

vol. { 4 }

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد { 4 }



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

vol. { 4 }

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The Chapter of

Al-‘Imran

Continued

هُمْ دَرَجَاتٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ بِصِيرٍ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

They are in a different class in God's eyes; God sees exactly what they do [163] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 163)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'They are [varying] degrees in the sight of Allah...' means that people's different positions in the Hereafter will be in accordance with their deeds in this worldly life. In the Hereafter, everyone will be held accountable for his deeds. In this context, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* uses the word *darajat* (degrees) with reference to the paradise and uses the word *darakat* (the lowest depths) to refer to the fire. Thus, it becomes clear that word 'degree' refers to the high rank in paradise, while the word 'the lowest depth' refers to the awkward position in the fire.

'They are [varying] degrees in the sight of Allah..., this clearly indicates the Divine Justice of Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* sees all His creatures equally. In addition, He has no enmity towards them. This rule laid down in this verse is applicable to all mankind, be the ruling for or even against them. Allah then concludes this verse saying, '...and Allah is seeing of whatever they do.' (*Al-Imran*: 163) This is to make people feel assured that Allah is All-Seeing of what they do; thus their good deeds will not be to waste, nor will their evil deeds. '... And Allah is seeing of whatever they do.' We frequently hear the following three verbs *yaf'al* (do/does), *ya'mal* (work/works) and *yaqul* (say/says). It goes without saying that 'work/action' is the most important of the three. That is because it entails the fact that every part of the body shall perform the act assigned to it. For example, the function (work) of the heart is to intend, and the function of the ear is to listen, while the function of the eye is to look. So, it is crystal clear now that every part of the body has a certain function to do. Therefore, every function performed by a body part is called an action.

However, all the body parts perform actions, except the tongue, which produces saying (speech), and speech is the opposite of actions and "work" includes both "action" and "speech". But why is what the tongue produces known as saying or speech; not action? That is because man talks too much, but putting his words into practice is another thing. That is why Allah *the Almighty* warns the believers

against saying that which they do not do, stressing that this act is one of the most hateful acts in the sight of Allah. (*as-Saff*: 2-3)

It becomes clear now that saying is in contrast to doing, and both of them are included in the action category. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says, '... and Allah is seeing of whatever they do.' This means that He *the Almighty* hears their sayings and sees their actions. He *Glorified is He* then says,

لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ ءَايَاتِهِ ۖ وَزَكَرَتِهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٦٤﴾

God has been truly gracious to the believers in sending them a Messenger from among their own, to recite His revelations to them, to make them grow in purity, and to teach them the Scripture and wisdom – before that they were clearly astray [164]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 164)

In reality, conferring a favour upon someone is to grant him something he needs. Hence, Allah wants to say, 'Do I need your belief? Do I need your submission? Is there any of My Attributes which is imperfect and thus you are going to remove this imperfection?' The answer is no. Therefore, when I send you a Messenger who is merciful to you, the favour is to be attributed to Me Alone. 'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164).

The question to be asked here is: 'Did He *the Almighty* send an angel?' The answer is no. He *Glorified is He* sent a human being so that people could take him as a perfect example. Thus, when he, the Prophet, orders Muslims to follow his *Sunnah*, they must adhere to his orders. But if Allah had chosen an angel, would he have been taken as an example? Of course not, because if that angel orders you to do a particular act, you might reply, 'I am unable to do it because you are an angel.' Along the same lines, ascribing divinity to a Messenger negates the fact of being a perfect example because if he says to you, 'Be like me,' you may reply, 'Can we do so? Your nature is different; could we reach such a level? We could not!' For this reason, all those who ascribe divinity to any Messenger are ignoring the possibility of taking him as a perfect example. A Messenger is known to be a perfect example of

behaviour, to convey the Message of Allah and to declare that he is a mere human being. He shall say, 'I am a human being and I can obey and submit (to the Will of Allah). Furthermore, I am following the Orders of Allah assigned to you.' So, a Messenger is a practical example of behaviour.

Even though the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all creatures, Allah *the Almighty* declared, as shown in the verse, that His favour is restricted only to those who believe. Why? It is because the believers are the ones who will benefit from this situation, while others missed the opportunity of taking him *peace and blessings be upon him* as an example, and that is why the favour of Allah is conferred only upon those who believe. 'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164). So, what does the word *minnah* (favour) mean? Originally, this word means cutting off. But when we hear it, we realize that it may indicate several opposite meanings. For instance, it may give the meaning of giving money away without expecting its return. It may also mean to spoil a good deed by permanently reminding others of it, as shown in the verse (*al-Baqara*: 262).

Hence, the kind of favour we are discussing in this particular verse is to give to others without expecting its return. However, the word *Al-mannu* has been frequently used to spoil the good deed by always mentioning it. A case in point is when one says to a person who all the time reminds him of the favour he conferred, 'I do not want you to do me that favour you are speaking about all the time.' So, the word *Al-mannu* was used to refer to the blessing and the act of spoiling it. One may say 'So and so did me a favour as he helped me overcome a difficulty.' Arabs used to say, 'So and so has no *munnah* (strength).' As clearly shown, all the meanings of the word have to do with cutting off even with blessings and expenditure since a blessing is received to cut off one's needs. In addition, expenditure also indicates the meaning of satisfying the need. Therefore, the word has been used in this context to indicate its original meaning.

So, when the need is satisfied by the existence of a blessing, thanking the one who granted you this blessing, especially Allah *the Almighty* is a required act. Nevertheless, the act of always reminding the person of your favour annuls the act of thanking. This is because when you remind the person of your favour to him all the time, he might get annoyed and thus reject your favour.

So, this annuls the act of thanking. As a matter of fact, if you give a needy person something that satisfies his need, this is called a blessing or favour; however, if you are proud of the favour you did, to the extent that you spoil it, this is viewed as annulling the favour because it implies the negation of the act of requirement to thank that person. This act is called *Al-mann* because it hurts people's feelings and emotions. However, in case you completely annul or cut off something, this is called *Al-munnah*. Arabs say, 'So and so has no *munnah*; that is, he has no strength to make decisions about matters.' In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 164). The word *mann* in this context indicates the meaning of doing a favour. The worldly favours are exclusively confined to the affairs of this worldly life; however, the favour conferred by Allah upon us, by sending the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, involves the affairs of this worldly life and the life to come, thus it is a great blessing.

'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers when...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 164). The word *idh* (when) in this verse means '[remember] when Allah *the Almighty* sent you a Messenger from among yourselves.' This is actually viewed as a great blessing granted by Him *the Almighty* to you (O mankind). In reality, if the ultimate goal of sending a Messenger was to guide people to the Way of Allah, this is already viewed as a blessing. But what if the Messenger sent to them were from among them? This is actually viewed as an additional blessing because as long as he is from among them, it obviously indicates that his lineage and moral character are known to them; he does not betray the trust; he does not tell a lie—this (i.e. sending of a Messenger with these qualities) is 'a favour' because they did not have to exert any effort to know him *peace and blessings be upon him* and ask questions like: Has he ever told a lie?' and 'Has he ever betrayed the trust?' Did it not come into their minds? Besides, they did not concern themselves with asking about whether or not he wanted his news to be spread here and there. On the contrary, they were fully aware of his lineage; his grandfather was Al-Muttalib, chief of Mecca, and all his family members were of senior ranks.

All his followers knew for certain that he was honest since early childhood. Therefore, all this information stopped people from having to assure themselves whether he was truthful. That is why when He *the Almighty* sent the best of

creation to people; there was a group from among them who immediately and firmly believed in him once he said to them, 'I am Allah's Messenger to you.' Although he did not perform a miracle for them at that time, they did not doubt him and asked what he was saying or doing.

But once he told them that he was the Messenger of Allah, they firmly believed in him. So, upon what events did, they rely on for their acceptance of his Message? They entirely relied upon the events of the past.

You called him 'the reliable man of the tribe' in his youth; and the reliable person is not to be doubted in what he says. In this regard, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* may be quoted, 'If he said so, he had told the truth.' So, the previous information they knew about him *peace and blessings be upon him* was the way leading to their acceptance of his Message. Because of the same reasons, Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* believed in him *peace and blessings be upon him* eventhough he did not perform miracles for her and nor did he recite the Quran to her. Rather, once he *peace and blessings be upon him* said to her, 'I am the Messenger of Allah,' she replied, 'You have told the truth. You must be a Messenger.' Look! Even though he *peace and blessings be upon him* himself was doubtful, she firmly believed in him. He *peace and blessings be upon him* even wonders, 'May the one who attended me in the cave be a jinn?' But Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* took him *peace and blessings be upon him* to Waraqat ibn Nawfal, her cousin, and further explained to the Prophet that what he was talking about could never bring about a calamity or disgrace upon him because his previous life led directly to that expected result; that is, he would be a noble Messenger sent by Allah *the Almighty*. She said to him, 'By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the deserving afflicted by calamity. A man with such qualities can never be approached by jinn. Let us go to consult with one of the people of the Book who knows about these matters. So, she believed in him *peace and blessings be upon him* even before Waraqat told her anything.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*, '... from among themselves' (*Al-'Imran*: 164) clearly indicates that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was known to them, and that Allah *the Almighty* did not send an angel from heaven

and He said to them, 'This is the Messenger of Allah to you.' No; this did not happen so. But Muhammad is a Messenger {from among themselves}; this is actually the first blessing and favour from Allah. He *the Almighty* says, 'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers when He sent to them a Messenger from themselves' (*Al-'Imran*: 164). This is the meaning if we consider the verse in the light of the tribe of the Prophet. As for the saying of Allah '...from among themselves...', this indicates that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is an Arab, which is viewed as another favour conferred upon them; he *peace and blessings be upon him* is an Arab, thus they are able to understand his speech. Also, they will not need any medium to translate to them. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to bring mankind out of darkness and into the light. Therefore, he was in need of a people who were able to understand him. That is why Allah *the Almighty* clarified His Favour upon them by saying 'I did not burden you with the need to interpret his speech. He is from among you. He has your same characteristics.' However, due to their obstinacy, they did not believe in him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Their obstinacy led them not to believe in him *peace and blessings be upon him* on the grounds that he was a mere human being. (*al-Isra*': 94)

They did not believe that Allah *the Almighty* had sent a mere human as a Messenger. As a matter of fact, this is a stupid argument. But Allah *Glorified is He* answered them that if angels were to walk on the earth in peace, He *Glorified is He* would have sent an angel from heaven as a Messenger to them. (*al-Isra*': 95)

Due to the fact that you are human beings, it was inevitable that any Messenger sent to you, must have been from among you. Therefore, when he orders you, 'Do this,' you will obey his orders because he is a human who works and so are you. Yet, if he were an angel, you would say 'We can never act as an angel.' Accordingly, their argument in this regard proves tenuous. It is in this way that Allah *the Almighty* conferred His Favour upon the believers by sending them a Messenger from among themselves. Undoubtedly, it is a Favour in the truest sense of the word; if we view it in the light of the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was from their tribe, it is a Favour; and so is the matter if we consider it in regard to the Arab race, who speak one language; it is also the case if we view it regarding all mankind.

At this point, an important question shall be asked, 'Does considering one particular meaning negate the other meanings? Or can they all be accepted together?' Certainly, all of those meanings can be accepted together. That is because Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who states all those meanings; thus one word may carry various meanings. He *the Almighty* says, 'Certainly did Allah confer [great] favour upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves....' (*Al-'Imran*: 164) Yet, there is one particular mode of recitation (that is odd) reads *anfasihim* (the best of them) because his lineage goes back to the family of Hashim who are the best of Quraysh, if not the best of all Arabs.

But what is the role attributed to the Messenger? One can understand from the saying of Allah that 'a Messenger' does not bring anything from his own. Because, in spite of his high rank, great moral character and glorious past, he is sent by Allah *the Almighty* Who is better than him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, do not occupy your minds only with thinking of this great man; rather, you must wonder who sent him?' You must pay full attention to the fact that the One Who sent Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is better than Muhammad himself.

'... A Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164) The word *yatlu* means to recite or to read. That is because words follow each other, one after the other. The word *ayat*, as we know, is used to refer to wonderful matters. For example, we say, 'So and so is a manifestation of beauty,' that is, his beauty attracts people's attention. It is along the same line when you say, 'So and so is a manifestation of intelligence.' It is true that there are many intelligent people, but he is the most intelligent. This means that the intelligence of that particular person is something which gains admiration. As such, the word *aya* means a wonderful matter that one should reflect upon to realise its amazing aspects. Signs are of two kinds: those which are seen and observed in the universe, such as the signs of the night, the day, the sun, the moon, etc. (*Fussilat*: 37)

In reality, all the phenomena of the universe are considered amazing and wonderful. As for the second kind, it has to do with the *ayat* (verses) of the Quran, shown in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* replaces one *aya* (verse) by another. (*an-Nahl*: 101) Therefore, signs are those amazing matters. They are

of two kinds, namely that which is seen and observed, and that which is recited. As for the first kind, the seen and observed signs, it includes the entire universe. As for the second kind which is the recited signs, it has to do with the Quran. The Quran explains the signs of the universe and vice-versa. Besides, the Messenger was sent to recite the verses of the Quran to them which was amazing and surprising to them. As for the other signs of the universe, they (people) saw and observed them. The Messenger was sent with these recited verses to drive their attention to the ones that could be seen and observed. One is absolutely astonished by knowing about the absolute accuracy in the creation of the universe, so he finally believes in the One Who created the universe.

Talking about the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, Allah the Almighty says, '... reciting to them His verses and purifying them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 164). But his mission is not exclusively confined to reciting the verses to them to gain their admiration. Rather, the Messenger was given a mission regarding belief; this mission shall drive the attention of all who listen to the Quran, to the One Who created this wonderful universe full of amazing signs. Then, He *Glorified is He* gives the Messenger the methodology compatible with the beauty of the universe. Therefore, the Messenger was sent to guide believers to that particular methodology under which they can purify themselves. In fact, when one hears the word *yuzakkihim* (purify them), he immediately realises that it is derived from the word *Az-Zakat*. The most important meaning given by the word *Az-Zakat* is purification, cleansing and growing. Hence, the verses of the Quran with which the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, were meant with purifying their souls.

But is such purification beneficial for the one who commands it or the purified person? It is undoubtedly beneficial for the one commanding it. However, you are the ones who will get benefit from growing and increasing. Yet, this matter should not be taken against *taklif* (legal charge/obligation). That is because *taklif* has nothing to do with the *mukallif* (the One who imposed those legal obligations/Lawgiver); rather, it is concerned with the *mukallaf* (a person who has a duty ordained by law). I give this example to fully illustrate the point; a rich man who loves his children and wants to encourage them to learn may say to them, 'If you succeed, I will do such-and-such for you.'

Actually, he does not want anything from them for himself because he has what suffices him and meets his requirements. Thus, it is the interest of his children that he wants to achieve.

Therefore, the Lawgiver does not gain any benefit by our obligations; rather, it is we who will get benefit from that; it is good for us to be cleansed, to be purified and to achieve growth. *At-Tazkiyah* (purification) gives the meanings of purification, cleansing and growing. Let us consider the condition of Arabs in the pre-Islamic period of ignorance in the light of these three meanings given by this word.

In fact, there was neither purification, nor cleansing nor growing during that particular period. That is because it was a period of ignorance during which they were subject to whims, despotism, and injustice. It is known for certain that the first thing man pays attention to is to keep his life. As a matter of fact, *At-Tazkiyah* encompasses all of these matters, i.e. purification of the man himself. So, instead of telling a lie, he purifies it from that; instead of unlawful looking at women; he purifies his eye from that; and instead of stealing, he purifies his hand from that by refraining from doing it.

It is known for certain that theft is considered a vice. This is proved by the fact that the thief hides from people, while committing this crime. Religion, therefore, comes to instruct such a person not to steal. Hence, religion purifies the movement of man's body parts in this worldly life, and also purifies his heart from hatred so that he will live in great comfort. Similarly, a man's strength will be preserved, by virtue of religion, thus it could be used in hard work. A number of questions are to be asked here, 'Why should man weaken his strength?! Why should he look at what Allah has forbidden?! And why should he break off relations with others?!'

It becomes clear now that religion is meant to purify man; it has actually to do with purifying and cleansing him, as well as improving his living conditions. So, when one feels impotent or incapable, he will not accept humiliation for the sake of sustenance. In such a way, religion protects man from humiliation to the extent that it prescribes a certain share for the poor from the money of the rich. Not only that, but it is the rich who shall search for the poor to give them their due share as well. Therefore, when the poor finds all the riches the believers are searching for, in order to give them their

shares prescribed by Allah *the Almighty* then they will say, 'We are not alone in this world. We are backed and supported by our fellow Muslims.' It is in such a way that man's purification takes place.

