*' (His promise), i.e. Allah's promise. He made a promise, and actual events played out in accordance with that promise. The True Lord says: 'If you help [the cause of] Allah, He will help you, and will make firm your steps' (*Muhammad*: 7) and He has also said: 'And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners.' (*as-Saffat*: 173) These two verses confirm the issue of making a promise; after that, the actual implementation came. Was the promise fulfilled or not? It certainly was, but when? Is the True Lord referring to the battle of Badr in this verse?

'When, by His leave, you were about to destroy your foes' (*Al-'Imran*: 152) means literally 'you were about to remove their sense' (sense meaning the five senses). The meaning of 'remove their sense' is to deprive them of their five senses. 'You were about to destroy your foes' (*Al-'Imran*: 152); it indeed did happen, and the believers overwhelmed them, killed them and captured them; or it might refer to the sound that comes out of a human being, and when a human being loses sense, he is done. 'When, by His leave, you were about to destroy your foes' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). When you were true to your

approach towards your enemy, according to Allah's guidance, Allah has fulfilled His promise. This was the situation at Badr.

As for there, at Uhud, He has said: '...until the moment when you faltered' (*Al-'Imran*: 152), i.e. you became fearful, 'And disputed the order and disobeyed [the Prophet's command]' (*Al-'Imran*: 152) 'Once He had brought you within sight of your goal' (*Al-'Imran*: 152), i.e. the battle spoils, 'some of you desire the gains of this world and others desire the world to come' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were giving us a moral drawn from two battles: a battle in which Allah's promise was fulfilled and victory was attained and the other when Allah has also kept His promise when you disobeyed Prophet Muhammad, and hence, defeat ensued. So, the issue is laid out before you in the form of an actual experience, not just theoretical speech or in the form of a verse, but an actual event.

Moreover, the whole thing might even refer to the battle of Uhud. Let us suppose that this is so and leave Badr aside. When you first plunged into the battle, O believers, were you victorious? Indeed you were, and Talha ibn Abu Talha, the standard-bearer for the disbelievers, was killed along with twenty or so others. The standard of the disbelievers fell early in the battle; its bearer killed as well, and this is alluded to by Allah's words: 'And, indeed, God fulfilled His promise to you: you were routing them, with his permission, but then you faltered, disputed the order, and disobeyed...' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). One group said: 'Let us stay on the battlefield' and another said: 'Let us withdraw', and when you saw the booty, you awkwardly reacted and did what this verse mentioned. Consequently, the defeat took place. Had not been for your erratic reaction, you would have had the right to doubt this religion, for what happened was a proof of its truthfulness, and evidently that shows that, when you part with Allah's guidance, you would land on failure and debacle.

But '... then you faltered, disputed the order, and disobeyed...' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). One group said: 'We will remain where Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded us to be', while others said: 'We will go to collect the battle spoils.' 'Some of you desire the gains of this world and others desire the world to come' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). As long as you disputed the command, and some of you elected to stay in their positions, while others

elected to collect the spoils, this means that those who wanted to continue fighting desired the Hereafter and were not distracted by the booty, whilst those who cared for this world alone elected to go after the booty.

Ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* said about this: 'By Allah, I was unaware that any of the Companions of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, desired this world until what was revealed about us on the day of Uhud.' In other words, he did not imagine that any of Prophet Muhammad's companions desired this world; he thought that they all desired the Hereafter alone, and when Allah has revealed His words: 'Some of you desire the gains of this world and others desire the world to come' (*Al-'Imran*: 152), Ibn Mas'ud realised that there were some among Prophet Muhammad's Companions attracted to worldly material pleasures.

However, Ibn Mas'ud's opinion does not detract from their status. When they witnessed victory, they thought that the battle came to an end because the standard of the disbelievers had fallen, and the believers had killed a number of Quraysh hardliners. Allah *Almighty is He* pardoned the believers and forgave them for their disobedience to the command of His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad.

'Whereupon, in order that He might put you to a test, He prevented you from defeating your foes' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). You were busy fighting them before you looked to the spoils, and when you looked to them, you looked to the desires of your worldly lives, therefore you were distracted from your foes, and you neither finished them off, nor did you completely rout or overwhelm them. 'Whereupon, in order that He might put you to a test, He prevented you from defeating your foes' (*Al-'Imran*: 152). Your test in this battle was one of the implementation of Allah's guidance, as though it were a battle especially intended to test, and you see now everything that happened therein. After that hard test, the experience proved a success because the Muslims were never defeated in battle again after this one.

For this reason, the Battle of Uhud is not considered a defeat, rather a precious lesson that led the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* to numerous victories afterwards. Let us set an example. Suppose that a boy fails one school year and feels humiliated for such a failure, for such a discredit,

he then works diligently and ends up as one of the top students; that is to say the initial failure encouraged him to improve and thus it was for his own good.

‘But now He has effaced your sin’ (*Al-'Imran*: 152) ; such a pardon was granted because you had your own perspective: thinking that the battle had ended with the fall of the disbelievers’ standard, the killing of Talha ibn AbuTalha and some of the war veterans on the disbelieving front; so you believed that it was all over. You had to remember, however, that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said to you: ‘Stay in your posts and positions, even if you see us pursuing them to Mecca or you see them entering Medina.’

Could there be any warning more articulated than that? ‘For God is limitless in His bounty unto the believers’ (*Al-'Imran*: 152). Allah *the Almighty* has not ousted them from the fold of faith for their indiscretion with this wise revelation. The truth then says:

إِذْ تَصْعَدُونَ وَلَا تَكُلُّونَ عَلَى أَحَدٍ وَالرَّسُولُ يَدْعُوكُمْ
فِي أَخْرَابِكُمْ فَأَثْبَبَكُمْ غَمًّا بِغَمٍّ لِّكَيْلًا تَحْزَنُوا عَلَى مَا
فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا مَا أَصَابَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٥٣﴾

You fled without looking back, while the Messenger was calling out to you from behind, and God rewarded you with sorrow for sorrow. [He has now forgiven you] so that you may not grieve for what you missed or for what happened to you. God is well aware of everything you do [153]

(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 153)

Here “[Remember] when you [fled and] climbed [the mountain] without looking aside at anyone”, Allah gave them an image from the battle so that if any one of them heard this, they would recall the shameful image which should not have taken place: ‘When you fled’. The Arabic word used for ‘flee’ is taken from a root that means ‘to ascend’ and ‘to go to a flat plain’, i.e. to the land to which it is easiest to flee: The Arabic root ‘*seda*’. The one who flees does not look here or there; there is nothing in front of him except easy land to traverse.

‘Paying no heed to anyone’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), i.e. not halting for anything. The crucial thing about this is that there was an appeal from the greatest commander, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, who was calling them: ‘... while at your rear the Apostle was calling out to you...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), i.e. calling you from behind you, requesting that you return to the battle field, ‘wherefore He requited you with woe in return for [The Apostle’s] woe’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*). You caused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* woe by disobeying his commands, and so Allah *Almighty is He*, placed you in this position.

In the phrase ‘wherefore He requited you with woe in return for [the Apostle’s]’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), ‘woe’ really means ‘punished you’, but He *Almighty is He* expressed it and coated it with His divine tenderness and says: ‘He requited you’. It was requital! By His Lordship and Divinity, He has acknowledged them to be believers, so He was not tough on them by saying: ‘...wherefore He requited you with woe in return for [The Apostle’s] woe...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*) as though what happened to them was a true expiation so that ‘... you should not grieve [merely] over what had escaped you...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*). If there had been no grief, humiliation, or debasement, you would have been obsessed with the loss of battle spoils and victory, and your minds would have remained with the spoils because they were the cause of it all. It is as if the woe that afflicted them only came to purify their hearts from excessive yearning for worldly desires, the killing, and defeat that afflicted them. ‘Wherefore He requited you with woe in return for [The Apostle’s] woe so that you should not grieve [merely] over what had escaped you, nor over what had befallen you: for God is aware of all that you do’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), i.e. Allah *Almighty is He* appreciates what overcame you. Since there was likelihood that ‘while at your rear the Apostle was calling out to you...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), they did not hear the call over the din of battle, but ‘God is aware of all that you do’ (*Al-‘Imran: 153*), and He is aware of every action and emotion. The truth then says:

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمْنَةً نُعَاسًا يَغْشَى طَائِفَةً مِنْكُمْ وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ هَلْ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ لِلَّهِ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ مَا قُتِلْنَا ههنا قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي يُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَى مَضَاجِعِهِمْ وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿١٥٤﴾