But what is it about the preservation of human race? Most surely, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to purify mankind from all vices by guiding them to the divine code of ethics manifested clearly in chastity. Therefore, religion came to purify you (O mankind) in all your affairs; it has to do with purifying the movements of your body parts so that one movement by a particular body part shall be in its proper context set by Allah *the Almighty* the One Who created it. In reality, Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified the primary roles to be performed by all the body parts including the eye, the tongue, the hand, the leg and the heart. Therefore, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who created all the body parts and clearly defined the role of each. Therefore, there shall be neither extravagance nor negligence. Yet, if any of the body parts breaks the code established by Allah *the Almighty* this will be considered disobedience to Him *the Almighty*. In such a way, it becomes clear that religion has come to purify and cleanse you (O believers). It is also meant to improve your living conditions '...And teaching them the Book and wisdom...' (*Al-Imran*: 164). As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* uses the word "the Book" in this context to refer to the Quran, the Book that He revealed down upon the heart of Muhammad. As for the word *Al-Hikmah*, it is used here to refer to the *Sunnah* (of the Prophet). This is proved by the fact when Allah *Glorified is He* asked the wives of the Prophet to remember the verses of the Quran and *Al-Hikmah* recited in their houses (*Al-Imran*: 34).

It is known for certain that *ayatu Allah* (or the verses of Allah) in this context refer specifically to the verses of the Quran, while '*Al-Hikmah*' refers to the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Here in this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, '... reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom...' (*Al-Imran*: 164) This verse clearly indicates that the Book is the Quran. This means that he, Muhammad, will recite the verses of the Quran to them, and then he will teach them what has been revealed down in the Book. Yet, some mufasssirun (scholars who are able to give explanation for the verses of the Quran) opine

that there is another explanation for the word *Al-Kitab* in the verse. They said, 'The word *Al-kitab* must be interpreted and explained to mean something other than the Quran.' 'In this context,' they added, 'it means writing.' And the first instance of writing was the writing down of the Quran. Thus, the two meanings apply. A case in point is the battle of Badr, when disbelieving captives were to be released in return for either money or teaching ten unlettered Muslims how to read and write. Muslims, at this time were unlettered—a fact proved by Allah *the Almighty* Who states clearly in the Quran that He *Glorified is He* has sent an unlettered Prophet (Muhammad) to an unlettered nation (The Arabs) to recite to them His Verses (the verses of the Quran) to purify them and to teach them the Quran and the *Sunnah*. (*al-Jumu'ah*: 2)

Therefore, I believe that explaining the word *Al-Kitab* in this context as referring to 'writing' is the most correct opinion because it fits the illiteracy of the Arabs. You may also consider the following point on the grounds that there is a difference between recitation and education as follows: recitation means that the Messenger himself is the one who recites to them the verses of the Quran, while education means that they themselves are the ones who recite the Quran. '... And teaching them the Book and wisdom...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 164) The verb '*Allam*' bears the meaning of conveying knowledge from a teacher to a student.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '... although they had been before in manifest error.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 164) The Quran contains various linguistic styles including the preposition '*in*'. As a matter of fact, sentences containing this preposition may indicate different meanings. For example, it may mean "if" indicating condition in some sentences, that is, it is to be followed by a verb of condition and a verb of action. A case in point is when Allah says "If a wound has afflicted you (at Uhud), a wound like it has also afflicted the (unbelieving) people..." (*Al- 'Imran*: 140).

This verse means that if wound afflicts you, O Muslims, do not despair or be downcast because the same wound has already afflicted the opposing people. This particular linguistic style is also clear in the verse: "If you give alms openly, it is well..." (*al-Baqara*: 271). In this verse, we notice that the preposition '*in*' has been used to indicate condition; that is, the sentence contains a verb of condition and verb of action. In another linguistic style, this preposition '*in*' may

be followed by '*illa*' (or except/save). This is clear in the verse: "None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth..." (*al-Mujadala*: 2).

In this context, He *the Almighty* tells about those people who commit the act of *Zhihar* against their wives. *Zhihar* means that the husband says to his wife, 'You are to me as like the back of my mother.' But the Quran declares this act as wrong. That is because the husband's mother is the woman who gave birth to him. It is for certain that man's wife did not give birth to him. So, if your wife were your mother, you would be forbidden from getting married to her. (*al-Mujadala*: 2) As a matter of fact, this linguistic style in which the preposition 'in' is followed by '*illa*' indicates that what comes after '*illa*' is different from what comes before it. This is crystal clear in (*al-Mujadala*: 2). Concerning this particular verse of (*al-Mujadala*: 2), Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that men's mothers are those women who gave birth to them and not their wives.

However, concerning the preposition '*in*' in the verse (*Al-Imran*: 164), it indicates neither condition nor negation. It actually indicates reality; that is, it is true that those people were in manifest error. Yet, there are some Arabic language grammarians who believe that it (i.e. the preposition '*in*') is used in this context to make the situation plain and obvious.

At that point, we shall know what is meant by the word *Ad-dalal* (error). Arabs say, 'So and so *dalla at-Tariq* (deviated from the way) in case he walked on a way that would not lead him to his final destination or when that way may even bring him a different result.' But what about deviation regarding moral conduct? Most surely, it will not achieve man's ultimate goal that is being admitted in Paradise, but rather, it will lead to the opposite which is hellfire. Actually, this is the manifest error. It is proved by the fact that the one who commits a crime does not like people to know about it. For instance, a thief does not like people to know about his crimes, and so is the liar who will be deeply shocked once someone calls him a liar. Therefore, these vices are committed by people who do not want anyone to see them or know about them (i.e. vices).

The verse '... Although they had been before in manifest error' (*Al-Imran*: 164) describes error as manifest and obvious. This is proved by the story of the two young men who entered prison (*Yusuf*: 36). The two

young men had realised that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was a doer of good because he was able to distinguish good from bad. Due to the fact that they (the two young men) were fully aware of the criterion of doing good, it was easy for them to recognise Yusuf. But why did any of them not say such a thing before? They gave this testimony about Yusuf *peace be upon him* because it was at that time that they were in need of his advice concerning the interpretation of visions. Yusuf *peace be upon him* was imprisoned and none dealt with him but as a prisoner. It was due to his behaviour towards these two young men that they perfectly knew that he was a doer of good and kindness. That is why they resorted to him and became certain that he was able to interpret their two visions. We have already stated clearly that the deviant himself knows very well the value of uprightness. Therefore, we can deduce that uprightness is something naturally implanted in man. This is based on the fact that the deviant himself realises the essence of uprightness.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* sheds light on a very important topic; He *Glorified is He* conferred His favour upon the believers by sending them a Messenger who was from among them, who recited His Verses (the verses of the Quran) to them, and who was sent to purify them and to teach them the Book and the wisdom (i.e. how to make use of something in the best way). So, it was due to this Favour that when the Messenger ordered you to do something, you did not have the right to disobey him *peace and blessings be upon him*, and when he makes a miracle for you, you should not argue with him in this regard. So, what is wrong with you? Allah *the Almighty* says,

أَوَلَمَّا أَصَابَكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَدْ أَصَبْتُمْ مِثْلَيْهَا قُلْتُمْ أَنَّى هَذَا قُلْ هُوَ
مِنَ عِنْدِ أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

Why do you [believers] say, when a calamity befalls you, even after you have inflicted twice as much damage [on your enemy], 'How did this happen?' [Prophet], say, 'You brought it upon yourselves.' God has power over everything [165]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 165)

Why do you (O believers) say, 'How could the disbelievers defeat us?' In reality, you were defeated because you disobeyed the orders of the Messenger

of Allah; He *Glorified is He* conferred His Favour upon you by sending you a Messenger who was from among yourselves and who came to you, purified you and taught you the Book and the wisdom. This actually implies that you are obliged to obey all the orders of such a Messenger; none of you should say, 'Why were we defeated as such?' In other words, none of you should say, 'Why did the situation go like this in the battle of Uhud?' You should not say this because your saying does not match with the favour of Allah *the Almighty* conferred upon you by sending you a Messenger. In addition, the defeat in Uhud was inflicted upon you after you had already defeated the disbelievers (in the battle of Badr) and after you had certainly afflicted them with misfortune which was twice as much the misfortune you were afflicted with in Uhud. So, you were the first to defeat them (in Badr); Allah *the Almighty* gave you victory; you killed seventy from the disbelievers and took other seventy as captives, while in Uhud they killed seventy of you but they took no captives; you (O believers) took the booty of Badr, while they (the disbelievers) did not take any booty in Uhud, so what is unusual about this? You were supposed to inspect yourselves and examine the truthfulness of your belief and the faithfulness of your obedience and submission to the leadership of the Messenger of Allah! As a matter of fact, the question 'Whence is this?' should not have been asked by you because it indicates objection to the occurrence of the defeat; that is, you wondered, 'How could we be defeated as such eventhough we fight in the Cause of Allah and the Messenger of Allah is among us, while the others are idolaters?' We answer your question by asking you the following, 'Have you (O believers) reached the required level of belief?!' As a matter of fact, this required level of belief necessitates that you obey the orders of the Messenger, but you (O believers) did not really reach that level of belief that you previously had in the battle of Badr.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'What! When' indicates interrogation and time respectively; that is, you have believed in Allah as the True Lord and you have believed in Muhammad as a Messenger, but when a misfortune afflicted you, and you had certainly afflicted the disbelievers with twice as much before; you say, 'What! When!'

Reason indicates that you were never supposed to ask such a question because you have believed in a Fair God Whose Laws are neither altered nor

changed. Do you think that He *the Almighty* would change these laws for your sake? No, since He *Glorified is He* says: “(Such has been) the course of Allah with respect to those who have gone before; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah...” (*al-'Ahzab*: 62). He *Glorified is He* affirms this undeniable fact that His Laws are neither changed nor altered in another verse of the Quran in which He *the Almighty* also states that evil scheming will not engulf but its authors (*Fatir*: 43).

Had you recalled your belief in the One God Who established these laws to perfectly run the affairs of His Universe in such a way that is most beneficial, you would not have said something like that, and as long as you have believed in the fact that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who established these laws, you would have known for sure that He *Glorified is He* would not change His Laws for your sake because you chose Islam (submission to the will of Allah). So, you would have known for certain that in case you disobeyed His Orders, all His Laws would have been applied to you, so you must have understood the matter. Furthermore, you would not have asked this question because you have believed in Allah as One Who established Laws and in Muhammad as a Messenger from Allah.

So, when a misfortune afflicted you (O believers), and you had already afflicted the disbelievers with a misfortune that was twice as much as yours, you said, ‘How could this happen?!’ You (O believers) had already afflicted the disbelievers with a misfortune which was twice as much as the misfortune you were afflicted with, so you would have reviewed your deeds in light of the criteria of belief, and if you have already done this, why would you ask this question ‘How could this happen?! When one hears this question *anna hadha* (how could this happen?!), he should realise that it indicates two meanings; that is, it means either the question, ‘How could this happen?’, or the question, ‘Whence did this happen?’

If it were used to refer to a person who would like to know about something, as was the case with Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah), it means ‘from where?’; Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wanted to know ‘whence’ came the provision to Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* while in her sanctuary. (*Al-'Imran*: 37) It may also have the meaning of ‘how’ as shown in

the story of that Prophet who passed by a town that had fallen into ruin. Therefore, he wondered, 'How will Allah bring this town into life after its death?' (*al-Baqara*: 259)

In the above mentioned example, it (i.e. *Anna*) indicates the meaning of 'how'. Hence, it has the meaning of 'whence' or 'how'. As for the believers who fought in the battle of Uhud, they were surprised at their defeat, hence Allah *the Almighty* clarified the matter for them, 'Had you already taken into your account the fact that you truly believe in a Just (God) Who established unalterable and unchangeable Laws to run the affairs of His Universe, you would have known for certain that He *the Almighty* will not change these laws for your sake; rather, you are the ones who must change for the sake of Allah.

'What! When a misfortune befell you, and you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 165) The word *lamma* in this verse gives the meaning of an adverb of time 'when'. It may also be used exactly as the case with the particle '*lam*'. Furthermore, this Arabic adverb of time '*lamma*' is also used to negate verbs. This is clearly shown in the Quran when Allah *the Almighty* told the dwellers of the desert that faith had not yet entered into their hearts. (*al-Hujurat*: 14)

This verse (*al-Hujurat*: 14) means that faith had not yet entered the hearts of the dwellers of the desert, but it might enter into their hearts later. This is the apocopate function of the word *lamma*. This word may also be used to indicate condition. For example, Arabs say, "*Lamma yaqum Zayd yahrauthu kadha*." This sentence means 'when Zayd ploughs the earth, this particular thing will take place.' This conditional usage of *lamma* is confirmed in the Quran when Allah *the Almighty* tells the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them* (*as-Saffat*: 103-105).

These verses of (*as-Saffat*: 103-105) refer to 'When both Ibrahim and his son Ismail surrendered to the Order of Allah and Ibrahim laid his son down to his forehead in submission to the Order of Allah, We called out to him saying: "O Ibrahim! You have indeed shown the truth of the vision."' With regard to the particle *waw* (and) in these verses of (*as-Saffat*: 103-105), it is used for emphasis, exactly like the verse of the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* talks about the opening of the gates of paradise (*al-Haqqa*: 73). It becomes crystal

clear now that the particle 'and' in this context is used to indicate emphasis. Other Arabic language grammarians, though, believe that this particular word was used in this context to indicate that the act of Allah *the Almighty* calling Ibrahim, came shortly after he *peace be upon him* laid down his son Ismail to his forehead to slay him in submission to the Order of Allah *the Almighty*.

So, the word *lamma* here in this verse is an adverb of time. This means, 'When a misfortune afflicts you and you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much', you began to say, 'Whence is this?' (O believers) it would have been better for you if you would have drawn a comparison between what happened in Badr and what happened in Uhud; it was in Badr that you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much you were afflicted with in Uhud, but why did your enemy defeat you in Uhud as such? You must have asked yourselves this question because criteria are already established, and as long as you paid them no attention, here is the answer to your proposed question, 'Say to them, O Muhamamd, "It is from yourselves."' You disobeyed the order of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, thus your defeat was inevitable because of the belief in Allah Whose Laws are neither changed nor altered.

'What! When a misfortune befell you, and you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much, you began to say: Whence is this? Say: It is from yourselves....'

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '... surely Allah has power over all things.' (*Al-'Imran*: 165) So, the question to be asked here is 'why did Allah *the Almighty* conclude the verse that way?' The answer is that as long as Allah has established unchangeable Laws and He *the Almighty* has absolute power over all things, no other (false) god will come to nullify any of these Laws established by Him *the Almighty*. And since there is no other god, then it is the Almighty the One Who has power over all things and has power to keep His Laws unchanged. In fact, there is not any other power that can change the Laws established by Allah *the Almighty* Who, then, can change them?! As a matter of fact, these laws can never be changed except by a power which is more enormous- Allah forbid- than that of Allah *the Almighty*. Accordingly, He *Glorified is He* clarified the matter, 'I have power over all

things and thus I can keep My Laws in the Universe in such a way which is perfect. Therefore, there is no other power that can change or alter these Laws established by Me'.

As well, you should not think that what afflicted you was a result of the fact that My Laws are unchangeable; no, it afflicted you by My Permission. He *the Almighty* put it clear that whoever disobeys His Commands will be afflicted with His punishment. Therefore, there is nothing which takes place in the universe without the Knowledge and Permission of Allah *the Almighty*. Then, He *Glorified is He* says,

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ يَوْمَ التَّنَقُّ الْجَمْعَانِ فَبِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

**What befell you on the day the two armies met in
battle happened with God's permission and in order
for Him to see who were the true believers [166]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 166)**

This means that He *the Almighty* made the army of the believers fight against the army of the disbelievers at Uhud by virtue of His Knowledge and Permission. He *Glorified is He* previously knew the result of the battle, and that they would disobey the orders of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Yet His saying, 'with Allah's Permission' may be explained in the light of His Laws which are unchangeable. Therefore, all what happened to them has taken place with the Knowledge of Allah *the Almighty*. Yes, it happened with His Permission, and it is for certain that the divine laws are applied to all those who disobey His Orders.

'And what befell you on the day when the two armies met (at Uhud) was with Allah's knowledge, and that He might know the believers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 166) When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and that He might know the believers,' and 'that He might know the hypocrite,' this truly means that He *the Almighty* knows them perfectly well before the occurrence of the events, but His Knowledge will not bear testimony against people unless they do the action themselves. That is because a person may say, 'O my Lord, you held me accountable for this deed by virtue of Your Knowledge, but I would not have done this deed.' He *the Almighty* therefore, will clarify the matter, 'No, it does

not go like this. You knew about it because you had already done it, thus it bears testimony against you.'

For more clarification, I will offer the following example: A teacher may say to one of his students, 'You have failed.' The student then replies, 'No, you must test me.' The teacher will then say, 'I know that you have failed,' whereupon the student says, 'I do not rely on your knowledge in this regard, but you must test me.' The teacher will then say, 'I will test you.' But upon giving some questions to the student, he fails. Then, the student became fully aware of his failure; it is true that he already knew about it, but now he is unable to argue with the teacher about the matter which has now turned into an undeniable fact.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...and that He might know the believers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 166) indicates that there are some believers whose faith is steadfast; it is those believers whose belief in Allah increases with the misfortunes afflicting them. He *Glorified is He* then says,

وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ نَافَقُوا وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا فَنَبْلُوهُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَوْ اذْفَعُوا قَالُوا لَوْ
نَعْلَمُ قِتَالًا لَّاتَّبَعْنَاكُمْ هُمْ لِلْكَفْرِ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَقْرَبُ مِنْهُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ
يَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ مَا لَيْسَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿١٦٧﴾

When it was said to them, 'Come, fight for God's cause, or at least defend yourselves,' answered, 'We would follow you if we knew there was going to be fighting.' On that day they were closer to disbelief than belief. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts: God knows exactly what they conceal [167] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 167)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And that He might know the hypocrites...' means that He *the Almighty* will reveal the deeds of the hypocrites so that people recognise them. But if these events did not take place, how could you recognise them? It goes without saying that they will conceal themselves. These events must have then taken place in order to expose them (the hypocrites) because the nature of the hypocrites entails cheating. That is why Allah *the Almighty* causes these events to take place in order to reveal and expose them.

'And that He might know the hypocrites; and it was said to them: Come, fight in Allah's way, or defend yourselves.' (*Al-'Imran*: 167) Medina was under attack, and if the disbelievers gained victory, they would enter it and take Muslims as captives and do all sorts of evil deeds. That is why 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Hiram said to the hypocrites, 'Come out to fight with us, and if you do not come out to fight with us, then come out to defend yourselves, your property and your women because if they (the disbelievers) gain victory over you, they will enter the city and do all sorts of evil deeds.' He called them out to fight by evoking their feelings of pride and zeal. But when he *Allah be pleased with him* became fully aware that they would not come out to fight with the believers, he said to them, 'Go away, O enemies of Allah! Most surely, Allah will suffice His Messenger.'

Hence, the verse clearly indicates that there is a difference between 'fighting in the Cause of Allah' and 'defending themselves.' That is why He *the Almighty* says, 'Come, fight in Allah's way or defend yourselves.' The believers said to the hypocrites that in order for the disbelievers to know that Muslims are large in number. They (the hypocrites) replied, 'If we knew fighting, we would have certainly followed you.' If we consider the story carefully, we will find that Ibn Ubayy was of the opinion that Muslims should have stayed in Medina, but why? Because it is proved by evidence that all those who tried to attack the people of Medina from inside it were defeated, but when they (the people of Midyan) fought against any enemy outside the city, they gained victory.

Therefore, Ibn Ubayy was fully aware of the matter; he did not want to go out to fight because he knew from experience that the people of Medina gained victory over enemies when they fought from inside the city, but when they came to fight outside Medina, they were defeated. So, he was fully aware of the result of coming out to fight the enemies outside Medina. But since it was 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, the head of the hypocrites, the one who said that, you were unable to know where the truth was. It is possible that the impact of the migration of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was felt by him because it was on that day of migration that he would have been crowned as the king of Medina. But when the Messenger of Allah arrived at

Medina, the situation completely changed, and Ibn Salul was not appointed as the king of Medina. So, he might have kept his feeling hidden.

‘They said: If we knew fighting, we would certainly have followed you.’ (*Al-'Imran*: 167) Ibn Salul claimed that coming out of Medina to fight against the enemy was nothing but simply throwing oneself into destruction because war means that you engage in it, while thinking that you may gain victory; nevertheless this particular act of coming out of Medina to fight against the disbelievers was nothing but marching into destruction, and not real fighting. Allah *the Almighty* said, ‘If we knew fighting, we would certainly have followed you.’

Allah *the Almighty* exposed their evil deeds by stating that, ‘... They were on that day much nearer to unbelief than to belief....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 167) This means that their hypocrisy was concealed, and as long as hypocrisy is concealed, it means that the tongue says, while the heart denies and rejects. Therefore, they are wavering between this and that, (belonging) neither to these nor to those; and this issue made him closer to manifest disbelief.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 167) This verse clearly indicates that the heart has to do with ‘intentions’, while the tongue has to do with ‘speech’, so one may say that which he does not. That is why we have already said that hypocrites’ souls are divided, and their faculties are shattered; they say with their tongues what they deny in their hearts. That is why they will be in the lowest depth of the hellfire because they are deceivers and their souls are divided.

‘They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts....’ (*Al-'Imran*: 167) The mouth is very important for the act of ‘saying’ because it reflects what is in the soul. Similarly, if one expresses what is in his soul in writing, this is considered as an act of ‘saying.’ That is why whoever feels shy to say something to someone, he will write it on a paper, and thus his writing is considered an act of ‘saying’. As for those hypocrites, they say with their mouths and not in writing; this is considered sheer hypocrisy because if they were shy, they would just whisper it. ‘... They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts....’ This indicates that the saying of the tongue does not match the

intention of the heart; the heart is absolutely determined to committing disbelief, Allah forbid, and the tongue lies by declaring belief.

We know for certain that truthfulness is achieved when the act of 'saying' agrees with reality, which is the topic of belief. As a matter of fact, belief entails the existence of an intention in the heart and a deed to prove that belief. As for the hypocrites, their sayings do not match their intentions. But when Allah exposed their evil intentions, people knew their deceit. That is why they were closer to unbelief. Allah says, 'They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts....' (*Al-'Imran*: 167) This saying of Allah *the Almighty* indicates the lack of belief in their hearts, for they dealt with Allah in the same way they dealt with human beings. Allah *the Almighty* then says,

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا لِإِخْوَانِهِمْ وَقَعَدُوا لَوْ أَطَاعُونَا مَا قُتِلُوا قُلْ فَادْرَءُوا
عَنْ أَنْفُسِكُمُ الْمَوْتَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿١٦٨﴾

**As for those who stayed behind, and said of their brothers,
'If only they had listened to us, they would not have been
killed,' tell them [Prophet], 'Ward of death from yourselves,
if what you say is true' [168] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 168)**

When Ibn Ubayy wanted to desert the army, some of the hypocrites agreed with him, while others did not. But when those hypocrites who did not agree with him were killed, other hypocrites, who obeyed the command of Ibn Salul not to come out, were delighted and said, 'Had they only obeyed us and stayed in Medina, they would not have been defeated or killed.' Hence, Allah *the Almighty* explains the way they think to us. It is true that they stayed behind and said to their brothers who were killed in the battlefield and who mainly belonged to their own group of hypocrites, '... If they had obeyed us....' This clearly indicates that an order was issued by the hypocrites to their brothers to 'stay behind'. But those members of the group who are of less hypocrisy did not obey them and came out to fight, so they were afflicted with defeat and killing.

But how did Allah *the Almighty* answer them? You say, 'If they had obeyed us...', this means that their obedience to you would serve as a means of survival to them. So, you (O hypocrites) know the way to be safe from killing.

But the question to be asked here is: Does the person who knows how to be safe from killing, know how to be safe from death?! That is why Allah *the Almighty* scorns them saying, '... Then prevent death from yourselves, if you should be truthful.' (*Al-'Imran*: 168) As a matter of fact, this part of the verse is in response to their speech 'if they had obeyed us, they would not have been killed.'

Similarly, if you know a way to be safe from being killed, then use this particular way to prevent your deaths. You and your forefathers will surely die, and you cannot prevent death for yourself. So, you do not know how to be safe from death. How many fighters are those who safely came back from war! How many are those who fled from fighting but died? Even if some believers who were fighting in the Cause of Allah were killed, does this mean that they are of a lesser degree in the sight of Allah *the Almighty*? Of course, they are not! But those believers who were killed are more beloved to Allah than those who fled the battlefield.

We know for certain that an action is either praised or despised based on the goal behind it. In reality, every action that gets you closer to your goal is praised, while every action that drives you away from the goal is despised. For example, if your goal is to travel to Alexandria, you may go there on foot, thus you will need more days; however, if you go there on a horse, a donkey, etc., you will need less time to reach there; if you use a car, you may reach it in a few hours. In the same way, if you use a plane to travel there, you may reach it in half an hour. That is to say that, the faster the means of transportation, the less time it needs to reach a destination. That is based on a rule stating that the active power is in adverse proportion with time. It also means that the more the power, the less the time. Since my goal is to travel to Alexandria, surely the means of transportation which takes less time is better than the ones that take more time, thus it is for sure the best means of transportation.

Since the ultimate goal (of the believer) is to meet Allah *the Almighty* and to live in His Company, then it is better for the believer if Allah hastens his death. But people improperly misunderstand the concept of death. It goes without saying that death gets the true believer closer to his goal, so why would he be sad?

‘And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision’ (*Al-‘Imran: 169*). You truly fear death, but those who are killed in the Cause of Allah are not dead because their lives continue. In fact, there is a big difference between death and martyrdom. The lives of those who are killed in the Cause of Allah are continuous and they will not experience the period of death that those who die normally suffer. We must understand that they are alive and in the Company of their Lord. This is totally done under the Law of Allah *the Almighty* so you must not judge things according to your own point of view. It is true that if you open the grave, you will find the martyrs with dismembered limbs, but this is your own judgment according to your point of view. As a matter of fact, those martyrs are alive with their Lord and receive provision.

Let us ask a very important question: what is the difference between life and death? Most surely when the soul leaves the body, one’s life is over and thus he will not get benefit from provision which is used by man to maintain life. In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* wants to give us some characteristics to prove that martyrs are indeed alive. It goes without saying that provision is one of the most essential elements for maintaining of life. Also, we must understand that the Company of Allah is totally different from that of others. Martyrs are alive with their Lord and are sustained by Him *the Almighty* in such a way that is destined by Him *Glorified is He*. We know perfectly well that the need for sustenance is the characteristic which distinguishes the alive from the dead. When we read the saying of Allah *the Almighty*,

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أَحْيَاءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ

[Prophet], do not think of those who have been killed in God’s way as dead. They are alive with their Lord, well provided for [169] (The Quran, *Al-‘Imran: 169*)

We may say that it is possible to take a man, keep him alive and provide him with food and drink, but will that person be pleased with his situation? No, such a person will not be pleased. For this reason, we must realise that the life of the martyr is not in the grave, but in Allah’s Company, and he is pleased with his situation destined by Allah. That is why Allah *the Almighty*

confirms the fact by the verse: 'Rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them—that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.' (*Al-'Imran*: 170)

All human beings are to die and this is a sign of justice, but it is due to Allah's Favour that He *the Almighty* hastens the death of those whom He loves and moves them to live in His Pleasure and Bounty. This is confirmed by His Saying, 'Rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty...'. However, we find that the fraternity they share with each other, as Muslims, turned into a form that is purer than the one that existed when they were alive. Belief entails that a believer must love for his fellow believer what he loves for himself and so is the case of martyrs with their Lord *the Almighty*. This clearly indicates that the life of martyrs is one that is full of provision and happiness, and every martyr believes that Allah *the Almighty* has favoured him with this bounty. That is why the martyr receives good tidings about the believers who did not join him yet and says,

فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا
بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١٧٠﴾

**happy with what God has given them of His favour;
rejoicing that for those they have left behind who have yet
to join them there is no fear, nor will they grieve [170]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 170)**

The phrase *yastabshirun* is derived from *Al-bushra*, which means glad tidings/good news. The saying of Allah *the Almighty*, '... receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them,' refers to the believers to be martyred after the already martyred ones. So, martyrs say, 'They (our fellow brothers) will come to us, and we would like them to enjoy the same pleasure and bounty we are in.' Besides, all of them love each other, for they know well the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.' Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him and his father* narrated that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*

said, “When your brethren were struck at the battle of Uhud, Allah put their spirits in the crops of green birds which go down to the rivers of paradise, eat its fruit and nestle in lamps of gold in the shade of the Throne. Then, when they experienced the sweetness of their food, drink, and rest, they asked, “Who will tell our brethren about us that we are alive in paradise provided with provision in order that they might not be disinterested in *jihad* (fighting in the cause of Allah) and recoil in war?” Allah *the Almighty* then said, “I shall tell them about you”, so He *Glorified is He* sent down the verses “And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision,” and what comes next.

We know that the word *Al-bishr* has the meaning of happiness that appears on a man’s face. So, when someone is happy, this happiness appears on his face, and it becomes radiant. That is why we call it *Al-bisharah* because it causes the face of the person who receives glad tidings to be radiant and smiling.

‘... And they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them—that there will be no fear concerning them, and nor will they grieve.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 170) This verse means that those believers who were not martyred yet shall fear nothing because they may be involved in a battle and gain martyrdom. So, Allah *the Almighty* conveys to the believers who are still alive, the message of their fellow brothers who gained martyrdom before them, that they shall not fear because they will be moved to another life which is better than that worldly life. He *the Almighty* says, ‘that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.’

Allah *the Almighty* then says,

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**[rejoicing] in God’s blessing and favour, and that God
will not let the reward of the believers be lost [171]
(The Quran, *Al-‘Imran*: 171)**

Most surely, Allah *the Almighty* will not waste the reward of those believers who fought in His Cause. He *the Almighty* then says,

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ
لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٢﴾

Those who responded to God and the Messenger after suffering defeat, who do good and remain conscious of God, will have a great reward [172] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 172)

If you contemplate the higher position prepared by Allah *the Almighty* for the believers, you will know that the misfortune that afflicted them in the battle of Uhud has reinforced belief in the spirits of the believers. That is why Allah *the Almighty* wanted not to overextend the period of grief upon them (the believers). Also, He *Glorified is He* did not want to overextend the period of happiness for the disbelievers who felt happy about the misfortune that afflicted the believers in their last battle. So, the situation was like this: *Al-mushrikun* (ones who associate partners with Allah in worship) were happy, while the (defeated) believers were sad. We have already explained that as long as they were Muslims, they had the right of Islam, but they were only punished in return for the mistake committed. That is why He *the Almighty* punished them with defeat in Uhud as a result of their disobedience. However, they are still the superior by virtue of the right of Islam. As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* destined their defeat in order to cultivate them, test them and check the veracity of their belief. So, He *the Almighty* did not overextend the period of grief on the believers. Also, He *Glorified is He* did not overextend the period of happiness for the disbelievers. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* then came and ordered his announcer to call upon people, 'None shall come out with us except those who attended fighting with us.'

Then, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* came out with a number of fighters that was not more than the number of believers who had already attended battle with Prophet. He *peace and blessings be upon him* did so in order for the disbelievers not say that Muslims received additional support. So, those who came out to fight were the ones who remained with the Messenger of Allah in the battle of Uhud, with the exception of the martyred and those whose serious wounds prevented them from fighting. Therefore, the

number of believing fighters then was even less than the number of those who attended the main battle. So, Allah *the Almighty* wants to show us that purification has produced its desired result.

Even though they (the believers) were in an unpleasant situation due to their defeat, they obeyed the order of the Messenger to come out to fight. Therefore, it seems that the call for coming out served as a means to rehabilitate the believers who had attended the battle so that they would not experience weakness, and the misfortune would not become humiliation chasing them all the time either. Rather, they must realise that the battle of Uhud had finished. Also, they must learn the lesson from this battle very well.

Once the announcer of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed the message of the Prophet to people to come out to fight, they all answered: No. No one was allowed to join the Muslim army except Jabir ibn 'Abdullah whose father who had been martyred in Uhud, ordered him to stay to take care of his seven sisters. Jabir explained the matter to the Messenger of Allah who allowed him to join the army.

As we explained before, Allah *the Almighty* wanted the misfortune that afflicted Muslims in the battle of Uhud to reinforce their belief, and since belief had been reinforced, they were well prepared to receive the Orders of Allah. That is why they answered the call of the Messenger of Allah in the blink of an eye and came out to Hamra' Al-Asad (a location eight miles away from Medina). Then, Allah *the Almighty* supported the Muslim army with those who cast fear in the hearts of the disbelievers. One of those soldiers sent by Allah *the Almighty* said to the army of the disbeliever, 'Muhammad has come out with a large army to fight against you.'

We notice here that Allah *the Almighty* uses the phrase 'Those [believers] who responded...', to refer to the difference between 'those believers who responded' and 'those who disobeyed the order of the Messenger of Allah' (the archers). He *the Almighty* says, 'Those [believers] who responded to Allah and the Messenger after injury had struck them.' (*Al-Imran*: 172)

This verse means that the believers responded to the order of the Messenger of Allah even though they were in pain and severely wounded. Even though

all of them suffered the pain and fatigue from fighting, they responded to Allah and His Messenger. The word al-qarh means pain or wound. He *the Almighty* says, '... after injury had struck them. For those who did good among them and feared Allah is a great reward.' (*Al-'Imran*: 172) The verse means that they did a good deed by their swift response, thus they deserved a great reward because they had already been punished for the disobedience they committed. Allah *the Almighty* then says,

الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ
إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ

Those whose faith only increased when people said, 'Fear your enemy: they have amassed a great army against you,' and who replied, 'God is enough for us: He is the best protector' [173] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 173)

The hypocrites did not suffice with deserting the Muslim army. They rather spread false rumours that the polytheists had recalled a new number of the disbelievers of Mecca to fight against the Muslims. They (the hypocrites) did so with the intention of casting fear in the hearts of the believers whose belief remained steadfast and did not budge. 'Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 173) When you find that Allah *the Almighty* using the word *an-naas* (people) in this context, you must know that those people are away from belief, so they will fight against ordinary people like them. It is true that in such a battle, those who will gain victory will be the ones who are more skilful and exert greater efforts. But in the case where believers fight against disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* provides believers with His Support.