After sorrow, He caused calm to descend upon you, a sleep that overtook some of you. Another group, caring only for themselves, entertained false thoughts about God, thoughts more appropriate to pagan ignorance, and said, ‘Do we get a say in any of this?’ [Prophet], tell them, ‘Everything to do with this affair is in God’s hands.’ They conceal in their hearts things they will not reveal to you. They say, ‘If we had had our say in this, none of us would have been killed here.’ Tell them, ‘Even if you had resolved to stay at home, those who were destined to be killed would still have gone out to meet their deaths.’ God did this in order to test everything within you and in order to prove what is in your hearts. God knows your innermost thoughts very well [154] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 154)

Then, after this woe, He sent down upon you a sense of security, a drowsiness which enfolded some of you, whereas the others who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about God – thoughts of pagan ignorance – saying, ‘Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?’ Say: ‘Verily, all power of decision does rest with Allah – [but as for them,] they are trying to conceal within themselves that [weakness of faith] which they would not reveal unto thee, [O Prophet, by] saying, ‘If we had any power of decision, we would not have left so many dead behind.’ Say [unto them]: ‘Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the places where they were destined to lie down. And [all this befell you] so that Allah might put to a test all that you harbour in your bosoms, and render your innermost hearts pure of all dross: for God is aware of what is in the hearts [of men].’ The phrase ‘sent down’ indicates that there is a lofty bestowal unrelated to

material means or human laws because sleep is a state that overcomes living beings, and this state is necessitated by certain chemical activities in your body. Until now, we do not know exactly what these chemical reactions are, and the most that is understood about them is that they are an inherent restriction in the human body. It is as though the mobile equipment (the human) composed of a brain that works, eyes that see, ears that hear, senses and movement, had a certain limited power, and when it runs out of energy, it does not say to you 'You are the one who will stop working'; rather, it says 'I am no longer apt for work'. It is self-deterrence, just as the case of machines which stop running the moment the power supply is cut.

So, this self-deterrence mechanism is manifested in sleep when drowsiness overpowers one. Scientific research shows that there are some substances in the body that are not expelled as waste, but rather require equilibrium and chemical balance. We know that there are discharges in the metabolism process that result from motion; the residues of which are excreted in the form of urine, faeces, mucus, etc. So, much of the waste is the result of energy production, but it is not desirable to expell other substances, rather to be equilibrated. When one sleeps, motion stops, and the chemicals within the body begin to be equilibrated; and those things are caused by sleep which is a basic natural process. A distraught and distressed person never sleeps well; rather, he exhausts his body, leading to a more serious problem. Given those circumstances, sleep would be a blessing from Allah.

Remember that we have said before that Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* became renowned for issuing *fatwa* (legal opinion) and for being able to answer all questions raised to him. They said, 'We used to seek his legal advice on a complicated issue and see how he would answer us', as though they had forgotten that he could deliver his '*fatwa*' (legal opinion) efficiently because he was raised under the patronage of Prophet Muhammad. The Divine Call was awarded to Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* when 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was still young, whereas the other Companions were old, so they had absorbed some practices from the pre-Islamic days of ignorance, whilst 'Ali was not polluted with such pre-Islamic debased practices. He received all the vast dimensions

of education at the hands of his guide, Prophet Muhammad. Such an interaction had entitled him to be well grounded in religious issues and delivered *fatwa* pretty quickly.

For example, a woman came to him and said: 'O son of Abu Talib, how could they give me only one *dinar* from six hundred? The one from whom I inherit left six hundred *dinars*, and they gave me a single *dinar*.' He said to her: 'Perhaps he died leaving behind a wife, two daughters and a mother, so the wife takes one eighth (seventy-five *dinars*), the daughters two-thirds (four hundred *dinars*) and the mother takes a sixth (one hundred *dinars*); and perhaps he had twelve brothers and one sister, full or half brothers, and you are the sister, and there were twenty-five *dinars* left to be shared amongst twelve brothers and one sister; so your share is one *dinar*.' How could he have known this? It was the precision of arithmetic skill from one who was raised in the house of Prophethood.

In the verse that we are currently examining, we find that the Truth *Almighty is He* bestowed them with 'drowsiness' to protect them, and so sleep did not come by their own will, but rather, Allah sent it down. The meaning of 'sent it down' is that He sent a new Divine mercy to rescue those people who were afflicted by chagrin because of what they had done. For this reason, Abu Talha said: 'Drowsiness enfolded us, whilst we were at our posts on the day of Uhud so that one of us would drowsily drop his sword, pick it up, drop it, and pick it up again.

It was a matter of compulsion then. When Allah *Almighty is He* sends down drowsiness, it is a matter of rescue from misdeeds dictated on them by the frailty of the human nature and made up for by Allah's compensation. But what was it about the hypocrites? Without a doubt, those who fought in the battle out of hypocrisy felt no woe whatsoever over what had happened; on the contrary, they must have been delighted and reassured by what happened. Such people were not worthy of Allah's compensation in the form of the security of sleep. Rather, Allah let them be for their selves, because they were not under Allah's protection as they neither followed the Straight Way of guidance nor devoted themselves to the concept of absolute surrender to Him or at least being true to the concept of surrender to Him. Allah *Glorified is He* left those to their own discretion.

Hence, the security of sleep would not be sent down to them. As long as this was so, they became worried. Why? It was because they cared only for their own safety. When a person truly believes in Allah and accepts to surrender to Him, he implicitly and devotedly sells himself to Allah. And this trade with Allah has to continue for long. Any time that a Muslim feels conceited, we may assume that he has gone back on the trade, and so Allah, the One purchased his life from him, will leave him to his own discretion. Therefore, His words 'who cared mainly for themselves' (*Al- 'Imran*: 154) mean that they went back on the pledge of faith because the one who concludes such a pledge with his Lord is the one whom Allah described thus: 'Behold, Allah has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them paradise in return, [and so] they fight in Allah's cause, and slay, and are slain: a promise which in truth He has willed upon Himself in [the words of] the Torah, and the Gospel, and the Quran. And who could be more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Rejoice, then, in the bargain which you have made with Him: for this, this is the triumph supreme!' (*at-Tawba*: 111)

As long as Allah *Almighty is He* has purchased the believer's own self, the believer must not get immersed in self-indulgence and must plunge into the battle pursuant with the conditions of the pledge of faith. If one fails to abide by them, he will become worried, troubled, and restless. Finally, he would be entangled into the web of misconceptions and delusions and, even worse, fall easy prey to kaleidoscopic visions. His soul would be insecure then, and as long as a person is concerned with his own cares and indulgences, sleep would never overtake him even though it is a natural reaction.

And so we find that Imam 'Ali, *Allah be pleased with him* when asked about the strongest of Allah's soldiers, he stretched his hands and said: 'The strongest of Allah's soldiers are ten: well-pegged mountains, yet iron cuts them, so iron is stronger than the mountains; yet fire melts iron; and water extinguishes fire; and the clouds suspended between the sky and the earth by Allah's command carry the water; and the wind disperses the clouds; and the son of Adam can overcome the wind by covering himself with garments and then goes out to fulfil his needs; and intoxication overwhelms the son of Adam; and sleep overwhelms intoxication; and care overcomes sleep; so the strongest of Allah's soldiers is care.'

When care overpowers the human soul, it is then the strongest of Allah's soldiers, for care overcomes the human soul in many forms in one single situation. He imagines many complicated issues in relation to one single issue. An event might only have one form, but care maximizes the matter in every possible form. Those people worried about themselves, and as long as that was so, they breached the pledge of faith. As long as they breached the pledge of faith by means of which Allah purchased from them their own selves, Allah relinquished them. And since Allah has relinquished them, they had to face their doom.

Care and anxiety took hold of them to the extent that they are horrendously scared when confronted with any vicissitudes. However, the state of the first group was different because Allah *Almighty is He* treated them well as they sustained their pledge of faith, albeit their human nature misleads them to interpret the course of action incorrectly, they thought the battle was over dashing to claim the spoils of war. Allah *Almighty is He* appreciated their devotion to Islam, admonished them for their incorrect interpretation of the events, and requited them with woe because of their disobedience, but He sent down security upon them because they remained devoted to the cause of Islam.