Some people say, 'Satan may take the form of a big gathering to terrify the believers. We know that Satan belongs to the jinn who can see human beings whence humans cannot see them. Allah *the Almighty* gave them the ability to take any form they want. So, they can take the form of human beings, animals or whatever. But once they are represented in any form, they are governed under the laws of the form they are content with. So, if they take

the form of humans, the laws of humans will be applicable to them. That is to say that if you shoot them or stab them with a dagger, they will die. As a matter of fact, this is what keeps us safe from their terror. That is why we find that Satan appears for a brief moment and then disappears for fear that the person before him may be fully aware of the fact that the form he is in, governs him, thus that person may throttle him. For this reason, he fears man and does not appear except for brief moments.

In addition, we may interpret the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you...' (*Al-Imran*: 173) in light of the narration that some of the disbelievers spread rumours that Abu Sufyan had gathered his people once again (to fight against the Muslim army). The phrase *jama'u* (they gathered) indicates that the disbelievers recalled other fighters or that their gatherings had reorganised. Irrespective of such two meanings for this particular word, it is clear that the gatherings of the disbelievers went out in defeat because defeated armies do not flee from the battlefield in an organized way; rather, each soldier fled as far as possible. It is also true that the defeated gatherings may reorganise themselves once again or even call other fighters. We should take into account that the style of the verse may offer all these explanations.

'Those to whom the people said: Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them...' (*Al-Imran*: 173) In fact, such a saying (by the hypocrites) may even weaken believers, but they (the believers) did not pay attention to such sayings, thanks to the process of purification through which they had been. Therefore, it becomes clear that believers learnt the first lesson perfectly well; they learnt that disobedience to the Order of Allah, clearly manifested in the order of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, causes them weakness. They also recognised that the firm adherence to the orders of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* brings about the power of Muslims, and that is why they paid no attention at all to that threat and said, 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.' (*Al-Imran*: 173) This verse means that the believers paid no attention at all to the number of the disbelievers. Besides, they (the believers) understood that their belief in Allah and His Messenger entailed that they must fight against

the disbelievers' army so that Allah punished them by the hands of the believers. In reality, this is viewed as a lesson to all fighters; that is, when a fighter is in battle, Allah will make firm his feet if he is a true believer. This is clearly shown in the battle of Badr when Allah *the Almighty* told the Messenger that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was not the one who cast fear in the hearts of the disbelievers, but it was Allah *the Almighty* the One Who did that. (*al-Anfal*: 17)

It becomes crystal clear now that Muslims became fully aware of the mistake they committed, thus they were purified and their belief was reinforced. This matter is manifested in the fact that some people tried to frighten them, but they could not. The only reply from them was 'and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector; this clearly indicates that the Muslims were fully aware of the fact that it was the Power of Allah *the Almighty* that gave them victory. They also fully realised that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who supports them and protects them from all the troops of the enemy; He *Glorified is He* is the most excellent Protector. The word *Al-wakil* means that when one is unable to do a particular act, he entrusts someone else to do it on his behalf. So, when we entrust Allah *the Almighty* to do acts we are unable to do, it means that He *the Almighty* is the most excellent Disposer of affairs. Allah *Most Exalted* tells us about the result of the believers' reliance upon Him,

فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَّمْ يَمَسَّ لَهُمْ سُوءٌ
وَأَتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٧٤﴾

**returned with grace and bounty from God; no
harm befell them. They pursued God's good
pleasure. God's favour is great indeed [174]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 174)**

This verse indicates that He *the Almighty* gave believers victory by casting terror in the hearts of the disbelievers. The Muslims did not engage in fighting with the disbelievers. Allah *the Almighty* favoured believers by casting terror and fear in the hearts of their enemies. (*al-Anfal*: 12)

Allah *the Most High* then states His reward to the believers when they realised their mistake and entrusted their affairs to Him *the Almighty*. 'So they returned with favor from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 174)

All believers, who underwent such purification of Allah *the Almighty* must be fully aware of this experience. Also, they all must always pay attention to the experience gained from the battle of Uhud. In fact, it was one particular night that made a big difference; the group of believers spent that night in the Company of Allah before they came out to chase the army of disbelievers. Also, since they learnt the lesson of Uhud very well, they performed wonderful acts. That is because when they chased the disbelievers, they paid no attention at all to the psychological warfare waged against them by their enemies; on the contrary, they increased in faith and said, 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.'

So, they became unattached to their own selves, strength, power, and troops, and from everything else, but to say, 'Allah is the most Sufficient for us, and He is the best Guardian for those who are unable to achieve their aims.' Thus, the believers fully realised the most important matter; that is, all of them must remain in the Company of His Lord all the time. As a matter of fact, Companions of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his family members have used the lessons learnt through this experience to solve a lot of their problems.

In fact, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector' reminds us of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq, son of Imam Mohammad Al-Baaqir, son of Imam 'Ali Zayn Al-'Abidin. Imam Ja'far was one of the most knowledgeable scholars who are well-versed in the understanding of the Quran. Besides, he was one of the most skilful scholars in deducing its secrets. Imam Ja'far perfectly understood the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.' He expresses surprise at people who feel afraid of anything. As a matter of fact, man does not fear anything but what causes him discomfort and worry as well as what threatens his life and safety. This fear must have a particular reason. So, when a believer faces any fear, he must remember the saying of Allah *the Almighty*

'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.' That is because this statement benefited the entire Muslim army in the battle with the disbelievers. So, when the individual believer utters this statement, he regains his composure. His heart will harden as well, thus he will not flee in times of terror and fear.

Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq also drives our attention to this statement so that we resort to it in times of distress. He says, 'I am surprised at those people who do not resort to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* "Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector at times of fear."' The Imam is surprised at those people who do not have recourse to that particular statement in times of fear. He Allah *be pleased with him* then tells us the reason behind his surprise and says, 'Because Allah *the Almighty* followed it with His saying, "So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them..."' If you contemplate the statement of Ja'afar As-Sadiq, 'Because Allah *the Almighty* followed it with...', you will find that he read it with the eyes of a true believer. As a matter of fact, when the believer reads the Quran, he must take into account that he is hearing Allah *the Almighty* speaking to him. Imam Ja'afar said, "Because Allah *the Almighty* followed it with His saying, 'So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them.'" That is why Allah *the Almighty* instructs us to be very attentive, while listening to the recitation of the verses of the Quran (*al-A'raf*: 204).

So, when the Quran is being recited, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who is speaking to you, thus it is not right to ignore Him *Glorified is He*. Therefore, the wonder cure for fear is to say firmly, 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.' You are supposed to heartily say it, because in case you do so, Allah *the Almighty* will confer His Favour upon you and no evil will touch you. He *Glorified is He* says, 'So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them...' O Muslims! Consider this grace and bounty; they are from Allah. Allah may confer His Favour and Bounty upon a person, but he may realise these favours of Allah too late. So, Allah *the Almighty* explains that His Favour in this situation is not accompanied by any evil. This actually represents the true meaning of favour. So, if one understands the value of Favours from Allah too late, he is mistaken. He *the Almighty* says, 'So

they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them...' It was due to the valuable experience of Uhud that the believers followed the Pleasure of Allah.' In reality, the experiment had borne its fruits.

Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq then proceeds to prescribe the treatment for the fear and worry that may afflict the human soul, which is to say, Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector. Furthermore, he adds, I am surprised at the person who is afflicted by sorrow and does not hasten to read the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* uttered by Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* when he was in the stomach of the whale. (*al-Anbiya'*: 87)

The word 'sorrow' refers to that kind of worry afflicting a man's soul. As a matter of fact, the reasons for this worry are unknown and complex. Besides, it causes one's chest to tighten, and that is why one may say, 'My chest is tight; I am tired, but I do not know why.' This clearly means that there are no obvious reasons for such tightness in your chest; however, it may be the result of particular actions and events you do not remember at the moment. This is known as *ghamm* (sorrow). So, when man hastens to read the saying of Allah *the Almighty* uttered by Prophet Yunus *peace be upon him* (*al-Anbiya'*: 87), he is confessing his sins and saying, 'I was afflicted with this sorrow only because I deviated the sound approach.' Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq tells us that when one utters this statement, Allah *the Almighty* will surely respond to him and deliver him from sorrow and distress. (*al-Anbiya'*: 88)

It is known for certain that Prophet Yunus *peace be upon him* is the one who uttered this statement. In addition, when he *peace be upon him* said it, Allah *the Almighty* responded to him and delivered him from the sorrow that afflicted him.

However, answering the call of Yunus *peace be upon him* in this regard was not something just for him; rather, it pertains to all the believers who may say it. This means that Allah *the Almighty* opens the door widely to all the believers who utter this statement. Imam Ja'afar then added, I am really surprised at the person who is plotted against and he does not hasten to entrust all of his affairs to Allah *the Almighty* as clearly mentioned in the Quran. (*Ghafir*: 44) Imam Ja'afar continues, 'Whoever does so, Allah *the Almighty* will protect him for the evil of their schemes.'

The Arabic phrase *mukir bihi* (he is plotted against) means that a conspiracy has been secretly organised against him. That is because *Al-makru* (evil plotting) means that your enemy is plotting an evil act against you, while you are supporting the truth. In reality, this act is viewed as an evil plotted against uprightness. It goes without saying that this kind of plotting is nothing but evil. Nevertheless, there is another kind of plotting, which is the good one. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells that evil scheming will engulf none but its authors. (*Fatir*: 43)

Therefore, it becomes clear now that there is another kind of scheming which is not evil. The good scheming is achieved when an upright person secretly makes a plot against an evildoer. As a matter of fact, this is known as 'the good scheming,' for it implies fighting against evil. So, Allah *the Almighty* explained the matter to us, 'O Muslims! Be aware of that point, for if they waved conspiracies and plots against all mankind, they cannot do so against Allah *the Almighty* Who is All Knowing and the Creator'. In reality, if Allah plots against them, they will never be able to uncover His Plotting, for He *Glorified is He* is the best of planners. So, all of their plots are surely known to Allah *the Almighty* thus all are weak. As for the genuine plotting, there is no particular way to discover it.

Let us continue with the opinion of Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq on the treatment of the human soul. He Allah *be pleased with him* continues, 'I am surprised at the person who wants to acquire the adornment of this worldly life and does not hasten to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in (*al-Kahf*: 39).

Whoever says this statement, Allah *the Almighty* will provide him with great provision as clearly shown in the story of the 'owner of the garden.' (*al-Kahf*: 39-40) In reality, Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq Allah *be pleased with him* deduced that particular point from the story of the 'owner of the garden' (*al-Kahf*: 39-40).


As a matter of fact, when one says, 'It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save in Allah,' he will easily obtain the adornments of this worldly life because he has already detached himself from his own power, his strength and means and entrusted his affairs to Allah *the Almighty* Who is able to do anything.

So, the different trials that may afflict the human soul include fear, worry, evil scheming, and seeking the adornment of this worldly life, all of which have cures. Concerning our particular cure here, it has to do with the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector. So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them, and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.’

‘Favour’ means that Allah *the Almighty* will confer His Favour according to your work, whereas ‘grace/bounty’ means that He *the Almighty* will increase His Favour. As a matter of fact, no evil touched the believers who chased the fighters of Quraysh. Hence, those believers acquired all what Allah *the Almighty* had granted them including His Favour, Grace and Pleasure. In truth, those believers became fully aware of the lesson they learnt (from the battle of Uhud), thus He *the Almighty* describes them, ‘and they followed the pleasure of Allah; and Allah is the Lord of mighty grace.’

The hypocrites attempted to prevent the believers from meeting the disbelievers of Quraysh, but Allah *the Almighty* wanted to uncover their conspiracy and reveal the reasons behind their position. That is why Allah *the Almighty* told the believers about what the hypocrites said to them, ‘... Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them...’ He *the Almighty* then tells the believers with the real position of the hypocrites, saying, ‘It is only the Shaitan that causes you to fear from his friends...’.

He *the Almighty* tells the believers about the actual situation of the hypocrites, saying,


 إِنَّمَا ذَلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَآءَهُ، فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُوا إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ

**It is Satan who urges you to fear his followers; do not fear them, but fear Me, if you are true believers [175]
(The Quran, Al-'Imran: 175)**

This verse may mean that it is the call of Satan that causes you to fear from his allies. In reality, Satan may do so, while taking the form of a human being. Satan may also do so to a person who, in turn, does the same to other people.

When we read the verses of the Quran very carefully, we can certainly understand their meanings correctly. So, who are the allies of Satan? In this context, the allies of Satan may be either the disbelievers of Quraysh or the hypocrites, or even both of them. 'The allies of Satan are those who support his ideas. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that it was only Satan who said, 'Surely men have gathered against you, therefore fear them...', but this Satan frightens none but his allies. From the first while, we understand that the context supposes that Satan was to frighten his enemies and not his allies. But we are here observing that Satan sows dissensions by causing them to be afraid, so the question to be asked is: who are those to be frightened and who causes them to fear? By reason, Satan is supposed to cause his enemies to fear.

As a matter of fact, in our daily lives we say, 'I caused someone to fear someone else.' Thus, Satan tries to take control over the believers and to cause them to fear his allies from the disbelievers and hypocrites. In Arabic, we understand that prepositions may be omitted from certain sentences, while the meaning remains the same. This is clearly shown in the Quran.

In the light of this rule of the Arabic grammar, we may understand the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'It is only the Satan that causes you to fear from his friends' to mean that Satan causes you to frighten his allies and this meaning is supported by the mode of recitation adopted by Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud, both recited this particular verse as 'It is only the Satan that causes you to frighten his friends.' But Allah *the Almighty* instructs the believers not to fear them, saying, '... But do not fear them.'

This clearly means that Satan wants to cause the believers to fear his allies (the hypocrites and disbelievers). Some other exegetes of the Quran interpret this part of the verse... *yukhawwifu awliyaahu*... or '... frightens his allies...' (*Al-'Imran*: 175) as meaning that Satan frightens his allies so that they would not take part in fighting, thus he told them that they would be killed in case they came out to fight against the believers, but this meaning is not correct because if it applied to the hypocrites who did not come out to fight with the Muslims, then how could it apply to the polytheists who had already come out to fight against the believers?! Along the same lines, we understand from the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... but do not fear them, and fear Me if you are

believers...' (*Al-Imran*: 175) that the allies of Satan are not the ones who are afraid, but they are the ones who cause others to fear. 'It is only Satan that causes you to fear from his friends, but do not fear them, and fear Me if you are believers.' (*Al-Imran*: 175)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* asks the believers to draw the following comparison: Should they fear the allies of Satan? Or must they fear Allah *the Almighty*? It goes without saying that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who must be feared because He *Glorified is He* is the One Who is able to defeat the allies of Satan. He *the Almighty* then says,

وَلَا يَحْزَنُكَ الَّذِينَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَنِ يُصْرُقُوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا
يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ إِلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حَظًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

[Prophet], do not be grieved by those who are quick to disbelieve. They will not harm God in the least; it is God's will that they will have no share in the Hereafter – a terrible torment awaits them [176] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 176)

In the first battle between the believers and the disbelievers (the battle of Badr), the hypocrites were concealed and hidden. But when it was the battle of Uhud, the first sign of their deceit appeared, thus they were nearer to disbelief than belief. However, after that they hastened to disbelief as if there was someone lashing them with a whip to do so.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* defines the parties of the battle, or the forces of the battle, or the battlefield, or the soldiers of the battle, thus He *the Almighty* instructs His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief.' We should notice that He *Glorified is He* did not say, 'They cannot harm you at all' because the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and the companions were not a real part in the conflict; rather, the enmity of the disbelievers was against Allah *the Almighty* and that is why He *Glorified is He* says, '... Indeed, they will never harm Allah at all.' This indicates that the battle of disbelievers was with Allah *the Almighty* and not with the believers. Since the battle was with Allah

the Almighty the believers were His Soldiers and the means with which He *the Almighty* chose to defeat the disbelievers.

This meaning is clearly shown in another verse of the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* orders the believers to fight against the disbelievers, and He *the Almighty* will punish them by the hands of believers, disgrace them, give believers victory over them and heal the hearts of the believing people. (*at-Tawba*: 14)

So, if the battle was between the disbelievers and believers, He *the Almighty* would have said: 'And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will never harm you at all.' But the case is not like that. As a matter of fact, both disbelievers and hypocrites wanted to enter into a battle with Allah *the Almighty* in spite of the fact that there is no power that is able to do so. That is why Allah *the Almighty* provides the believers with more assurance so that they would be more steadfast in their belief. It is taken for granted that all humans—be they believers or disbelievers—are similar to each other in terms of creation. In addition, some of the believers may deviate from the way for a, while, thus when the battle is between humans fighting against each other, one of the two parties may gain victory by virtue of its power.