'Whereas the others, who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about God - thoughts of pagan ignorance' (*Al-'Imran: 154*). They were "a group" that had particular idiosyncrasies they strongly adopted. It was not just any group, but one which adopted a single notion and the wise statement here came to reveal their internal monologue. Did anyone hear them? No, but Allah was well aware of it, and He revealed what lay within all their souls with a single statement which explains that they all adopted a single notion expressed by a single sentence: 'Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?' (*Al-'Imran: 154*) They said this to themselves, so who heard them as a group? Allah *Almighty is He* heard 'for Allah is aware of what is in the hearts [of men]' (*Al-'Imran: 154*).

The word 'group' (*tai'fa*) in Arabic denotes a singular word; *twa'aif* is the plural form for the word. But in Arabic, the reference of the singular word *tai'fa* may be singular and plural. The verb used with the dual word takes the dual form at times and plural form at other times. In Arabic, such a remark is

only grasped by a professional linguist who distinguishes between its usage in the singular form and its connotation referring to the plural; for this reason, we find this as the inimitable and miraculous nature of Quran linguistics. The Truth *Glorified is He* says: 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to Allah's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them]: for, verily, Allah loves those who act equitably!' (*al-Hujurat*: 9) When He says, 'Hence, if two groups of believers', He relates to two groups that 'fall to fighting' in the plural form; the Arabic word *ta'ifatan* is used to refer to the dual sense (for two groups), yet out of syntactic precision, each group constitutes a plurality. 'If two groups of believers fall to fighting', what should we do? We should 'Make peace between them.' The dual form is used this time, meaning the two groups). Sometimes it refers to the plural form; other times to the dual form. On the battlefield, one group does not fight with a single sword, and nor does it deliver a single strike; during fight, every individual member of the group has his own role, so the individuality of the group is numerous in a way.

When we seek conciliation between them, however, do we go to every individual member of each group, or do we consider each group represented by their leaders and make peace between them? The syntactic precision of the Quran is shown: 'If two groups of believers fall to fighting'. After this, the truth returns to the dual sense of the word, saying: 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them' (*al-Hujurat*: 9), with the plural used first and the dual used second. Then, Allah returns to the dual, saying: 'but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to Allah's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them' (*al-Hujurat*: 9). Peace accords are concluded between groups represented by their leaders.

Allah says: 'whereas the others, who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about Allah – thoughts of pagan ignorance – saying, "Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?" Say: "Verily, all power of decision does rest with Allah" – [but as for them], they are trying to conceal

within themselves that [weakness of faith] which they would not reveal unto thee, [O Prophet, by] saying, "If we had any power of decision, we would not have left so many dead behind" (*Al-'Imran*: 154). This statement indicates that they were a group who adopted the same idiosyncrasies, and it also indicates that their hypocrisy was commonly agreed upon; it was not that each of them worked in recluse; rather, they were a group of hypocrites and they constituted a faction which had a common policy, codes and uniformed thought; laid bare by the words of Allah *Almighty is He*: 'whereas the others, who cared mainly for themselves, entertained wrong thoughts about Allah – thoughts of pagan ignorance' (*Al-'Imran*: 154).

We know that the truth is firm: Unchanging is He; Being Truthful is out of the question. Allah is Truth, and He created the heavens and the earth and the entire universe truthfully. He sent down His Book with truth, all with truth. They entertained thoughts about Allah that were untrue, even though He is the Truth, He created the universe according to true laws, Allah's *Sunnah* (ways) in creation were fulfilled truthfully and He always succours the truth. They entertained untrue thoughts about Allah, saying: 'Our Lord did not grant us victory, despite having promised to do so,' totally ignoring the fact that Allah devised the elements as means to victory. This is Allah's *Sunnah*; and Allah's *Sunnah* always prevails, even in the case of those He favours. They disobeyed the order of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, hence they received an instant retribution by being routed, for no one is exempted. Whoever disobeys must accept the consequences because this is the right thing to do.

They should have mulled over the crystal clearness of the truth. As when the people whom Allah favoured and yet disobeyed Allah's commandment, though were on the side of His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad, they received their lot, the *Sunnah* of Allah took its very course for being the way of truth; they entertained thoughts of pagan ignorance about Allah, *Almighty is He*. Either this means the thoughts of the people of the pre-Islamic ignorance, or it refers to ignorance of all kinds.

In saying: '... "Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?"' they might mean that 'Had we gained any victory or even collected war

spoils?' In saying: '... "Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?"...' Or 'We went out to fight despite our views, for we were of the opinion to not go for fighting and to stay in Medina, and fight them only when they entered it.' And in saying "... "Did we, then, have any power of decision [in this matter]?" say: "Verily, all power of decision does rest with Allah"' (*Al-Imran*: 154). They lacked the subtlety of faith insight and so were unable to grasp the gist behind their loss. They thought that they had not been victorious, but truly, it was a victory. Why? It was so because the battle consolidated the principle that when orders are disobeyed, victory is denied. So Islam was victorious, but the defeated were those who had forsaken the guidance of Islam, and this in itself was a victory for Islam. For this reason, we must always differentiate between the Islamic principle and those who are only outwardly affiliated to it. Be careful not to judge a principle according to the persons who outwardly embrace it. Those persons can serve as a manifestation of this principle only if they adhere to it wholeheartedly. This is because when Allah *Almighty is He* announced a religion, i.e Islam, in order to regulate people's lives, He ordained legislations to certain actions, while He prohibited others. As long as there are prohibitions and permissions set by Allah, Muslims are susceptible to a sort of breach to these laws. When Islam sanctions the flogging or stoning of the adulterer and adulteress and the amputation of the thief's hand, and likewise, when Islam legislates all punishments for crimes, there is a possibility that these crimes will be committed. If they are committed, this is not a pretext to incriminate Islam, but rather, the perpetrator. We do not assume that Islam permits stealing; rather, we say that a Muslim stole something, and Islam sanctions severe punishment in his case; i.e, the amputation of the hand.

'[But as for them,] they are trying to conceal within themselves that [weakness of faith] which they would not reveal unto thee, [O Prophet by] saying, "If we had any power of decision, we would not have left so many dead behind."' (*Al-Imran*: 154) This exposes them because what was it that they wanted for themselves? They did not want to have to go out to fight, and hence said: 'If we had had any choice in the matter, and if he had followed our own suggestion, we would not have come to the battlefield, and none of this would have happened.' This is one explanation; another is: 'If we had

been granted the victory that God promised Muhammad and his Companions, we would not have left so many dead behind'. According to both explanations, the meaning is correct; it was as though they wanted to relate killing and death to material causes; yet, who dares to ascribe killing or death to material causes? Death signals the end of life; the cause of which is unknown, together with its time, place, and age which are only known by Allah.

Since the matter is unknown, why should you relate the killing to the battlefield? Have you ever not seen a person die, while not in battle? Have you ever not seen a person killed, while not in battle? If killing only took place in battles, you would have the right to say that, but deaths and killings are common things, they are facts of life. They are not linked to a place, a time, an age or a cause; one dies because the die is cast; it is predestined.

By relating killing and death to the battle, they abandoned their faith, so the reply came from the True Lord in the form of a decisive command to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Say [unto them]: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the places where they were destined to lie down' (*Al-'Imran*: 154).

A person may be a reason of his own death. This can be exemplified as the situation of a person who is ill and insists on having surgery, but the doctor apologises saying: 'I have a lot of operations to perform, so wait for a month,' but the patient seeks mediation to convince the doctor to operate. The patient insists, increases the doctor's fees and then dies in surgery. Was not the patient a reason of his own death? Indeed, he was.

The True Lord says: 'Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the places where they were destined to lie down.' (*Al-'Imran*: 154) The Arabic root *baraza* (to go forth) indicates a hasty movement indicating that a row is actually coherent, and the person who comes forth is the one who advances in the opposite direction of the the row, so he sticks out.

'Say [unto them]: "Even if you had remained in your homes, those [of you] whose death had been ordained would indeed have gone forth to the

places where they were destined to lie down.” And [all this befell you] so that Allah might put to a test all that you harbour in your bosoms, and render your innermost hearts pure of all dross: for Allah is aware of what is in the hearts [of men]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 154). The one who goes forth to his final resting place is the one who leaves a secure place, otherwise how could those whom Allah destined to fight for Islam be tested until the Hour? There must be hard experiences testing people so that only chosen elite is allowed to carry weapons during wars.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* announced that they would go out to fight at Uhud, some lagged behind seeking the intercession of Ibn Ubayy not to be among the fighters. This was the first filtration test. Then, the archers were tested, and this was the second filtration; some of them remained, while others went to collect the battle spoils. Afterwards, word spread that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been murdered. This was the third filtration. ‘...And [all this befell you] so that Allah might put to a test all that you harbour in your bosoms, and render your innermost hearts pure of all dross: for Allah is aware of what is in the hearts [of men]’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 154).

A person attempts to conceal within his heart that which he must keep to himself, with the care that one friend has for another. It is as if the heart were careful not to reveal what lay within, but Allah revealed them to the people, and exposed them to themselves because they could even be fooling themselves. The True Lord then says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَلَّوْا مِنْكُمْ يَوْمَ الْتَقَى الْجَمْعَانِ إِنَّمَا اسْتَزَلَّهُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ
بِبَعْضِ مَا كَسَبُوا وَلَقَدْ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

**As for those of you who turned away on the day the two
armies met in battle, it was Satan who caused them to slip,
through some of their actions. God has now pardoned
them: God is most forgiving and forbearing [155]
(The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 155)**

When we read the words “caused them to slip” (*Al-‘Imran*: 155), we see that the verb is in the *istaf’ala* form, which implies a request or requirement.

'Slip' means to to err, i.e. to make a mistake. So, Satan wanted them to stumble 'only by means of something that they [themselves] had done' (*Al-'Imran*: 155), as though Satan did not dare to cause any believer to slip unless they had fallen into dissolution in some way. But as for those who have no dissolution, Satan has no power over them. When a person allows himself to entertain a certain desire, Satan labels him and says: 'This one is weak; we are able to cause him to slip.' However, he never approaches those whom he sees to never allow themselves fall into dissolution.

Hence, the lower self is Satan's instrument of sin. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'Satan flows in the son of Adam as blood flows.' When Satan sees anyone overpowered by his lower self, he says: 'This person is a promising would-be evildoer!' This is the one through whom he flows like blood, as the Hadith describes. As for the one who practices his religion, when his lower self incites him to evildoing, and he refuses, Satan fears him. So, Satan cannot cause anyone to slip except those who are weak, and if someone keeps their Lord in mind at all times, Satan will not dare to approach them.

Allah has named Satan 'the whispering, elusive tempter (*alwaswas Al-khannas*)' (*an-Nas*: 4). He whispers to people, but when Allah is mentioned, he sneaks away. He only remains with you when he sees that you are distracted from your Lord; but if you are with your Lord, he is unable to reach you and he disappears. He is prevented from whispering if you seek Allah's refuge from him.

So, His words, 'Satan caused them to stumble' (*Al-'Imran*: 155), mean that Satan sought for them to stumble as a result of what he knew they had done, thereby showing their weakness. 'Satan caused them to stumble only by means of something that they [themselves] had done...' (*Al-'Imran*: 155). The phrase 'only by means of something that they [themselves] had done...' (*Al-'Imran*: 155) being followed by '...but now Allah has effaced this sin of theirs...' (*Al-'Imran*: 155) suggests that Satan was unable to take them by means of everything that they did, for our Lord pardons much. 'Satan caused them to stumble only by means of something that they [themselves] had done. But now Allah has effaced this sin of theirs: verily, Allah is much-forgiving,

forbearing' (*Al- 'Imran: 155*). Why did Allah efface their sins? He effaced their sins in honour of the principle of Islam which they had embraced sincerely, but their souls were a little bit detached regarding certain matters. He could have punished them for that, but He pardoned them, for this is the right of Islam; 'Verily, Allah is much-forgiving, forbearing' (*Al- 'Imran: 155*). The True Lord then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَقَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ إِذَا ضَرَبُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ أَوْ كَانُوا غُرَى لَوْ كَانُوا عِنْدَنَا مَا مَاتُوا وَمَاقُتِلُوا لِيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ
حَسْرَةً فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ﴿١٥٦﴾

You who believe, do not be like those who disbelieved and said of their brothers who went out on a journey or a raid, 'If only they had stayed with us they would not have died or been killed,' for God will make such thoughts a source of anguish in their hearts. It is God who gives life and death; God sees everything you do [156] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran: 156*)

You who believe, do not be like those who disbelieved and said of their brothers who went set forth on a journey or a raid, 'If only they had stayed with us they would not have died or been killed,' for Allah will make such thoughts a source of anguish in their hearts. It is Allah Who grants life and death; Allah sees everything you do.

'Setting forth on a journey' here means to travel in search of Allah's bounty and for the cause of making His word the uppermost. Those who disbelieve related death and killing and the loss of human life to what? They related it to their having travelled afar or going out to fight in Allah's cause, saying: 'Had they not gone out, none of this would have befallen them!' We would rather clear it out saying: it is as though you never saw a man die in his bed, or a man killed by a falling wall, or a bucking camel, or a stray bullet. Is it a must that everyone who dies or is killed should be travelling or fighting in Allah's cause?

This is a foolish way of judging; the True Lord has mentioned this to give us an example of how they judge matters, a judgment with no basis in true

inductive principles. If we know them to be disbelievers, we say that this is their nature; their judgments on clear matters is incorrect, and whilst their judgments of particulars is unsound and unrealistic, if you know them to be disbelievers, you will find that it makes sense that they would say such a thing because their state is such that their arguments have no consistency, and so it is no wonder that they do not believe.

The term 'Or gone forth to war...' used in Arabic rendered as 'gone forth to war' is actually *ghuzza* which is the plural form of *ghaz* (which simply means the one who goes forth to war)—just as the plural words *suwwam* and *quwwam* of the active participles *sa'im* and *qa'im* meaning, respectively someone who is fasting and someone who is standing up [praying late into the night]). 'If only they had stayed with us they would not have died or been killed,' for Allah will make such thoughts a source of anguish in their hearts. ' (*Al-'Imran*: 156). So, Allah *Almighty is He* depicts for them what they said in order to chastise them therewith. Why? Because it will lead them to say: 'If they had been with us, we would have prevented them from going out or from being killed, so it is our fault.'

In this way, we find that every time they remembered their dead, they realised that they were wrong, and this instilled bitter anguish into their hearts. If they had only referred back to the Higher Truth, they would have found respite and would not have put themselves into such a labyrinth. This also occurred on their part so that their foolishness is uncovered, for it was manifested by all their actions their understanding of individual events, their judgment of absolute faith and their intervention in other people's matters; and our Allah wished to make that a source of anguish for them.

"'If only they had stayed with us, they would not have died or been killed,' for Allah will make such thoughts a source of anguish in their hearts' (*Al-'Imran*: 156). The principle of faith here is: '...it is Allah who grants life and death...' (*Al-'Imran*: 156). Travelling and fighting in Allah's cause is not the cause of death, and this is why Khalid ibn Al-Walid said: 'I saw a hundred advances or thereabouts and there is not a part of my body except that it has been struck with a sword or pierced by a spear; yet here I am, dying in my bed as a wild donkey dies! Let the eyes of the cowards sleep not!' The poet said:

‘O ye who would prevent me from the tumult and the glory: Can you grant me, then, eternal life?’

That is, ‘O you who seek to prevent me from entering the battle, can you guarantee that I will live forever if I forgo fighting?’ The poet continued:

‘If you indeed cannot meet my request, let me rush to it with all that I possess!’

The True Lord ends the verse with His words: ‘Allah sees everything you do.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 156) It is as though their foolishness were off limits; they failed to cover up their sin; it was made seen. The statement ‘sees’ is stronger than ‘All-knowing’ because if the word were ‘knows’, it would have suggested that they had some moral scruples to enshroud their actions. It is not Allah’s knowledge at play here; it is rather, His sight. Their action, i.e. their mistake, was too plain to be seen, so Allah says: ‘...and Allah sees all that you do’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 156). The Truth then says:

وَلَيْنَ قُتِلْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ مُتُّمْ لَمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَحْمَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَكْمُمُونَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Whether you are killed for God’s cause or die, God’s forgiveness and mercy are better than anything people amass [157] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 157)

Those who do not want to go to war for fear of not being killed, what pushes them to such intent? It is nothing but relating prosperity to the quality of being alive.