In order to give further assurance, He *the Almighty* took the battle against disbelief into another level. He *the Almighty* obviously states that He is the One Who stands against the disbelievers. But the most important thing in this regard is that believers must be in the Company of Allah *the Almighty*. The Messenger was saddened that some people hastened into disbelief. Thus, did not the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* know that his own responsibility is to convey the Message of Allah?! Of course, he *peace and blessings be upon him* knew that for certain, yet he was keen to make all people believe so that they could feel the sweetness of belief. In reality, it was this keenness that made him *peace and blessings be upon him* feel sad. That is to say that when he *peace and blessings be upon him* saw a person who did not believe, he wished that particular person believed so that he would taste the sweetness of belief. In truth, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was kind and merciful to the believers, and even to all humanity. Allah *the Almighty*

tells this fact in the Quran; He *Glorified is He* tells that the Messenger of Allah was not sent but as a mercy to mankind. This is proved by the fact that when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked to choose either to pardon the people of Mecca or to order the angel of mountains to destroy them, he chose to pardon them. It was narrated that Jibril (Gabriel) called upon the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Indeed, Allah *the Exalted* heard what your people said to you and the response they made to you. And He has sent you the angel in charge of the mountains to order him to do to them what you wish.' The Messenger of Allah then said, '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 Allah 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 Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "No, but I hope that Allah will bring out of their offspring people who worship Allah alone with no associates."

As a matter of fact, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was keen not only on the disbelievers of his time, but on the next generation as well. In fact, Allah *the Almighty* fulfilled the wish of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* because it was from the progeny of those disbelievers that Islam was supported with heroes, brave soldiers, callers to Allah and martyrs. As such, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, as shown clearly in the verses of the Quran, felt sadness when there were some people who did not taste the sweetness of belief. Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran: 'Then maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement...' (*al-Kahf*: 6).

He *the Almighty* then affirms this fact in another position in the Quran where He says: 'Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe. If We please, We should send down upon them a sign from the heaven so that their necks would remain humbled...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4).

But He *the Almighty* does not want their necks; rather, He *Glorified is He* wants that hearts came freely to Him out of love. As a matter of fact, He

Glorified is He is fully able to create human beings in such a way that forces them to obey Him *the Almighty* as it is the case with the angels. We know for certain that all creatures glorify His Praise. Therefore, the Quran clearly shows that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was very keen on people's belief so that all of them would taste the sweetness of meeting their Lord *the Almighty* following the methodology of Allah and following such laws that would make them happy and satisfy all their faculties. But when things turned out contrary to what the Messenger of Allah liked, Allah *the Almighty* ordered him not to feel sadness, 'And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief.'

This indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* wants to convey the following message to mankind, 'O people! Out of the Messenger's great love for you, he is saddened by your disobedience and thus I told him not to grieve.' Undoubtedly, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is merciful to the entire *ummah* as shown in that particular verse of the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that Muhammad was not sent but a mercy to mankind. (*al-Anbiya'*: 107)

It is sufficient here to consider his position on the Day of Resurrection when every *ummah* will go to seek the intercession of its own Prophet or Messenger, but they will not help. Afterwards, all of them will come to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* who Allah *the Almighty* will honour by accepting his intercession to Him *the Almighty* to hasten judging people's deeds and holding them accountable for them. As a matter of fact, this (intercession) is a mercy to all mankind because during that time people will wish the situation to be over even if they are to be thrown in the fire.

We have already explained that Allah *the Almighty* knows for certain how His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* loves his *ummah*, and how he is merciful to his followers, thus Allah *the Almighty* wants to assure him that He *Glorified is He* will never expose the followers of Islam to anything that displeases Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. At that point, a very important Hadith may be quoted. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* recited the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of Ibrahim, 'My Lord, indeed

they have led astray many among the people. So whoever follows me - then he is of me; and whoever disobeys me—indeed, You are [yet] Forgiving and Merciful.’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* then recited the saying of Allah on ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, ‘If You should punish them—indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them indeed, it is You who is *the Exalted* in Might, the Wise.’ Then he raised up his hands and said, ‘O Allah! My *ummah*, my *ummah*,’ and wept; Allah *the Exalted* said, ‘O Jibril (Gabriel)! Go to Muhammad and ask him: “What makes you weep?” So Jibril came to him and asked him (the reason of his weeping), and the Messenger of Allah informed him what he had said (though Allah knew it well). Upon this Allah said, ‘Jibril, go to Muhammad and say, “Verily, We will please you with regard to your *ummah* and will never displease you.”’

There is yet another situation for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, which obviously indicates his infinite mercy towards his followers. After the revelation had come back to him *peace and blessings be upon him* at the very beginning of the mission, Allah *the Almighty* sent down the following verse, ‘And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.’

Concerning this verse, Imam 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* is narrated to have said to the people of Iraq, ‘You say that the most important verse in the Book of Allah is “Say, ‘O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful.”’ They said, ‘Indeed we do.’ The Imam then replied, ‘But we—the members of the family of the Prophet—believe that the most important verse in the Book of Allah is His saying, “And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.”’ Hence, it is narrated that when this verse was sent down, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘In that case, I will not be satisfied, while any of my *ummah* is in the fire’.

Along the same line, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to have said, ‘There is, for every apostle, a prayer which is granted, but every prophet showed haste in his prayer. I have, however, reserved my prayer for the intercession of my *ummah* on the Day of Resurrection, and it would be granted, if Allah so willed, in case of everyone amongst my *ummah*

provided he dies without associating anything with Allah.'⁽¹⁾ Now we can see how the members of the *ummah* of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* were at the forefront of his sentiments.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief' is a clarification from Allah *the Almighty* to His Messenger; he *peace and blessings be upon him* performed his role properly, and he was not to be blamed for the disbelievers' haste into disbelief. He *the Almighty* then adds, '... Indeed, they will never harm Allah at all.' We should notice that He *the Almighty* did not say, 'They will not harm you (O Muhammad), nor will they harm the believers; rather, He *Glorified is He* declared that the war of disbelief is with Him *the Almighty* and the All-Omnipotent. By this statement, He *the Almighty* wants to reassure the believers.

In addition, He *the Almighty* does not want to give any share in the Hereafter to those who hasten into disbelief, thus He *the Almighty* says, '...Allah intends that He should give them no share in the Hereafter, and for them is a great punishment.' (*Al-'Imran*: 176) In truth, since this is the Will of Allah *the Almighty* can those who hasten into disbelief prevent the Will of their Lord?! No, they cannot.

Indeed, He *the Almighty* wants His *Sunnah* to reach them (the disbelievers), and it is known for certain that He *Glorified is He* punishes whoever disobeys His *Sunnah* because He *Glorified is He* commanded *Al-mukallafin* (people obligated by law to discharge a legal duty) to apply the *Sunnah* He legislated for them.

In Arabic grammar, we should differentiate between *lam al-'aqibat* (an Arabic preposition) which is followed by a result different from that intended by man, and *lam al-iradat wa al-t'alil* (an Arabic preposition) which is followed by a result that is in line with that intended by man. We can give the following example for the latter when we say: 'The student studied his lessons to succeed.' This preposition is rendered by "to" in this example where the main reason behind the process of studying is to achieve success. Concerning the first kind of *lam*, which is *lam al-'aqibat*, we can offer the

(1) [*Muslim, Sahih*]

following example of a father who says to his son, 'I have pampered you, so you failed in your final exam.' This preposition is rendered by 'so' in this example. Hence the uses of those kinds of *lam* are totally different.

Did the father pamper his son so that he failed? No, this did not happen. But the result of his son's exam was opposite to his own will because of a greater power. For further clarification note when Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran, '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)

We must pay attention to the Order of Allah *the Almighty* to the mother of Moses to cast him into the river. If an ordinary man said to a mother: 'If you fear for your son, throw him into the sea,' she would have never believed him. But the mother of Moses realised that what she received was a revelation from Allah, which could not be interrupted by Satan or any human thoughts. Therefore, the Inspiration of Allah is crystal clear in the verse where Allah tells explicitly that He *Glorified is He* inspired her. Since it was Allah *the Almighty* Who inspired her, no satanic incitement could come through, and that was why she carried out His *the Almighty* Order. Then He *the Almighty* assured her and asked her not to fear or grieve, for He *the Almighty* would give him back to her and make him from the Messengers.

Thus, He *Glorified is He* drives the attention of the mother of Moses that He would give him back to her, not because she loved him very much, but because He *the Almighty* would assign him to a particular mission. Speaking about the act of inspiration to the mother of Moses, He *the Almighty* says in another verse in the Quran, 'Saying: Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him, and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes...' (Ta Ha: 38-39).

Here, He *the Almighty* describes the moment when she fulfilled the task that she had been inspired to do. So, this description is different from the previous one which described the preparation for the task. In truth, when Allah *the Almighty* asked her to cast him into the river, it gave indication of the

stage of preparation. Then, when it was the time to carry out the mission, He *Glorified is He* informed Moses of the inspiration He gave to his mother. This is a series of events that show that the action had taken place at the time when the soldiers of Pharaoh were taking away the children of the Israelites to kill them. He *the Almighty* wants to show us that He has countless soldiers, to the extent that the inanimate items understood the divine order and protected Moses. So, the word *iqdhifihi* (cast him) indicates that the matter took place swiftly. Moreover, when the river received the Order from Allah to throw Moses to the bank, it had to carry out the Order. Therefore, these are divine Commands issued to a creature that never disobeys Allah.

But how did Allah issue His Order to His enemy? Indeed, He *Glorified is He* casts them in the mind of Pharaoh to carry out His Will. So, the wife of Pharaoh asked him not to kill him because he would be a refreshment of the eye to both of them, or they could even take him as a son. (*al-Qasas*: 9) Hence, Allah's Command came in the form of a notion, and the family of Pharaoh took the child in, not in order to become the refreshment of the eye to the wife of Pharaoh, but to execute something willed by Allah.

When they took him in, did they think that Moses would be an enemy to them or a source of joy?! Here, *lam al-'aqibah* which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'to be an enemy and grief for them.' As a matter of fact, man may want something, but the Ultimate Will of Allah wants something else.

When a person plans to do something for a certain purpose, the Unchallenged Power of Allah *the Almighty* may want it for another purpose, to the effect that He *the Almighty* may be the One Who inspired him to do that particular act. The reason why the family of Pharaoh took the child in is the best example for this. Pharaoh wanted the boy to be a refreshment of his eye, but Allah *the Almighty* wanted him to be the enemy of Pharaoh. This example shows us the big difference between *lam al-'aqibah* and *lam al-i'radah wa al-ta'lil*. When we see events like these, we cannot say: 'This is the Will of Allah;' rather, we should say: 'The result of their actions was not what they had planned for.' Allah *the Almighty* then says,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرُوا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٧﴾

**Those who sell their faith for disbelief will not harm
God in any way; agonizing torment awaits them [177]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 177)**

Indeed, they could not harm the Messenger and his companions because they were in Allah's Company, and nor could they harm Allah *the Almighty*. This verse is viewed as assurance to the believers because Allah *the Almighty* tells them, 'O you who faithfully believe in Me and trust in Muhammad! The battle with disbelief is not between the believers and the disbelievers; rather, it is a battle between your Lord and those disbelievers.' Undoubtedly, this verse provides the believers with further assurance.

'Indeed, those who purchase disbelief [in exchange] for faith..., ' the word *Ishtiraa*' (purchase) indicates the existence of a transaction which, in turn, entails the existence of a 'price' and a 'commodity'. The 'price' here is the belief, as indicated by the Arabic preposition '*bi*' which has to do with the item left, whereas 'the commodity' here refers to disbelief, for it refers to what is to be taken. So, did they buy disbelief in return for belief? And does this mean that they were previously believers? Yes, they were previously believers, but their belief was that old one upon which Allah *the Almighty* created them in the very beginning, before they came to life.

In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says that He *Glorified is He* took from the children of Adam—from their loins—their descendants and made them testify of themselves that Allah is their Lord (*al-A'raf*: 172).

We can also say that by virtue of the human soul's ability to choose, they (the disbelievers) preferred disbelief to belief. That is to say that they took disbelief instead of belief. This replacement of belief for disbelief is crystal clear because the preposition *bi*, as I said before, is followed by the item to be left. They had already abandoned the intrinsic belief upon which they were created, and which is shown clearly in the Hadith of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* where he states, 'Every child is born with a true faith (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone); his parents then make him a Jew, or a Christian or a Zoroastrian.'

They slunk away from belief and paid it as a price for disbelief. So, when one of them embraced disbelief, he has taken it in place of belief, and yet they cannot harm Allah at all. Moreover, He *the Almighty* prepared for them a painful punishment. But why did He do so? Because if we suppose that the entire world became believers, this would still not benefit Allah *the Almighty* in anyway.

It is narrated in a Qudsi Hadith that Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O My servants, I have forbidden oppression for Myself and have made it forbidden amongst you, so do not oppress one another. O My servants, all of you are astray except for those I have guided, so seek guidance of Me and I shall guide you, O My servants, all of you are hungry except for those I have fed, so seek food of Me and I shall feed you. O My servants, all of you are naked except for those I have clothed, so seek clothing of Me and I shall clothe you. O My servants, you sin by night and by day, and I forgive all sins, so seek forgiveness of Me and I shall forgive you. O My servants, you will not attain harming Me so as to harm Me, and will not attain benefitting Me so as to benefit Me. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as pious as the most pious heart of any one man of you, that would not increase My kingdom in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as wicked as the most wicked heart of any one man of you, that would not decrease My kingdom in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to rise up in one place and make a request of Me, and were I to give everyone what he requested, that would not decrease what I have, any more that a needle decreases the sea if put into it. O My servants, it is but your deeds that I reckon up for you and then recompense you for, so let him who finds good, praise Allah, and let him who finds other than that, blame no one but himself.'

Therefore, people's belief in Allah will never benefit Allah at all, nor does their disbelief harm Him *the Almighty* at all. That is because man has come into existence in this world and he does not add anything new to it. That is to say that man is the creation of Allah, whom Allah created from the elements, existed in His Universe. The Hadith then continues to indicate that Allah *the Almighty* needs no time at all to do whatever He wants; rather, He *the Almighty* says to anything, "'Be!" and it is.'

The word 'Be' itself is the shortest form of commands – His commandments are too subtle and swift to be fully realised by any creature. But He *the Almighty* gives us the simplest form so that we, humans, can understand the matter. Hence, those who purchase disbelief in exchange for belief will never harm Allah *the Almighty* at all. In addition, He *the Almighty* prepared for them a painful punishment.

So, they will not be secure and safe from the punishment; rather, a painful punishment is prepared for them.

We sometimes notice that Allah *the Almighty* describes the abode of the disbelievers as having painful punishment; He *the Almighty* other times describes it as having great punishment. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* describes it as having humiliating punishment; why so? That is because punishment is of various kinds; even though the punishment may be very painful, the person being tortured may show patience for it; he feels awful pain, but they do not show it. At that point, the following poem may be quoted,

My endurance before those who hurt me shows them that I waver not before the misfortunes of fate! Endurance is a kind of resistance to reality. That is why Allah *the Almighty* tells us next that such people will have a humiliating punishment; that is, they will be afflicted by a humiliating and painful punishment, and none of them will be able to endure it. As a matter of fact, this kind of punishment does not stop at the limits of ordinary pain; it is rather, a great punishment in terms of degree and intensity. In addition, it is painful in terms of its nature, and is humiliating because it humiliates the human soul and removes its arrogance. So, when we see Allah *the Almighty* describing the abode of the disbelievers as having 'painful punishment,' 'great punishment' and 'humiliating punishment', it shows clearly that each of them indicates a different meaning.

Now, I would like to stop to shed more light on *lam al-'aqibah* because many people try to pose problems concerning it. As a matter of fact, those criticising the verses of the Quran search for these so-called weak points in the Quran, according to their own thinking. In truth, He *the Almighty* tells us that the disbelievers will ask Him to get them out of the fire so to obey Him all the time, but He *Glorified is He* will reject their request telling them that

they had mocked the believers in the worldly life, but the believers are now in Paradise, while they are suffering great punishment. (*al-Mu'minun*: 107-110)

The disbelievers occupied themselves with mocking the believers; they used to do that either by scorning, mocking or even accusing them of backwardness or any different form of contempt, to the extent that they forgot the topic of belief. But what caused them to forget the Remembrance of Allah? Indeed, what caused them to forget was that they occupied themselves with mocking the people of belief all the time. The disbelievers spent all their time mocking the people of belief to the extent that they forgot that this universe has a Creator. Actually, this is what we call 'the consequence of actions'; it has nothing to do with the will or intention, for they did not mainly want to forget the Remembrance of Allah, but this happened eventually.

Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* will punish those disbelievers severely, greatly and humiliatingly. In truth, each description for these punishments in this context has been used to indicate a particular meaning; that is, they are prepared to include all different kinds of punishment. So, whoever suffers now with a light punishment will have a severe one, and so will the person who shows patience to the great punishment; he will be tortured with a humiliating punishment. Allah *the Almighty* then says,

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُؤَمِّلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِّأَنفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا
نُؤَمِّلِي لَهُمْ لِيُزَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿١٧٨﴾

The disbelievers should not think that it is better for them that We give them more time: when We give them more time they become more sinful – a shameful torment awaits them [178] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 178)

When we read the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'And let not those who disbelieve ever think,' we at once realise that it indicates interdiction; but from what does Allah *the Almighty* prohibit the disbelievers? As a matter of fact, when a disbeliever survives at a battle with believers, he thinks that Allah *the Almighty* has left him because it is good for him. That is because he views his life as the most important thing in this world. Thus, as long as he is

safe, this is the ultimate blessing according to him. But we say to such disbeliever that one's age is a particular period of time, and time encompasses all events. So, we cannot glorify time in itself, but rather, because of the events that take place within it; if the event to take place in a certain time is good, then that time will be good; but if the event to take place in a certain time is evil, then that time is evil. Since they are disbelievers, all of their actions and works are necessarily evil, not good, because they do not abide by the Guidance of Allah *the Almighty*. They may even be following a way which is the complete opposite of the Way of Allah. So, this is actually nothing but evil. Thus, He *the Almighty* does not extend their time to do them good; rather, He *Glorified is He* extends their time for them because, since they are disbelievers, they occupied their time with evil actions which are against His Guidance. In truth, every evil act has a defined punishment and torture. So, it becomes clear now that prolonging their life is nothing but bad for them.

When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And let not those who disbelieve ever think that [because] We extend their time [of enjoyment] it is better for them,' we notice that the verb *yahsabanna* (think) is in the present tense, and its past form is *hasiba* (thought). In truth, the past form was used in another position in the Quran, where Allah *the Almighty* wonders about those people who though their utterance of belief would make them safe from tests. (*al-'Ankabut*: 2)

So, *hasiba* is the past form of the verb, while *yahsabu* is the present form. The same verb, with different vowels (*hasaba/yahsibu*), means to count the numbers.

As for the forms *hasiba/yahsabu*, they indicate the meaning of 'thinking', which, as we know, is a matter of conjecture. So, Allah *the Almighty* tells them that they were wrong when they thought that the continuation of their life was something good for them. As a matter of fact, their thinking was nothing but a matter of conjecture and guessing which do not lead to any certainty.

True is the fact that life is calculated in years. Moreover, it is to be seen in the light of actions; thus one's life cannot be judged as good or bad without looking at his actions. That is why we say: 'Life is judged as good or bad based on the actions done by the person. As for the actions done by a disbeliever, they are undoubtedly judged evil, even if he does what apparently seems to be

good because he originally does these actions with the intention of opposing the Guidance of Allah.' So, we use the forms *hasaba/yahsibu* to indicate the counting of numbers; the form *yahsibu* is in the present tense to give the meaning of 'thinking', and *yahsabu* gives the meaning of 'to think.'

Allah *the Almighty* says: "... *Innama numli lahum...*," which means: "We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins." So the question to be asked here is: what is meant by *numli*? It means to prolong time. That is why we find that Ibrahim (Abraham)'s father, as mentioned in the Quran, ordered him to leave him for a prolonged period of time. (*Maryam*: 46)

The father of Abraham, as shown clearly in this particular verse, orders him to leave him for a long period of time. This is the true and profound meaning of this verse of the Quran. So, this particular verse of *Al-'Imran* means that prolonging the periods of time of those disbelievers who were not killed in the battle with the believers is not something good for them, and nor should they think it is good for them. That is because Allah *the Almighty* does so with them 'so that they may increase in sin, and for them is a humiliating punishment.'

So, be careful, O believers, not to say that Allah has destined this in order to punish them. This is not right. That is because He *the Almighty* had laid down laws by means of which the affairs of the universe are run and these laws are undoubtedly to be applied upon those who do not abide by His Guidance. Whoever commits evil, Allah will punish him in return. Therefore, the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'We only extend it for them so that they may increase in sin...' means that they, the disbelievers, commit sins and evil all the time.

The word *muhin* in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and for them is a humiliating punishment' is an entirely appropriate description for that kind of punishment. That is because the disbeliever, after the battle is over *may* feel proud and arrogant that no one beheaded him. So, the severe punishment in that particular case may not be sufficient because he may show endurance and patience with it. But when it is humiliating, this will be the most appropriate punishment for this situation. The One Who destined this is Allah *the Almighty* Who is fully aware of what fits every situation. Then, Allah says,

مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّى يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ
الطَّيِّبِ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ
يَشَاءُ فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٧٩﴾

Nor was it God's aim to leave you as you were, with no separation between the bad and the good. God would not show you [people] what is hidden; God chooses as His messengers whoever He will. So believe in God and His messengers: if you believe and stay mindful of God, you will have a great reward [179] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 179)

Upon hearing the saying of Allah *ma kan*, this clearly indicates that there is some sort of negation and denial; that is, there are some who deny this matter.

It is known that before the battle of Uhud, the hypocrites were intermingled with the believers. So, would Allah *the Almighty* leave the situation as such without revealing the hypocrites' real positions in terms of faith? No, He *the Almighty* did not accept this so that the hypocrites would no longer be able to cause harm to the believers. So, events must have come to reveal them. Hence, the battle of Uhud was meant to test those so-called believers, in order to separate those who are good from those who are evil, as shown clearly in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* where He *Glorified is He* states that the scum will pass away as a worthless thing, while that which benefits people will remain in the earth. (*ar-Ra'd*: 17) So, the occurrence of the battle of Uhud was essential.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'On no account will Allah leave the believers....,' it means that He *Glorified is He* would in no way leave the believers in the condition they were in until He exposed the hypocrites for one reason or another, and so knowing about the hypocrites will not be confined only to Prophet Muhammad through the knowledge conveyed to him by Allah *the Almighty*. If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, through the knowledge conveyed to him by Allah *the Almighty* informed the believers about the hypocrites, without the latter being actually tested, this experience would be viewed as a theoretical identification of hypocrisy from one direction. That is why Allah *the Almighty* wanted to expose the hypocrites by means of a real test. Therefore, they (the hypocrites) will not be able to

object when they are called hypocrites. Also, their description of hypocrisy will not be a matter of telling a lie, thus the evidence for their hypocrisy will be concrete and convincing.

The hypocrites used to hasten to attend the first rows of the congregational prayers; they wanted to completely hide and conceal the matter of their hypocrisy, thus they were keen on performing such acts firmly adhered to by the believers. They (the hypocrites) were fully aware of the fact that the true believers hastened to attend the first rows of the congregational prayers, so they wanted to act like them. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that if He *Glorified is He* willed, He would make him recognise them by their marks and by the tone of their speech. (*Muhammad*: 30) This means that if you think of their speech very carefully, you will be able to recognise them because they are merely hypocrites like all other hypocrites in the world. For example, when it is the time of the noon prayer, the true believer will say: 'Let us go pray', but the hypocrite will mock him and say: 'You can carry me on your wings to paradise on the Day of Resurrection!' As a matter of fact, such sentence refers to what Allah describes as *lahn Al-qawl* (or the tone of their speech). Another example is when a believer joins a gathering where there is a hypocrite, the latter will greet him with the following statement 'How are you doing Mr Sheikh?' This obviously means that he (the hypocrite) does not feel comfort with the existence of the believer, so he mocks him.

Such an act also falls under the category of the tone of the speech through which the affairs of the hypocrites are exposed. In reality, when the true and intelligent believer upon whom Allah *the Almighty* bestowed His Favour, undergoes such acts, his belief increased, and these acts served as a spur for him. That is because the true believer follows the Way and Guidance of Allah *the Almighty* thus he is able to control himself, whereas the hypocrite is unable to do so, and that is why he wants to misguide the believer to follow his path of hypocrisy. Hence, the believer must be fully aware of the fact that he will face such hypocrites who want to turn him back to disbelief; he will be confronted with those people who will mock him. Allah *the Almighty* tells us about this in the Quran when He *Glorified is He* talks about the guilty people

who laugh and wink at the true believers whenever the latter pass by them. (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-33)

The hypocrite or the disbeliever may say his family: 'Today, I saw a Sheikh, or clergyman, or religiously committed man and I mocked him and humiliated him.' By this, he wants to mock the believers among his corrupt followers, but Allah *the Almighty* exposes their hypocrisy to us in the Quran so that the believers will be assured and relieved from all the disasters afflicting them caused by the corrupt and the hypocrites.

In this regard, He *the Almighty* tells us that the believers, who will be observing, sitting on adorned couches, will laugh at the disbelievers on the Day of Resurrection. He *the Almighty* then tells us clearly that they (the disbelievers) truly deserve this punishment for the acts they used to do in the worldly life. (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-36) So, He *the Almighty* will ask the believers on the Day of Resurrection, 'Have We adequately requited the disbelievers and hypocrites who mocked you in the worldly life?' The believer will then reply: 'Yes, O Lord of the Worlds, they have been requited and rewarded for their deeds fairly and equitably.' The hypocrites' and the disbelievers' sarcasm will undoubtedly come to an end within this worldly life, but that sarcasm of the Hereafter will never come to an end.

When we, the believers, think of the matter very carefully, we will realise that we are the prosperous, if Allah so wills. If they hypocrites were allowed to mix with the believers, while the believers knew nothing about them, remedy would be difficult. That is why Allah *the Almighty* tells Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that if He *the Almighty* willed, He would make him recognise them by their marks and by the tone of their speech. (*Muhammad*: 30)

Allah *the Almighty* did not stop at this point; rather, He *Glorified is He* revealed the reality of the hypocrites in a practical way so that none of them would say: 'I am not a hypocrite.' When Allah reveals and exposes the affairs of the hypocrites with a tangible, practical and ignominious event that clearly shows his hypocrisy, thus he is to be stigmatised as a hypocrite. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* will never leave those hypocrites, who spend their life practising the act of hypocrisy, relying on the fact that they apparently

practice the rituals of Islam, without exposing their affairs. He *Glorified is He* will cause their hypocrisy to be exposed for a reason or another. As a consequence, the believers will recognise them and know their essence. That is because He *the Almighty* is the One Who says: 'On no account will Allah leave the believers in the condition which you are in until He separates the evil from the good...'

The word *yazhhar* means 'to leave' or 'to abandon.' Grammarians are fully aware of the fact that the following two verbs *yazhharu* and *yada 'u* are never used by the Arabs in the past simple tense, thus they are used to indicate the present tense all the time.

In truth, Allah *the Almighty* would never leave the hypocrites intermingled and intermixed with the believers without revealing their affairs to the believers, and that is why He *the Almighty* separated those who are good from those who are evil.

So, He *Glorified is He* did not suffice with informing Prophet Muhammad about the affairs of those corrupt people; rather, He *the Almighty* exposed them with tangible evidence. Thus, He *the Almighty* says: '... nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen...' This means that if He *the Almighty* made the believers acquainted with the unseen so that they could recognize the hypocrites, the latter would have concealed their affairs from them. That is why He *the Almighty* wanted to separate the good from the evil based on tangible evidence and situations. As such, the hypocrite will himself admit his hypocrisy.

'... nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His apostles whom He pleases....' He *the Almighty* chooses whomever He will from among His Messengers to make him/them acquainted with some of the unseen so that the Messengers' trust in Allah increases due to the fact that He *the Almighty* never leaves them. This means that He *the Almighty* told Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the marks of the hypocrites so that he would be fully assured that He *the Almighty* has never abandoned him.

Allah's Mercy decrees that the unseen will never be revealed to all the believers because this may render corrupt the affairs of so many laws in the universe. So, if we imagine that Allah *the Almighty* informed man about the unseen matters of his life, including one thousand happy events and just one

which is tragic, his continuous thinking of this one tragic event, which may occur twenty years later, will corrupt his happiness.

Also, if a person wants to be acquainted with the unseen matters of a particular person, will he be content with allowing others to know about his unseen? So, why do you want to be acquainted with the unseen matters of other people? Will any of us feel content when others know about his unseen? The answer is no. So, the concealment of information from people and involving them in the unseen are viewed as a great blessing.

Despite this, some people are eager to know the unseen. Furthermore, we see some people who hasten to the charlatans and soothsayers, who falsely claim that they are the Patrons of Allah, in order to know some of the unseen. At this point, we say that the true skill of a soothsayer is not to tell you what will happen to you in the future; rather, it is to inform you that an evil will afflict you and that he will protect you from it. In reality, none can fend off Allah's Fate, thus we are supposed to abandon thinking of the future and wait until it really occurs so that we will never live in sadness before the occurrence of that evil. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen...' refers to one of Allah's Laws through which the affairs of the universe are run perfectly.

Everyone has their ups and downs. Also, a person may go through a time of weakness in some regard. If other people knew someone's point of weakness and vice-versa, everyone would see each other as weak. It is due to the favour of Allah *the Almighty* that He *Glorified is He* concealed the unseen from people; He *the Almighty* grants someone a strength we do not know and so on. Thus, the affairs of life run normally in a way that pleases Allah *the Almighty* '...nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His apostles whom He pleases...' This verse means that He *the Almighty* selects whoever He wants from among the Messengers; that is, He selects some of them and not all of them to make them acquainted with the unseen. Consequently, those Messengers will feel assured that Allah *the Almighty* supports them, for He *Glorified is He* did not send them to leave them alone; that is not the point. Rather, they are supported by Him *the Almighty* all the time, and that is why He makes them acquainted of the unseen. We have

already explained that the unseen is of several types; that is, the absolute unseen, which is unknown to others. Yet, there is another kind of the unseen, which is unknown to you, whereas others may know about it. As a matter of fact, this is not considered as unseen.

A case in point is when one's wallet is stolen; the thief is unknown, and the place to which the wallet is taken is also unknown by its owner. But the person who steals it surely knows its whereabouts. So, the act is unknown to the person who has been stolen, but meanwhile it is known by the thief; therefore, it is not part of the absolute unseen. This is how charlatans are able to exploit naive people. Some corrupt charlatans may be in contact with the jinn or demons and thus they may tell the person who has been stolen about the stolen item. In reality, those charlatans are not acquainted with the unseen because none knows the absolute unseen except Allah *the Almighty* alone.

Another striking example is the many discoveries made by mankind in the universe. As a matter of fact, these discoveries were secrets before Allah *the Almighty* unveiled them to people to the extent that they may also be made at the hands of the disbelievers themselves. So, did anyone claim that they knew the unseen? The answer is definitely no. That is because there were reasons that led to this unseen. All these people did was exerting their utmost efforts to unveil Allah's Secrets in the universe. In doing so, Allah *the Almighty* guided them to depend fully on the means He made available in the universe. Moreover, it is noteworthy to mention that He *the Almighty* gives people, be they believers or disbelievers, the ability to understand how these laws act in the universe. So, as long as they make use of these divine laws, He *the Almighty* grants them reward (the ability to unveil the secrets of the universe) in return. For more clarification, I will offer the following example to make the topic very clear:

When a teacher gives a geometry problem to one of his students, can we claim that the solution the student will provide for that problem falls under the category of the unseen? The answer is no. That is because the student knows how to provide answers for geometry problems. He makes use of the problem's givens and rules and thus he knows the answer. So, as long as the student arrives at the solution to a problem by applying certain principles, this

is not the knowledge of the unseen. For this reason, we must be fully aware of the fact that the absolute unseen is something that is unknown to everyone. As a matter of fact, no one knows this absolute unseen except Allah *the Almighty* Who may, as clearly shown in the Quran, make some of His Messengers acquainted with it.

In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* states that He will not allow any of His Creatures to know the unseen, with the exception of those Messengers whom He *the Almighty* allows to be acquainted with it. (*al-Jinn*: 26-27)

As for the secrets of the universe, some people knew nothing about them until they have been unveiled, we cannot declare 'the act of unveiling them' as knowing about the unseen. This point is previously explained in the commentary I made for the Verse of the Throne (*Ayat Al-Kursi*) in which Allah *the Almighty* affirms the following points: He *the Almighty* Alone is the One Who deserves to be worshiped; He, the Ever-living, the Self-Subsisting, is not overtaken by a slumber or sleep; He *the Almighty* owns all what is in the heavens and all what is in the earth; none can intercede with Him but by His permission; He *the Almighty* knows for certain what is before the creatures and what is behind them, while they cannot encompass anything of His Knowledge, except to whom He wills; His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth and He *Glorified is He* feels no tiredness in their preservation; and He is *the Most High*, the Most Great. (*al-Baqara*: 255)

This verse clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* may allow people to attain knowledge by His Permission. As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* is the One Who allows the creation of secrets, exactly like the creation of people's different descendants in a particular period of time.