As long as they linked their prosperity to the quality of being alive, they must have entertained false assumptions that being alive would bring about their welfare. So they feared to be killed and leave behind that prosperity. They possessed no faithful insight, and we say to such people: your prosperity in life is determined by your actions, your strength, knowledge, and wisdom. As for the delights you would receive upon meeting Allah as a martyr, they are determined by what Allah possesses of bounty and mercy; enumerable are they! You have failed to grasp the difference between your ability, wisdom and knowledge and your efforts to earn a living, and that which Allah Himself would grant you of these means. So the True Lord says: ‘Whether you are killed for Allah’s cause or die, Allah’s forgiveness and mercy are better than

anything people amass.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 157). Next, the True Lord says: ‘for, indeed, if you die or are killed, it will surely be unto Allah that you shall be gathered.’ We should notice that in the first verse, the True Lord mentioned killing first and then death, saying: ‘And if indeed you are killed or die in Allah’s cause...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 157); whereas in the latter, He mentioned death first and then killing, saying:

وَلَيْنَ مُتَمِّمٍ أَوْ قُتِلْتُمْ لِيَّ اللَّهُ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

**Whether you die or are killed, it is to God that you
will be gathered [158] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 158)**

He mentioned killing first in the first verse because it was addressing warriors who die and meet their Lord as a result of being killed more often than they die of natural causes. The purpose of this verse, however, is to remind us that, on the Day of Resurrection, all humanity will be brought before Allah *Almighty is He* and most of them will have their souls separated from their bodies by means of death, not killing, so death is mentioned first. Every word and sentence, then, is commensurate with its context, for this is the word of the Wise, the Knowing. Afterwards, Allah says: ‘By an act of mercy from Allah, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them—had you been harsh or hard-hearted, they would have dispersed and left you—so pardon them and ask forgiveness for them. Consult with them about matters, then, when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in Allah: Allah loves those who put their trust in Him.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 159)

The verse, as we see, begins with a statement of fact which is: ‘By an act of mercy from Allah, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 159). It is as though Allah wanted to say: ‘Your nature, O Muhammad, is in line with what is required from you in this matter. They disobeyed you, and did not pay heed to you when you said: “To me, servants of Allah, to me, servants of Allah, I am the Messenger of Allah!” This is something that could have caused vexation and anger, but it did not vex your disposition or anger your temperament, because your inherent nature when dealing with your community is to show mercy.’ It is as though He wanted Prophet Muhammad to show tenderness to his community who were afflicted

with woe, saying to him: 'Be careful not to punish them for this, for you are by nature merciful, and you are not by nature harsh or hard-hearted; so do not act contrary to your nature in this matter.' It is akin to when you say to someone: 'You are a good person by nature, so be a good person in this matter!'

'By an act of mercy from Allah, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them....' (*Al-'Imran*: 159) Literally, it reads 'And by some grace from Allah....', i.e. by some grace that was placed within you. When you say, 'by some grace....', you are making the matter ambiguous, and when you do this, it shows the immensity of the matter because things are referred to with ambiguity either because they are very small or very big, i.e. either too big to be conceived or too small to be conceived. We can only see a small portion of immense objects and we cannot see minute objects at all. If something is referred to as being unknown, this sometimes indicates its immensity, sometimes its minuteness, sometimes its magnitude and sometimes its scarcity. If it is inconceivable because of its magnitude, it is huge in quantity; while if it is inconceivable because of its minuteness, out of the range of human eyesight, it is minute or infinitesimal.

So, when Allah says: 'And it was by Allah's grace...' (*Al-'Imran*: 159), it means 'by Allah's grace, which is inherent in your nature, you dealt gently with them. Why is the word *ma* (some) used here in Arabic? It can either be understood as a device to illustrate ambiguity, i.e. 'grace that is mighty beyond comprehension', or it can be understood as a lexical connector, as though the True Lord were saying to him: 'By the mercy that your Creator placed within you, commensurate with your place in your community, you dealt with them gently, and as long as this is your nature, be gentle with them in this regard, pardon them and pray that they be forgiven.'

This verse came after the mention of several events that took place at Uhud. The first event was that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* preferred not to go out and fight the Quraysh outside the city, but rather to stay in Medina; but those who longed for martyrdom and battle and longed to make up for what they had missed out on at Badr, preferred to go out to meet the Quraysh. Prophet Muhammad deferred to their opinion and donned his armour. When they saw that they had coerced the Messenger of Allah into

something that was contrary to the opinion he had arrived at, they went back on what they had said and suggested that he was right not to go out; but he said: 'It is not for a Prophet, when he has put on his armour, to remove it until he has fought.' Since he had prepared to fight, it is over. This was the first event: that of the consultation.

The second matter was that of ibn Ubbay's lagging behind with a third of the army. The third event was the archers' disobedience of Prophet Muhammad's order and their abandoning of their posts, despite His having warned them not to do so, saying to 'Abdullah ibn Jubayr, whom he had placed in authority over the archers: 'Keep the cavalry from us with your arrows, lest they come to us from our rear; whether the battle swings for us or against us, keep your position and let us not be approached from your side.' But they disobeyed the command of Prophet Muhammad. The fourth event was their fleeing when word went out that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had been murdered. The fifth event was that when he tried to rally them, they fled without paying attention to anything.

All these events were about to exert effects on him *peace and blessings be upon him*. As such, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to say, 'I created you with such mercy which makes you feel tolerant about all these mistakes. I am the One Who grants mercy and thus I embedded you with such energy that enables you to endure all disobedience committed by your followers. Did you think that you were sent to an angel-like *ummah*?! You were sent to mankind who frequently commit mistakes and who also change from time to time. That is why I want you to learn the lesson. I actually embedded you, O Muhammad, with mercy and you had already invoked Me for bestowing a lot of goodness upon your followers'. His mercy may be shown clearly in the event when Jibril (Gabriel) called upon him saying, 'Indeed, Allah *the Exalted* heard what your people said to you and the response they gave you. And He has sent you the angel in charge of the mountains to order him to do to them what you wish.' Muhammad then added, 'Then the angel of the mountains called me, greeted me and said: "O Muhammad, Allah listened to what your people had said to you. I am the angel of the mountains, and my *Rubb* (Lord) has sent me to you so that you may give me your orders. (I will carry out your orders). If you wish, I will bring together the two mountains that stand

opposite to each other at the extremities of Mecca to crush them in between.' But the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'I rather hope that Allah will raise from among their descendants people who will worship Allah the One and will not ascribe partners to Him (in worship).'

So, it is as though Allah said: I ask you (O Muhammad) to show them that particular mercy I implanted into your heart and which you made use of in all spheres of life. Certainly, it is by means of that mercy that you became lenient with them and thus they gathered around you due to your great moral character, great modesty, and warm smile; they gathered around you because you offered them considerable relief. As well, you took their individual affairs into your account to the extent that you were never the one who withdrew his hand first from theirs. You are of a great moral character. In fact, I implanted all of this into you so as to show them tolerance towards the mistakes they committed and to forgive them by virtue of such mercy and forbearance. That is because you are entitled with the role of educating them and cultivating their manners. As a matter of fact, these two characters of education and cultivating manners entail that you should not become angry at any mistake committed by them; otherwise, you are not performing your role perfectly.

فِيمَا رَحِمَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي لَهَمُّ وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِظَ الْقَلْبُ لَأَنْفَضُوا
 مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَأَعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ
 فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

By an act of mercy from God, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them – had you been harsh, or hard-hearted, they would have dispersed and left you – so pardon them and ask forgiveness for them. Consult with them about matters, then, when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in God: God loves those who put their trust in Him [159] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 159)

Why? Because you are weaning them off the practices they used to do in the pre-Islamic time of ignorance. In reality, it is taken for granted that a person who takes the responsibility of weaning someone off the practices he used to

do, should not resort to unfriendly manner. That is because that particular person is in need of compassion and mercy. As such, it is not right to bring about two difficulties upon him; that is, declaring the act he used to do ugly and deniable as well as weaning him off it. Therefore, anyone who gives a piece of advice to someone else should take into account that 'giving advice is not an easy matter. That is because the act of advice itself entails declaring to be criminal the deed committed by the person to whom advice is offered. So, when you advise someone not to do that particular act, what does this truly mean?

This means that it is hard enough to make a person who does a bad act wean off the practices he used to do in the past. So you should not add to this difficulty by directing advice in a way which is not good and harsh. In reality, this is not true because, in this particular situation, the person needs the adviser to be compassionate and lenient in order to remove the bad moral characters from him. We, in fact, apply this in our life when we coat the bitter medicine with sugar so that it could pass over the tongue without pain or annoyance until it reaches that particular area where we cannot feel its bitterness.

Hence, since you apply this in your worldly affairs, you should apply the same as to spiritual matters. Due to the fact that 'giving advice is not an easy matter,' you should not turn it into an argument. In addition, you should not offer it in a way which is difficult. It goes without saying that offering advice in a lenient way achieves the goal without agitation or annoyance. Similarly, being kind, while offering advice strongly urges the person to accept it and act upon it.

As such, you establish your goal. A case in point is the story of the king who dreamt that all his teeth had been fallen and thus he asked someone to explain it for him. The man said, 'All the members of your family will die,' but the king felt unpleasant with the interpretation of the dream in such words. So, he sought another person to explain it for him and the man said, 'Your life span will be longer than any of your family members.' It is the same interpretation given by the first man but in different words. It is true that as long as his life span will be longer than the life spans of his family members, then all of them will pass away before him. It is exactly the same interpretation. Therefore, Arabs used to say, 'Telling truth is difficult and thus you should do it in soft and kind words.'

‘And had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you’ (*Al- ‘Imran: 159*), so, it is due to mercy that you became lenient with them. As well, it is by virtue of soft words that they followed you, gathered around you, and gave you their love. Linguistically, the word *fazhzh* (rough) refers to the water camels store in their stomachs. It is known that camels drink great quantities of water which suffice them for long periods of time. So, when they, the camels, find no water to drink, they make use of these quantities of water stored in their stomachs. It is historically recorded that fighters slaughtered camels to drink water from their stomachs. It is known for certain that the taste of water taken from the stomachs of camels is unpleasant, and this actually indicates the true meaning of the word *fazhzh*. Due to the fact that this act of drinking water from the stomachs of camels brings about roughness, Arabs used to refer to ‘harsh words’ as roughness. Being hard-hearted automatically brings about harsh words.

‘And had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you....’ (*Al- ‘Imran: 159*) It is a mercy upon which you (O Messenger of Allah) were created by Allah *the Almighty* Who truly sent you with the Message.

And it is due to this mercy that you became gentle and lenient with them. The fruit of this mercy was crystal clear in the fact that they gathered around you and gave you their love. If you had shown them something otherwise, they would have dispersed from around you. As such, these previous events undoubtedly prove that mercy and leniency truly manifest your nature and moral character.

After telling about the mercy He *the Almighty* implanted in The Messenger’s heart and after telling about his leniency, He *Glorified is He* ordered him *peace and blessings be upon him* to pardon them. We have previously explained that the word *al- ‘Afwa* (pardon) means to entirely erase sins. This act of pardoning is totally different from *kazhm al-Ghayzhzh* (restraining anger). That is because the latter means that you do not punish for the sin, eventhough you are angry with it, but you restrain your body parts and tongue. Concerning the act of pardoning, it means the entire sin is completely forgiven. Placing emphasis on this act of pardoning, one says, ‘As for me, I pardoned you.’

However, the matter is not like that. It is because the issue is not related to you alone and thus you are also supposed to ask Allah to forgive them. The person against whom the sin is committed may pardon, but My Lord and the master of that particular person may not. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* puts it in clear words, 'If you pardon them, this is your right. But you are required to ask Allah to forgive them so that Allah does not punish them for the mistakes they committed against you.'

'Pardon them therefore...' (*Al-'Imran*: 159) This order is directed to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in particular. 'And ask forgiveness for them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 159). You should ask Allah to forgive them for the mistakes they committed in the battle of Uhud, which led to your defeat and injury. You (O Muhammad) should not say, 'I consulted with them and acted upon their advice, but we were defeated. This defeat should not make you keep away from consulting with them. In spite of the fact that the defeat you had was the outcome of this consultation, you should not shut the door to it. That is because education, cultivation of manners and testing the truthfulness of belief were the lessons to be deduced from the battle of Uhud. So, you should not hate to consult with them because of that. Rather, you should permanently have their consultation. As such, as long as you pardon them, and as long as you ask your Lord forgiveness for them, even if not in their presence, this indicates clearly that you feel content with them, and thus you are to resume your previous relations normally because you have already learned the lesson that will enormously benefit you in many subsequent events.

From the battle of Uhud on, Muslims always gained victory because they had learned the lesson very well to the extent that when Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* consulted with the companions concerning the apostasy wars, some of them advised him not to engage in them. But he did not follow their advice; rather, he consulted with them. The most important of all of this is that a counsel should be sought. Also, we shall follow the best opinions offered. The word *Al-Mashuratu* (counsel) means to draw comparisons between the various opinions and to choose what is best from among them. According to a line in a poem, 'Seek counsel of others if affliction should befall you, even if you are of those who give counsel.' The poet managed to convey the true

meaning to us. Eventhough one may be from among those people known for giving counsel to others, he should also seek the counsel of others. But why should he? You will find the answer to this question in the following verse by the same poet who said, 'The eye may see what is near to it and what is far from it, but it cannot see itself without the recourse of a mirror.'

It is true that the eye sees what is near and far, but it is incapable of seeing itself without a mirror. The same applies to other people' issues you examine because your mind minutely examines them, and truth is your strong motive. Your own personal affairs, however, may be negatively influenced by your caprice which may make them pleasing to you.

As such, Muslims became fully aware of the result of the Messenger of Allah seeking their counsel in Uhud. It seems that Allah *the Almighty* wants to say to His Messenger, 'Do not rely on the previous act of counsel to break off your relationship with them, and thus not consulting with them anymore. That is because, for certain, you will pass away one day, and another person will rule them. So, as long as they are governed by a person from among themselves, you should not prevent the ruler from seeking the advice of others. As a matter of fact, when various opinions are offered to the ruler in question, he will be able to choose the most correct one due to the fact that he is the ruler. Also, he will have the option to compare them all and say, 'This opinion is good but this is not, and so on.' Of course, this will be the case unless he authorises another person to make the decision

'And consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 159) The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was determined to set off to war and thus he put on his armour, so the question to be asked here is: 'Is it for the Prophet to put his armour on and then take it off due to their counsel?' No, it does not go like this because there must be no hesitation in the matter. 'And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 159) This is the benefit of belief which is clearly manifested in the fact that all the body parts shall work, while the role of hearts is to trust Allah; what a good equation it is!

The body parts say, 'We sow good seeds, plant, plough, irrigate and fertilise the land.' In spite of all of these acts, we suppose that frost may affect

our plants and thus we bring straw and the like to cover the crop. This is the work to be done by the body parts. Then, hearts shall trust Allah *the Almighty*. So, be careful not to say, 'It is for certain that I am going to harvest my crop because I perfected my work.' No, this is not right because Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who prepares reasons. So, it becomes crystal clear right now that the body parts shall work, while the hearts have to trust Allah—this is the benefit of belief; that is, I truly believe in Allah Who is Omnipotent and Who is able to create with and without reasons and means. You serve as reasons (O mankind), but Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who has nothing to do with reasons. So, your work means that you have actually considered reasons, and trusting Allah means that you seriously have to consider Allah, the One Who brings about reasons.

So, the body parts, as we explained previously, shall work and the hearts shall trust (Allah). Be careful not to think that trusting Allah means to leave your body parts idle. That is totally wrong. In fact, this is called indolence and laziness. In other words, it is the false trust. Liars are those who claim that! This is proved by the fact that such people like to trust Allah in difficult matters, while they do not do so when it comes to easy ones. To such man who claims that he trusts Allah but he does not work, we say, 'You have no trust because if you did, you would never stretch out your hand to food and place it into your mouth. You claim that you have trust in Allah, but you do not work, so let your (false) trust place food into your mouth, and chew it for you!'

Of course, he will not do such thing. To that person, we also say that his claim of trusting Allah is nothing but misunderstanding of the true meaning of belief. It is not a real trust in Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah.' (*Al-'Imran*: 159) The word '*azamta* (you have decided) requires the existence of determination, while trust requires showing impotence. The true meaning to be understood from the sentence 'I trust Allah' is that man has used up all his means and thus he resorts to the One Who is All-Omnipotent, i.e. Allah *the Almighty*.

In our daily lives, we hear people say that they have entrusted the matter to so-and-so. This means that a person is unable to do that particular thing and thus entrusts another to do it on his behalf. Also, it shows that this person is incapable of doing that thing. That is why he entrusts the matter to someone else who is able to do it. Similarly, this is the case with placing trust in Allah resulting from true belief in Him *the Almighty*. The word *At-Tawakkul* (having trust in) means to entrust your affairs to Allah *the Almighty* because you truly believe that He *Glorified is He* perfectly arranges matters of the entire creation including the fact that He has provided the means to you. Thus, you are not to neglect those means and meanwhile ask Him *Glorified is He* to work instead of you. We previously explained in (*al-Fatiha: 5*) that a man invokes Allah *the Almighty* for His Help.