In reality, every secret in the universe will be uncovered at a particular period of time predestined by Allah *the Almighty*. So, if mankind make use of the premises in their pursuit of unveiling a particular secret and the unveiling coincides with its birth, they will be viewed as the ones who unveiled it. But if the (predestined) time of unveiling this particular secret has not come yet, it would not be uncovered. However, in case the time of uncovering the secret already comes and there is no scientist to make use of the premises and reasons in revealing it, Allah *the Almighty* will cause a particular human to

unveil it by means of chance. As such, it may be said that this secret has been unveiled by chance.

As a matter of fact, a lot of Allah's Secrets in the universe, which encompass the new discoveries, have been unveiled by chance. This is crystal clear in the fact that eventhough scientists may be planning to make a particular discovery, Allah *the Almighty* may cause them to make a completely different one. It becomes clear now that it is not a must for all discoveries to be the result of certain premises; rather, scientists may plan to make a particular discovery, but Allah *the Almighty* enable them to make a completely different one. That is because the predestined time for the unveiling of these secrets have come and people did not occupy themselves by uncovering them. It is due to Allah's Favour that He *the Almighty* enabled His creatures to uncover these secrets even without premises or expectations.

Continuing His address to the believers, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...therefore believe in Allah and His apostles; and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward.'

It is at this point that a very important question may be asked: When Allah *the Almighty* addresses a particular people using a particular description, and then He *Glorified is He* asks them to fulfil this description, what does this truly mean? A case in point is that verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O you who believe! Believe...' (*an-Nisa*: 136).

They are truly believers and Allah *the Almighty* has already called them using this particular description. This means that He *the Almighty* asks them to firmly adhere to the characteristics of belief over the passage of time. This is based on the fact that belief requires certainty in all the matters pertaining to it in a particular period of time. It is taken for granted that time never stops, thus different periods of time follow one another. This means that the present, which was previously future, will change into past. It clearly means that the future turns into present which, in turn, changes into past. Time is a condition that never stops at any point; so it is changeable. Place, on the other hand, is something which is unchangeable. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wants to say, 'You were a true believer (in the past) before this address was delivered to you, and you must also remain a true believer in the life to come.'

So, this style indicates that Allah *the Almighty* asks the believers to keep up their belief. He *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying, "...and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward." Let us imagine how great the Favour of Allah *the Almighty* is; eventhough the believer's obedience benefits him alone, He *the Almighty* rewards him, as well. As such, when Allah *the Almighty* lays down a particular law, He *Glorified is He* does so for the good of people. As well, He is going to reward them for abiding by it. Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that whoever adheres to His Guidance, he will not go astray nor be unhappy; and whoever turns away from His Guidance, his life will be straightened and he will be raised blind on the Day of Resurrection. (*Ta Ha*: 123-124)

In reality, the person who follows the Way of Allah *the Almighty* will get the benefit of his obedience at once. In addition, He *Glorified is He* increases His Favour by rewarding him for this obedience. This is actually a pure Favour conferred by Him *the Almighty*. We have previously explained that prolonging the life of the disbelievers and the hypocrites is not something good for them. Therefore, people must consider events and times in the light of their consequences, impacts, and results.

He *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ بِمَا ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ بَلْ
هُوَ شَرٌّ لَهُمْ سَيُطَوَّقُونَ مَا بَخُلُوا بِهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَاللَّهُ مِيرِثُ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ يَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

Those who are miserly with what God has granted them out of His grace should not think that it is good for them; on the contrary, it is bad for them. Whatever they meanly withhold will be hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection. It is God who will inherit the heavens and earth: God is well aware of everything you do [180] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 180)

We said previously that some of the hypocrites and disbelievers thought that prolonging their life spans is something good for them, however, this particular verse tells us about another kind of people who thought that the

property they acquire is good for them; that is, the bigger the size of their properties, the more they rejoice. That is why He *the Almighty* says: 'Those who are miserly with what Allah has granted them out of His grace should not think...' This means that they got their property by Allah's Favour, for they were born owning nothing at all. In addition, none of us has ever seen a burial shroud or a newborn baby's diaper with pockets. Indeed, man comes to life with nothing at all and leaves it with nothing either. All the provision that comes to man is due to Allah's Favour. In truth, there is not one man who creates things by which he is provided sustenance. However, one may make use of the existing provision to get another one by developing the means and reasons. As a matter of fact, man has a role to perform in the process of getting his provision. He may farm the land, but he has no ability to create the land himself, and neither does he have the ability to create the seeds nor the power to bring forth water. So, we can conclude that Allah is the Creator of the land to be farmed; the seeds are (exist) due to His Favour and water is from His *the Almighty* Provision. Man's movement is even seen as a favour from Allah *Glorified is He*.

I swear by Allah that man does not know how many muscles move in his body when he picks his hoe to farm the land; does man know how many muscles move in his body when he picks the hoe up? And does he know how many muscles move when he puts it down?! Even when he breaks up the surface of the earth with his hoe, He tills the land of Allah. When a man wants to have a hoe, he has to go to the blacksmith to make it for him, but does this man ask himself 'where does this iron come from?' In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells us the answer: 'He *Glorified is He* sent down iron wherein is great military might and benefits for the people.' (*al-Hadid: 25*)

So, what do you create or produce (O mankind!)? You create nothing from nothing at all; rather, you make use of the movement granted to you by Allah *the Almighty* to change the raw materials into provision. So, everything (in this universe) is due to Allah's Favour. You (o mankind) is a speculator in this universe of Allah. Who created the mind you use with which to think? It was Allah. And who created your body parts that carry out the orders of the mind? It was Allah. Thus, your body parts, which are created, break the

surface of the earth, which is also created, with a tool (the hoe) and then you irrigate it with that water that comes down from the sky; so, what is the role you are due to perform in this regard, O mankind? Indeed, you must know that you have nothing to do with all of this; you are only a speculator in the Land of Allah. Therefore, you (o man) must perform the role of speculation commissioned to you.

In reality, He *the Almighty* requires nothing but a small amount of the crops and produce of the land. If the land is only watered by the rain falling down from the sky, then one-tenth of its produce is due; but in case it is artificially irrigated, then one-twentieth is due. The farmer ploughs the land every day and irrigates it once per two weeks. As for the trader, he is in need of continuous work. That is why the amount of *zakat* due upon him is estimated at 2.5%. Indeed, the more a person works, the less Allah *the Almighty* is the portion of *zakat* due upon him. This process is opposite to the nature of mankind; that is, the more a person works, the more they take from him!

In truth, Allah *the Almighty* wants the universe to be in continuous movement. That is because people get benefit from such movement. It is at this point that a very important question comes into existence, where to does the *zakat* taken from you go? It is given to your fellow Muslim brothers. So, as long as He *the Almighty* gives a portion from the produce of your work to your fellow Muslim brothers, this makes you feel assured and safe that, in case you become unable to earn your living, others will give you. This is an assurance against the vicissitudes with which Allah might afflict you. So, in case you are afflicted with a calamity, others will give a hand to you. Consequently, all the members of society shall help and support one another. This process of supporting one another clearly indicates “social security” in its highest meaning. So, all of this is due to Allah’s Favour.

He *the Almighty* says: ‘Those who are miserly with what Allah has granted them out of His grace should not think that it is good for them; on the contrary, it is bad for them...’ This verse indicates that misers think that miserliness is something good for them as it enables them to hoard large amounts of money, but this is not true because Allah *the Almighty* tells that ‘Whatever they meanly withhold will be hung around their necks on the Day

of Resurrection...'. This means that Allah *the Almighty* will change their money into a collar which will be hung around their necks. The moment the people see the collar hung around the neck of the miser, they will say: 'That person rejected to pay out Allah's Share in his property.'

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* vividly depicts this topic when he informs us that whoever rejects to pay out Allah's Portion in his wealth, the wealth will turn into a white-headed serpent with a sac of venom in each cheek, which will seek him out until it encircles his head. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Anyone whom Allah has given wealth, but he does not pay its *zakat*, then, on the Day of Resurrection, his wealth will be presented to him in the shape of a bald-headed venomous male snake with two poisonous glands in its mouth, and it will encircle itself round his neck and bite him over his cheeks and say, "I am your wealth; I am your treasure."' Messenger Muhammad then recited the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Those who are miserly with what Allah has granted them out of His grace should not think...' Thus, the more the miser accumulates wealth and rejects to pay out *zakat*, the more the collar will tightly encircle his neck on the Day of Resurrection.

'It is Allah who will inherit the heavens and earth: Allah is well aware of everything you do.' It is true that He *the Almighty* will inherit the heavens and the earth and then He *Glorified is He* will put them wherever He wants. All what is in the universe is owned by Him *the Almighty*; thus He *Glorified is He* distributes it as He wills. Our belief entails that we must not delay the giving of charity until the soul reaches the throat. In this regard, Abu Hurayrah Allah *be pleased with him* narrated: 'A man came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: "O Messenger of Allah, which kind of charity is best?" Messenger Muhammad then said: "Giving charity (in a state when you are) healthy and close-fisted, haunted by the fear of poverty, and still hoping to live (as rich). And you must not defer charity (to the time) when you are about to die, and would then say: "This is for so and so, and this for so and so." That is because when the soul reaches the throat, man owns no wealth"'.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Allah is well aware of everything you do;' it refers to something which makes the heart of man tremble with

fear and horror. Man may deceive others; for example, there are some people who evade taxes. In doing so, they may falsely keep two records; one for the exact amounts of money they gain, while the other is for keeping false information about their loss. This man who owns money and evades taxes shall know that Allah *the Almighty* is well aware of everything he does. He *the Almighty* then says:

لَقَدْ سَمِعَ اللَّهُ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَقِيرٌ وَنَحْنُ أَغْنِيَاءُ سَنَكْتُبُ مَا قَالُوا
وَقَتْلَهُمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَنَقُولُ ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ

God has certainly heard the words of those who sneer, 'So God is poor, while we are rich'. We shall record everything they say, as well as their killing of prophets in defiance of all that is right, and We shall say to them, 'Taste the torment of the scorching fire [181] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 181)

As for the cause of the revelation of this verse, it is narrated that Sa'id ibn Jubayr narrated that Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with them* narrated that when the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Who is it that will offer of Allah a goodly gift, so He will multiply it to him manifold...' (*al-Baqara*: 245) was revealed down, the Jews said: 'O Muhammad! Your Lord is so needy that He asks His Creature to lend Him?' Thus, He *Glorified is He* revealed down the following verse 'Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: Surely Allah is poor and we are rich.'

The Jews experienced Islam in Medina. As we know, they used to brag and be proud of being the people of the Book and knowledge; they also used to be proud of being masters of economy, exactly as they do nowadays. People used to get everything they needed from the Jews. Furthermore, they used to build fortresses, which were well equipped with weapons, to show their power. But when Islam came, it deprived them from all these characteristics of leadership, but at the same time they enjoyed the same rights of Muslims including the protection of their property and life.

So, the question to be asked here is: Would Islam leave them (the Jews) enjoy the same rights of Muslims including safety, assurance, and the protection of their property and souls with nothing in return? That is why Islam obliged

them to pay the tribute. As a matter of fact, it was inconceivable that Muslims paid out *zakat*, while the Jews, who were under the protection of Muslims, lived as such without paying for their protection. For this reason, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent Abu Bakr to the place wherein the Jews used to receive knowledge. Ibn 'Abbas narrated that Abu Bakr entered into the place where the Jews used to receive knowledge. He saw them gathering around one of their scholars called Finhaas who was attended by another Jewish scholar called Ashia'. Abu Bakr then said to him: 'Woe to you, Finhaas! Fear Allah and surrender to Him, for I swear to Allah that you know that Muhammad is a true Messenger sent from Him *the Almighty* and he has been sent with the truth. As well, you found his characteristics in the Torah and the Gospels,' whereupon Finhaas replied, 'O Abu Bakr! By Allah, we are in no need for Allah, but He is in need for us. We (the Jews) do not beg to Him, but He begs to us. We need Him no more. If He was rich, He would not ask us for loans as your so-called Messenger claims. He prevents you from taking interest and meanwhile gives it to us! If He was rich, He would not give us such interest.' Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* became very angry and hit Finhaas severely on his face and said: 'By the One in Whose Hand my life is, I would cut off your head but for the covenant we made with you. So, prove us liars if you are truly faithful, O enemy of Allah!'

Then, Finhaas went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: 'O Muhammad! See how your companion hurt me.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then asked Abu Bakr, 'Why did you hurt him as such?' Abu Bakr replied, 'O Messenger of Allah! The enemy of Allah has said something very grievous about Allah *the Almighty*; he claimed that Allah is poor and that they are in no need of Him. So, when he said that, I hit his face.' But Finhaas denied the accusation of Abu Bakr and said: 'I said no such thing.' Then, Allah *the Almighty* revealed down His Saying, 'Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: Surely Allah is poor and we are rich...' As a matter of fact, those Jews did not understand the great secret behind the divine order on offering up to Allah a goodly loan; an order shown clearly in (*al-Hadid*: 11).

In truth, this statement indicates that Allah *the Almighty* honours man's right of possession. But why does Allah *the Almighty* honour this particular

right of man? That is because He *the Almighty* wants to spur the man who already works to exert more and more efforts in his work. Also, He *Glorified is He* wants to spur the person who does not work to start working. So, when He *the Almighty* asks man to pay out a portion of this money, He *Glorified is He* does not say to man: 'Pay out (this portion from) what I gave you'; rather, He *the Almighty* says: 'I really honour your toil, work, intellectual endeavour, body parts and energy, as well as all what you do. So, in case I ask you to pay out of a portion of the wealth I granted you, I will not say to you: 'Pay out (this portion from) what I gave you;' rather, I will say: 'Lend it to me.' In fact, when you do so, you do it for the benefit of your fellow man and not for My benefit. Similarly, I may ask the rich to lend Me for your sake in case you are afflicted with a calamity. But why do I do so? Because I am Allah *the Almighty* Who created all the worlds. Thus, I am in charge of providing them with sustenance.

When one invites two of his friends for food, he cooks food which suffices five or ten persons. Therefore, since it is Allah *the Almighty* Who created all the creatures, He *the Almighty* is responsible for providing them all with sustenance. This provision indicates that they must exert efforts to obtain it.

So, when creatures do so, He *the Almighty* guarantees that all of them will be provided with sustenance that makes him content, or at least providing them with the most essential requirements.

But due to the interference of humans in nationalizing the fruit of work represented in money, man got used not not exert more effort as usual. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* is fully aware of the fact that man is very keen on achieving his own interest, thus He *Glorified is He* spurs him to work more and more so that the entire society would get benefit from his work, intentionally or unintentionally. So, when Allah *the Almighty* borrows from some of His Creatures for the sake of others, He *Glorified is He* does not take back His provision. Rather, He *the Almighty* affirms that whoever offers Allah a beautiful gift, He *the Almighty* will multiply it to him manifold. (*al-Hadid*: 11)

I will offer the following example for clarification because we, human beings, may experience such a situation one day: Daily a father gives his children an amount of money to spend, and all the children used to save the change. One day, one of the children may undergo a particular condition

which requires much more money which the father is unable to provide. So, the father says to his children: 'Lend me the money you collected and I will give it back to you manifold.' The man already took the money for their brother, but as long as it is the one who granted it, he did not take it back; rather, he asked them to lend him. When it is the beginning of the next month, he will give back the loan manifold. So, if such actions take place among human beings themselves, what about the Favour Allah *the Almighty* conferred upon His slaves?

He *the Almighty* asks people to offer Him beautiful gifts for the sake of their fellow humans, but the Jews did not understand it this way; rather, they stupidly interpreted the meaning of the verse in a materialistic way, thus said: 'Allah is poor and we are rich.' For this reason, He *the Almighty* revealed down, 'Allah has certainly heard the saying of those who said: Surely Allah is poor and we are rich. I will record what they say...'

But why does Allah *the Almighty* write down this eventhough He *the Almighty* is fully aware of all matters? This statement refers to the process of documentation; that is, when that person is going to read his record on the Day of Resurrection, he will find all his actions and sayings written down. So, writing down people's deeds is a matter of documentation so that they would not deny the acts they committed and the sayings they uttered.

In truth, eventhough Allah *the Almighty* is fully aware of the sins committed by the slave, the latter may, upon being inflicted with the Punishment of Allah, say: 'O Lord! You are the One Who (has the right to) punish and thus You can say whatever You like'. If, however, their deeds are written down, and they will read them themselves, this is considered a process of documentation that cannot be denied. In reality, this Jew (i.e. Finhaas) did not understand that by offering this loan to Allah *the Almighty* He *Glorified is He* wants to encourage humans to show mercy towards each other.