The word *nast'ain* (we seek help) means that we want such help from You (O Allah) so that we can perfect o`ur work. Moving to the next verse, He *the Almighty* says, 'If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him?' (*Al-Imran: 160*) 'If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely.'

In this particular verse, He *Glorified is He* says, '... And upon Allah let the believers rely.' Thus, the question to be asked in this verse is who the believers are. Undoubtedly, it means those ones who truly believe in Allah. As long as they believe in Him *the Almighty* it is clearly implied that He *Glorified is He* is Omnipotent and fully aware of man's interests; thus there is nothing better than to entrust all your affairs to Him *the Almighty*.

Upon reciting the saying of Allah 'If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you..., ' one may ask, 'What is the opposite of Allah's Aid or Victory?' The answer is clearly given in the following part of this particular verse, which is, '... but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him?'. As such, you have made use of all available means mentioned by Allah *the Almighty*. Moreover, you have obeyed the heavenly-revealed orders clearly embodied in the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, the one who conveyed His Message. In the same connection, you have prepared your troops as far as possible. But be careful not to draw a comparison

between the number of your troops and the number of your enemy's. That is because Allah *the Almighty* ordered you not to do that. He *the Almighty* rather has said, 'You shall prepare your troops as far as possible.' But why did He *the Almighty* order them to do that? That is because He *the Almighty* wants to make the believers superior to the disbelievers, thanks to their true belief in Him *Glorified is He*. In reality, if matters had had to run normally, the (weak) force of the believers would have met with the (strong) force of the disbelievers. But He *the Almighty* wants the number of the believers' troops to be fewer than that of the disbelievers. As such, believers will confess their weakness and say, 'Our Lord, this is all our ability. We trust that You (O Lord) will provide this small number with Your Support. You the Almighty are our All-Powerful Supporter. You clearly stated in the Noble Quran that You are the Protector of those who have believed, while the disbelievers have no protector.' (*Muhammad: 11*) As for this particular verse (*Al-'Imran: 160*), He *the Almighty* says, 'If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you...' This means that if you engage in war with the aim of making the Word of Allah superior, you will undoubtedly guarantee victory.

But the question here is how we can realise that we support Allah. We fully realise that when victory is ours. This is based on the undeniable fact that the Laws set by Him *the Almighty* can never contradict reality, otherwise, Muslims would have been deceived, Allah forbid, by these divine laws. As a matter of fact, if reality contradicted religion, people would surely say, 'Reality contradicts this particular topic of religion.' However, this is not the case. That is why Allah *the Almighty* places emphasis on the following undeniable fact that if you support Him *the Almighty* He will support you. (*Muhammad: 7*) Then, reality comes to confirm this fact. Therefore, our belief will not be particularly restricted to that topic, but it will exceed it to include all other unknown topics. For example, when factual findings of modern science prove the truthfulness of the Quran as to a particular topic, then my belief in such authenticity should not be solely confined to that topic; rather, one shall say, 'All that I am unaware of in the Quran is included under this truthfulness.'

This is why we previously said that Allah *the Almighty* left unveiled certain secrets of the universe which are not fundamental; if we come to know about

these secrets, we will get no great benefit. Also, He *the Almighty* keeps certain secrets in the universe for peoples' minds to ponder over. Hence, that particular thing which was not to be accepted in the past has been approved by today's minds—the passage of time has proved it right. That is why we should make an analogy to this particular rule.

For example, they say that Pasteur discovered microbes, but the question here is whether or not microbes existed before Pasteur. They did exist, but no one had ever seen them because man cannot see microscopic items without a suitable instrument. Before the time of Pasteur, the microscope (instrument used to magnify tiny items thousands of times) had not been invented.

Similarly, when the telescope was invented, people were able to see the extremely remote items that they were unable to see before. Although these items may be extremely tiny and unnoticed, yet we became fully able to see them by means of the magnifying instrument called microscope.

The telescope makes distant objects look nearer, whereas the microscope makes very small objects look larger, so we are able to observe their movement and life. These findings make me firmly believe in the authenticity of the Quran when it tells about the unseen worlds like the jinn and the angels. Undoubtedly, I can never think otherwise because there are creatures which have been created from the same material I was created from, however, I cannot see them. Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* tells that there are other creatures like angels and jinn, I can never believe that the Quran tells a lie. Therefore, understanding this topic (about the microscope and the telescope) makes the meaning clearer.

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذُلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي
يَنْصُرُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

If God helps you [believers], no one can overcome you; if He forsakes you, who else can help you? Believers should put their trust in God [160] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 160)

We know for sure that obtainig the Support of Allah relies entirely on the fact that you should engage in war only for the sake of supporting His Word, but

how can we achieve that goal? It can be achieved by submitting to His Orders, making His Word superior, and making the word of disbelievers the lowest.

But '... if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him?' (*Al-'Imran*: 160) He *the Almighty* supports us all the time, but sometimes we feel that He *Glorified is He* has forsaken us; why? That is because we sometimes abandon some of His Orders. Accordingly, He *Glorified is He* seemingly supports you all the time. But when you do not follow His Orders, He makes you go through hard times to teach you a lesson. He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...And upon Allah let the believers rely.' (*Al-'Imran*: 160) In the previous verse, He *Glorified is He* states that He *the Almighty* loves those who rely upon Him. So, the person who does not rely upon Him *Glorified is He* shall check the veracity of his belief.

Moving to the next verse, He *the Almighty* says,

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَبِيٍّ أَنْ يَغُلَّ وَمَنْ يَغْلُلْ يَأْتِ بِمَا غَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ
ثُمَّ تَوَفَّى كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا كَسَبَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

It is inconceivable that a prophet would ever dishonestly take something from the battle gains. Anyone who does so will carry it with him on the Day of Resurrection, when each soul will be fully repaid for what it has done: no one will be wronged [161] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 161)

What does the word *yaghull* (acting faithfully in regard to war booty) mean? The word *ghalul* means to take something in secret. It is derived from *Aghall Al-Jaziru*, i.e. when the butcher skins an animal and folds the skin to hide some meat in it. This is the original meaning of the word. From the Sharia perspective, it is used to refer to acting unfaithfully in regard to war booty. It is true that amidst the horrors of war, one may find something precious thus takes it in secret—this is the meaning of *Al-ghalul*. In addition, the word may be used to refer to people hiding hatred in their chests. So, the meaning of this noun revolves mainly around the hiding of something.

He *the Almighty* says, 'It is not [attributable] to any prophet that he would act unfaithfully [in regard to war booty]...' (*Al-'Imran*: 161) But why is it not?

The booty seized from the battle of Badr was not divided among all who participated in the battle. The ones who found it took it. That was to encourage fighters to exert their utmost efforts because Badr was the first battle. So, when archers saw the booty in the battle of Uhud, they hastened to seize it. Similarly, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have previously said, 'Whoever kills someone in battle, having a proof for that, then his goods are his.' Because of that, warriors during the battle of Uhud thought that the Messenger of Allah would not divide the booty among them, as was the case in Badr, so Allah *the Almighty* explicitly instructed them that there was a big difference between the two battles stressing that whoever did something like that would have committed the act of *ghalul*. When Allah says: 'It is not [attributable] to any prophet that he would act unfaithfully [in regard to war booty]...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 161), it means that the nature, upon which the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was created, indicates that the act of *ghalul* can never be committed by him. However, it may be committed by a person from his followers. Therefore, there is a big difference between the two examples; that is, the fact that the Prophet can never commit this act of betrayal and the fact that a believer may prevent himself from committing it; it is so because the act has nothing to do with his nature; however, it may be committed by one of the warriors in his army. A case in point is when the companions brought the crown of Khosrow to 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*, he said, 'Truly, honest are those people who bring such a thing to their commander.' This means that it is conceivable that they could have concealed it.

'It is not [attributable] to any prophet that he would act unfaithfully [in regard to war booty]...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 161) When you hear the words *wa ma kan* (it is not attributable to), this means that this act of betrayal can never be committed by the Prophet. Then, He *the Almighty* states the general ruling as to this act of *ghalul*; that is, it may be committed by any other person. He *the Almighty* says, '... And whoever betrays, [taking unlawfully], will come with what he took on the Day of Resurrection.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 161) This means that if a person unfaithfully takes something from the war booty, Allah *the Almighty* will bring it on the Day of Resurrection. In this regard, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said,

'By Allah, any one of you will not take anything from (the public funds) without any justification, but will meet his Lord carrying it on himself on the Day of Judgment. I will recognise any one of you meeting Allah and carrying a growling camel, or a cow bellowing or a goat bleating'. Then he raised his hands so high that whiteness of his armpits could be seen. Then he said, 'O my Lord, I have conveyed (Your Commandments).' So, whoever secretly takes something unlawfully will come on the Day of Resurrection carrying that thing, be it a camel, a cow or a sheep, even if it is a donkey braying.

Thus, if the person will bring all what he takes secretly on the Day of Resurrection, the stolen object itself will expose his deed. That is why the Day of Resurrection is known as *Al-Fadihah* (the day when people evil deeds will be exposed) and *Al-Tammah* (the greatest Overwhelming Calamity). So, a person may take something secretly in this worldly life, but he will carry that secretly stolen object on his back on the Day of Resurrection. Then, such a person will call upon the Messenger of Allah and say, 'O Muhammad... O Muhammad!' He will call upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* because they (Muslims) are fully aware of the fact that he is kind and merciful, and that the punishment intended to that particular person will not please him *peace and blessings be upon him*. But he *peace and blessings be upon him* had already told about the punishment prepared for such person on the Day of Resurrection, thus those who firmly believed in him must not have taken from the war booty in secret.

But why is the hiding of war booty viewed as something evil? It is due to the fact that fighter in the battlefield takes into account one ultimate goal; that is, to make the Word of Allah superior, so how can he be content with such betrayal?! He fights for the sake of making the Word of Allah superior and thus he must take into consideration this ultimate goal.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* lays down the general rule that is: 'Then will every soul be [fully] compensated for what it earned, and they will not be wronged.' (*Al-'Imran*: 161) This verse refers to unfaithfully taking something in secret, either from the booty or from any other thing. If we apply this verse to all those who betray the trust given to them, we can deduce that a person who betrays the trust regarding the construction of a building will come on

the Day of Resurrection carrying the building on his back, and so is the person who stole a hundred tons of fish or imported rotten cheese.

Therefore, anyone who steals will come on the Day of Resurrection carrying the stolen item on his back. Undoubtedly, people do not like their evil deeds to be exposed to their peers, who are limited in number. So, what about the disgrace that will afflict the person on the Day of Resurrection? Indeed, man's evil deeds will be exposed to the entire humanity, from Adam to the end of time. So, every person must take into account that his act of betrayal will be exposed on the Day of Resurrection.

'... And whoever betrays, [taking unlawfully], will come with what he took on the Day of Resurrection. Then, will every soul be [fully] compensated for what it earned, and they will not be wronged.' (*Al-'Imran*: 161) This means that since He *the Almighty* will fully compensate people for their deeds, there will be no injustice at all. But if the matter was to be fulfilled without rewarding/punishing people for their deeds, then it would be sheer injustice, Allah forbid. Having clarified this rule for the Muslims, He *the Almighty* then says, 'So is one who pursues the pleasure of Allah like one who brings upon himself the anger of Allah and whose refuge is Hell? And wretched is the destination.'

أَفَمَنْ أَتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانُ اللَّهِ كَمَنْ بَاءَ بِسَخَطٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ
وَمَا أَوْلَاهُ جَهَنَّمَ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٦٢﴾

**Can the man who pursues God's good pleasure be
like the man who has brought God's wrath upon
himself and whose home will be Hell – a foul
destination? [162] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 162)**

In reality, when Allah *the Almighty* proposes an issue in the form of a question, this does not mean that He *the Almighty* wants to know further about it. Rather, He *Glorified is He* does so in order to encourage people to express their opinions about it. Their opinions will be offered as evidence against them (on the Day of Resurrection). Indeed, there is a big difference between the one who pursues the pleasure of Allah and the one who brings upon himself His Anger. This is totally true. But Allah *the Almighty* wants people to express

their opinions on this particular issue. That is why He *the Almighty* says, 'So is one who pursues the pleasure of Allah like one who brings upon himself...'. The word *baa'* means to bring upon himself [the anger of Allah].

Undoubtedly, whoever knows about the differences between pursuing the Pleasure of Allah and provoking His Anger shall say, 'Most surely, pursuing the Pleasure of Allah makes man superior, while the one who brings upon himself His Anger *Glorified is He* will be in the lowest depth of loss and misfortune.' So, the listener says his own opinion about that particular issue. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to express our opinions on the issue in order to use them as evidence against us. Here arises a very important question, namely: Is there some sort of similarity between that person who pursues the Pleasure of Allah and that one who brings upon himself His Anger?

In other words, is there any sort of similarity between the person who follows the Pleasure of Allah *the Almighty* who does not take from the war booty in secret and who does not betray the trust and that one who acts otherwise? This means that there is no similarity whatsoever between those who obeyed the Orders of Allah and hastened to strive against the enemy and those who did not obey the Orders. It is for sure that there is no similarity between them at all. In reality, those who do not obey the Orders of Allah will bring upon themselves His Wrath and Anger.

The word *Al-Sakhat* (anger/wrath) means to reproach someone or some people openly. However, this act of reproaching may not exert impact upon those people with harsh feelings. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then states the ruling of such people. He *Glorified is He* says, '... and whose refuge is Hell? And wretched is the destination.' (*Al-'Imran*: 162) The word *ma'wa* refers to man's abode. In this context, it refers to hellfire which is an evil destination. Having concluded this verse, He *the Almighty* says,

Index

Chapter of *Al-‘Imran*

Verse 1	9	Verse 32	181
Verse 2	11	Verse 33	186
Verse 3	14	Verse 34	193
Verse 4	17	Verse 35	194
Verse 5	21	Verse 36	198
Verse 6	21	Verse 37	202
Verse 7	24	Verse 38	207
Verse 8	37	Verse 39	209
Verse 9	38	Verse 40	212
Verse 10	40	Verse 41	214
Verse 11	42	Verse 42	220
Verse 12	46	Verse 43	227
Verse 13	50	Verse 44	227
Verse 14	59	Verse 45	231
Verse 15	72	Verse 46	234
Verse 16	79	Verse 47	236
Verse 17	82	Verse 48	238
Verse 18	96	Verse 49	239
Verse 19	106	Verse 50	247
Verse 20	122	Verse 51	249
Verse 21	129	Verse 52	253
Verse 22	136	Verse 53	261
Verse 23	139	Verse 54	263
Verse 24	150	Verse 55	270
Verse 25	150	Verse 56	279
Verse 26	151	Verse 57	280
Verse 27	159	Verse 58	280
Verse 28	167	Verse 59	286
Verse 29	172	Verse 60	287
Verse 30	173	Verse 61	287
Verse 31	174	Verse 62	289

Verse 63	290	Verse 98	416
Verse 64	290	Verse 99	419
Verse 65	292	Verse 100	421
Verse 66	293	Verse 101	422
Verse 67	293	Verse 102	429
Verse 68	296	Verse 103	436
Verse 69	301	Verse 104	437
Verse 70	303	Verse 105	441
Verse 71	304	Verse 106	441
Verse 72	305	Verse 107	444
Verse 73	307	Verse 108	446
Verse 74	309	Verse 109	449
Verse 75	309	Verse 110	450
Verse 76	317	Verse 111	454
Verse 77	319	Verse 112	459
Verse 78	325	Verse 113	464
Verse 79	328	Verse 114	468
Verse 80	333	Verse 115	471
Verse 81	334	Verse 116	471
Verse 82	343	Verse 117	474
Verse 83	345	Verse 118	480
Verse 84	356	Verse 119	491
Verse 85	363	Verse 120	498
Verse 86	365	Verse 121	501
Verse 87	371	Verse 122	505
Verse 88	372	Verse 123	511
Verse 89	372	Verse 124	513
Verse 90	375	Verse 125	513
Verse 91	376	Verse 126	514
Verse 92	378	Verse 127	515
Verse 93	388	Verse 128	516
Verse 94	393	Verse 129	517
Verse 95	393	Verse 130	525
Verse 96	396	Verse 131	527
Verse 97	406	Verse 132	528

Verse 133	528	Verse 148	587
Verse 134	530	Verse 149	588
Verse 135	534	Verse 150	589
Verse 136	538	Verse 151	590
Verse 137	548	Verse 152	594
Verse 138	549	Verse 153	597
Verse 139	550	Verse 154	599
Verse 140	554	Verse 155	608
Verse 141	561	Verse 156	610
Verse 142	562	Verse 157	612
Verse 143	562	Verse 158	613
Verse 144	563	Verse 159	616
Verse 145	577	Verse 160	624
Verse 146	581	Verse 161	625
Verse 147	585	Verse 162	628