O Man! Allah *the Almighty* honours the efforts you exerted in possessing wealth. So, when you earn money, then it is yours. In this regard, it is important to know that He *the Almighty* did not say to you: 'Give your fellow brother'; rather, He *the Almighty* out of His Mercy and Kindness to His creatures, says: 'Lend Me', so the lender will feel assurance that his/her

money will be repaid manifold by the One Who owns the treasures of the heavens and the earth. But the children of Israel were impolite with Allah *the Almighty* to the extent that He *the Almighty* cursed them for their saying 'the Hand of Allah is chained'; and stated clearly that His Hands are spread out and He spends as He wishes. (*al-Ma'ida*: 64)

The reason behind their accusation towards Allah *the Almighty* is that they experienced a year of drought and starvation as a result of their disobedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him**. At this point, Ibn 'Abbas is quoted: 'Allah *the Almighty* abundantly provided the Jews with wealth to the extent that they became the richest of the world. But when they disobeyed Him *the Almighty* and disbelieved in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, He *Glorified is He* made them lose all of their property, during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. That is why Finhaas ibn 'Aazuraa' and others said: "The Hand of Allah is chained...", and then Allah *the Almighty* revealed down this verse. They (i.e the Jews) said: "The Sky has been miserly to us (i.e. it does not rain at all or even it rains small quantities of water, and Allah's Hand is chained and, thus, we are not provided." As such, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad that He, Himself, was not safe from their mocking. Thus, in case they (i.e. the Jews), Allah says, were rude to you (O Muhammad) and to your Companions, they had already been rude to Me, eventhough I am the One Who created them and provided them with sustenance; they said: "Surely Allah is poor and we are rich." They also said: "Allah's Hand is chained." So, (as long as I informed you (O Muhammad) of their bad behaviour even with Me), you should not feel sad or sorrowful for their bad behaviour with you and with your Companions!

This solace offered by Allah *the Almighty* to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is good. He *Glorified is He* then adds, '... I will record what they say...', but the question to be asked here is 'Why would Allah record their words, eventhough He *the Almighty* is fully aware of everything and never forgets?'

In the Quran, He *the Almighty* stresses the fact that He never errs nor forgets. (*Ta Ha*: 52) As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* will record all of their deeds and actions so that they will not say on the Day of Resurrection

that Allah held us accountable for things we did not commit (in the worldly life). So, their records will produce evidence against them. This indicates that the act of recording may include the process of recording voices and breaths, as well. Then, when it is the Day of Resurrection, everyman shall receive his/her own record in which all his/her actions and sayings are recorded. On the Day of Resurrection, all people will be asked to read their records, themselves, and to confess everything they did and said in this worldly life. (*al-Isra*: 14)

This aforementioned verse of the Quran indicates, obviously, that when *man reads what has been written down in his/her record, s/he will fully realise that these are the actions and sayings that had been committed and uttered by him/her (in the worldly life). Nowadays, we may record what our enemies say and do, so why do not we firmly believe that Allah *the Almighty* Who taught us to do that, is able to record all our breaths, voices and movements in such a way which forces them not to deny?!* Allah says: ‘... I will record what they say...,’ and they said: ‘Surely Allah is poor and we are rich.’ In reality, this is viewed as one of the most sinful major sins and bad behaviour against Him *the Almighty*. But the Jews did not stop at this point, they, in addition, killed the Messengers whom Allah sent to guide them. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘... I will record what they say and their killing the prophets unjustly...’.

When Allah *the Almighty* *told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, this is considered a kind of solace to him from Allah *the Almighty*. ‘O Muhammad! They fabricated lies against your Lord and killed the Prophets before you, so if they abused you, do not grieve deeply because I will hold them accountable for the actions and sayings written down on* their records and for which they testified. I will say to them: “Taste the chastisement of burning.”’ In truth, burning people with fire, causes their souls to suffer severely.

One’s sensation differs according to his/her different senses; sometimes it is done by the eye, while other times it is done by the ear. It may also be done with smelling, or* touching or tasting. Taste is the leader of all senses, for no one loses it at all. Even the blind, the deaf, the paralyzed and those who suffer from colds and, thus, are unable to smell, do not lose this* particular sense of taste. As such, taste is a sense* which comes from man’s essence and, thus,

the punishment will be extremely severe. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* gives an example of a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which, thereupon, blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's Blessings: consequently, He caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear as a result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently committed. (*an-Nahl*: 112)

If we contemplate this Quranic expression 'Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear,' we will find that Allah *the Almighty* used the word, '*adhaqaha*/ Allah caused it to taste,' to refer to something which is not tasted, that is, *libas* (clothing). So, the question to be asked here is, 'Can clothing be tasted?' The answer is definitely, no. But He *the Almighty* wants to direct the attention of mankind to the fact that all the different senses of mankind, including that sense originating in his/her essence, perform their due functions properly. This, undoubtedly, includes man's different parts*.

According to the Quran, tasting completely encompasses man. He *the Almighty* tells us that He caused that particular town to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear. As such, this verse tells how severe and painful the punishment is inflicted upon all the body part, to the extent that man felt it in every part of his/her body. The word, '*hareeq*/burning,' in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Taste the chastisement of burning,' refers to the blazing fire that burns. He *the Almighty* then says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتُمْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ

**That is on account of what you stored up for yourselves with
your own hands: God is never unjust to His servants' [182]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 182)**

The demonstrative adjective, '*dhalik*/this,' in this context refers to the chastisement of burning. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* did not wrong them, but they were the ones who wronged themselves. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'This is for what your own hands have sent before'; so does this truly mean that all the sins and acts of disobedience are committed only by one's hands? As a matter of fact, there are different sins; there is a sin which may be committed by the eye; there is another sin which may be committed by the

tongue, and so on. We can say that there is no definite number for the sins and the acts of disobedience. So, the question to be asked here is, “Why did Allah *the Almighty* limit the commitment of sins in this particular verse to hands? The answer is that most of our actions are usually committed by our hands. As such, Allah *the Almighty** says, ‘This is for what your own hands have sent before’, means that (You will be punished) for all the sins committed by all your body parts.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘... and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants’. This verse indicates that Allah *the Almighty* will have them taste the chastisement of burning as a result of their sayings and actions. They fabricated lies against Him *the Almighty* when they said: ‘Surely, Allah is poor and we are rich’. As well, they killed the Messengers sent by Him *Glorified is He* and, thus, they deserve this punishment. In reality, it goes without saying that Allah *the Almighty* is not ever unjust to His servants. At this point, the orientalist- enemies of Islam- claim that the word “zhallam” in this verse indicates an exaggerative form of the word “zhalim/the one who wrongs others.” The word “zhallam,” itself gives the meaning of frequently committing injustice and wrong.

As a matter of fact, whoever wants to refute this misconception must be fully aware of, *siyagh Al-mubalaghah* (exaggeration forms). Linguistics believe that the following patterns of nouns derived from verbs give the meaning of exaggeration, that is, *fa'aal*, *fa'il*, *mef'aal*, *fa'el* and *fa'ul*. It becomes immediately clear now that the word, ‘zhallam’, takes the same pattern and form of, ‘akkal/ the person who eats a lot’. It also comes in accordance with the pattern of the form ‘qattal/ the person who frequently commits the crime of killing’. At this point, we must differentiate between the two forms, ‘qatil/ the person who commits the crime of killing just one time’, and, ‘qattal/ the person who commits the crime of killing more frequently, to the extent that he takes it up as an occupation’. Similar to the aforementioned pattern are* the following two forms of, ‘nahib’ and ‘nahhab;’ the first refers to that person who commits robbery just one time, while the latter refers to that person who commits this crime of robbery frequently. These forms and patterns are known as the exaggeration forms. In truth, in case these forms are used in the affirmative, they indicate the bare minimum. For example, when

one says: ‘Someone is “zhallam”, this obviously indicates that he is a “zhalim/a wrongdoer,”’ as well. That is because we have proved exaggeration in the form and, thus, its least is proved too. We offer the following example, as well. When we say, ‘This person is ‘*allamah*,’ this means that he is well-versed in a particular field of knowledge. If, however, we say that this person is an* ‘*alim*’, this means that he is a* scholar, but not necessarily well-versed. As such, these forms indicate increase in the active participle forms because the action in these forms is strong or frequently repeated. So, if the increase form is proved, it is then necessary to prove the other* form. For example, when one says, ‘This person is *akkal*’, this includes the increase form of the verb, ‘eat’, and its bare minimum form, as well. But this is not the case in negation. In truth, if we negate the increase form, this does not mean that the bare minimum of this form is also negated.*

If we apply these rules to the verse in question, that is, ‘... and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants’, Orientalists believe that negation of this particular form in this verse is applicable only to ‘the exaggeration in injustice’ and that it (i.e. negation) does not apply to the bare minimum of the form. However, they (i.e. Orientalists) did not understand the reason behind the existence of exaggeration in this verse. In reality, Allah *the Almighty* says that He *Glorified is He* is never unjust to His Servants; He *the Almighty* does not say that He is never unjust to the servant, so what does this mean? This means that He *the Almighty* wrongs none of His servants from the very beginning of the time of Adam to the end of time because if He *the Almighty* wronged all of these people, Allah forbid, He would be described as, ‘zhallam’, even if He did not wrong them significantly. This is based on the fact that if this had been the case, the act of committing injustice against the servants would have been repeated frequently. So, let those who are obtuse understand that Allah *the Almighty* says here *that He *Glorified is He* is never unjust to His Servants. He *the Almighty* does not say that He is never unjust to the servant.

If the one who commits an offense *must be stronger than the one who is wronged, then every act of wrongdoing is facilitated by the power of the wrong doer. Thus, if Allah *the Almighty* allowed Himself to wrong, He *Glorified is He* would not be just committing a mere act of injustice; rather, He would be a ‘dhallam’, due to His Unchallengeable Power.

So, if the case is as exactly aforementioned, there will be no difference between the act and its repetition. So, the Orientalists' attempts to declare they discovered a mistake in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and because Allah is not in the least unjust to the servants', clearly indicate that they are unable to understand the Arabic language properly, or even deceive those people who know nothing about Arabic. But Allah *the Almighty* enables some of His faithful servants to show the miraculous nature of this Noble Book.

Having finished His speech on the battle of Uhud, He *the Almighty* wanted to shed light on the characteristics of the *means by which the enemies of Islam are known. He *the Almighty* tells Muslims that the list of their enemies includes the people of the Book, the polytheists of Quraysh in Mecca*, and those polytheists who lived around * Medina, who used to raid it.

After talking about this battle of Uhud, which purified, educated, tested, tried, and taught people religious lessons, He *Glorified is He* wanted to highlight these characteristics, and He, in the Quran, ordered Muslims to *be aware of those people who fabricated lies against your Lord, who abused Prophet Muhammad and who killed the Prophets and Messengers before.

He *the Almighty* then says:

الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عٰهَدَ اِلَيْنَا اَلَّا نُؤْمِنَ رِسُوْلًا حَتّٰى
يَاْتِنَا بِقُرْاٰنٍ تَاْكُلُهُ النَّارُ فُلْ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ قِبَلِ
بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَبِالَّذِى قُلْتُمْ فَلِمَ قَتَلْتُمُوهُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

**To those who say, ‘God has commanded us not to believe in any messenger unless he brings us an offering that fire [from heaven] consumes,’ say [Prophet], ‘Messengers before me have come to you with clear signs, including the one you mention. If you are sincere, why did you kill them?’ [183]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 183)**

They (i.e. the Jews) falsely claim: ‘Our Lord ordered us, in the Torah, not to believe in any messenger until he shows you a tangible miracle, that is, he should bring us an offering that fire [from heaven] consumes’. This was true.

We all know about the story of Cain and Abel mentioned in the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* tells us these two sons of Adam offered an offering to Allah *the Almighty*, but He *Glorified is He* accepted it from one of them and rejected it from the other. So, the son whose offering was rejected decided to kill his brother, whereupon the latter told him that Allah *the Almighty* accepts only the offerings of the pious. (*al-Ma'ida*: 27-28)

As a matter of fact, we are in* dire need of reflection regarding the meanings of the verses of the Quran; why did Allah *the Almighty* accept the offering of one of them and rejected the other? In truth, acceptance is something unique* to Allah *the Almighty* Alone, so how can we know why He *the Almighty* accepted this offering or not? He *the Almighty* must have made a particular sign to indicate His acceptance.

We know that someone may perform an act of worship that Allah accepts, while another person may perform an act of worship which Allah does not accept- we seek Refuge in Allah-; so, how can we know for certain that He *the Almighty* accepted the deeds and offering of a particular person, while rejecting those from the other? Just as acceptance is one of the secrets of Allah, we are unable to recognize its sign, unless there is tangible evidence. This is proved by this particular verse in which Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He accepted the offering presented by one of the two brothers, while rejecting the other. The one whose offering was not accepted by Allah said (to his brother): 'I will surely kill you'. This part of the verse indicates clearly that the person whose offering was accepted was fully aware of this fact, and so was the brother whose offering was not accepted. As such, a tangible sign must have taken place.

We explained previously that Allah *the Almighty* used to address His servants according to the capacity of their intellect*, corporeally and incorporeally. This is* the reason we find that the miracles He gave to the previous Prophets and Messengers were tangible. For example, Abraham's miracle was a fire which did not burn, while that of Moses was a stick that turned into a serpent. As for Jesus *peace be upon him*, he healed the blind and the leprous, and brought forth the dead, by the permission of Allah. Physical miracles are distinguished by the fact that they convince the senses, but their effects end

the moment they are over. As for those miracles that address human* intellect, they are the everlasting ones. As such, the tangible miracles can in no way be everlasting.

So, this necessitates that the eternal miracle given to the seal of all the Prophets and Messengers (i.e. Prophet Muhammad), should* last until the Day of Resurrection, and must not be a physical miracle*. This* is because tangible miracles are confined only to those who see them, while others, who do not see them, will not believe in them, unless they have great trust in the one who saw them. Now, both of the two sons of Adam offered an offering.

The word, '*qurban*', takes the same morphological pattern as, '*ghufran*', and '*udwan*'. *Al-qurban* is something by which the servant gets closer to Allah *the Almighty*. *Acceptance of this good deed is a secret known only to Allah. So, the question to be asked here is: 'How did these people know that Allah accepted the offering of Cain and rejected that of Abel?' The sign, as such, must be a tangible one. The two sons of Adam must have differed, but the Quran did not tell us about the reason behind their discord. It only tells us that one of them is closer to Allah, but how?* The Quran did not detail the matter for us. I believe if it was an important matter, He *the Almighty* would have told us. So, let us not conclude that they differed over marriage or something like this. That is because the Quran only tells us that there was a dispute between them and that they agreed to make Allah their arbitrator. It is taken for granted that no one can nullify Allah's Judgment. Both of the two brothers had their own claim against the other and, thus, there was no way, but to arbitrate.

In modern times, if we disagree about something, we draw lots, so no one yields to another's whim; rather, they both yield to what is predestined for them and, thus, each of them write on a card and ask a third person to pick one of the two cards. As for Cain and Abel, the Noble Quran tells us that they both made an offering to Allah *the Almighty* and that He accepted the offering of one of them and rejected the other. So, each of the two brothers had his own claim and neither* was able to convince the other. Accordingly, Cain, after having his offering rejected by Allah, told Abel that he would surely kill him, but how did Abel reply to him? He told him that Allah *the Almighty* only

accept the deeds of those who are pious. So, the one whose offering was accepted by Allah would be the one killed, while the* one who was full of anger and whose offering was rejected by Allah would be the killer. But what did the one whose offering was accepted say?

He said to his brother that if you stretch forth your hand towards me to kill me, I will not do the same as you, for surely I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds. (*al-Ma'ida*: 28) So, the brother whose offering was accepted by Allah met those requirements that made his offering accepted. As a matter of fact, he was fully aware of the Divine Laws. We also should not believe that the other brother "Cain" was completely full of evil, for he was only under the control of his lust.

In truth, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that he was, to some extent, a good person. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that the soul (inner-self) of Cain permitted him to kill his brother and, thus, he became one of the losers. (*al-Ma'ida*: 30) This indicates that he hesitated before he committed his crime. In this regard, it is important to know that Arabs do not say: 'taww 'at* *al-maa*'; rather, they say: *'taww 'at *al-hadid*' (*made the iron fillable/pliable). This clearly indicates that the belief that originated in the killer's soul tried to prevent him from killing his brother, but he finally responded to the temptation of the soul and killed him. When Cain killed his brother, and his anger and will for revenge abated, he saw his brother cast down in the open. It is at this point Allah *the Almighty* sent a crow that began scratching *the dirt, to show him how he should cover the corpse of his brother. Subsequently, Cain felt deep regret for the crime he committed. (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

The Jews said, accordingly: 'Allah ordered us not to believe in any Messenger, unless he brings a tangible miracle'. But why did they say this? As a matter of fact, they said this because they knew, for certain, that the greatest miracle of Prophet Muhammad (i.e. the Noble Quran) had nothing to do with the tangible aspect. In reality, Prophet Muhammad had brought many tangible miracles. Due to the fact that the impact of tangible miracles ends the moment they are over, the Noble Quran is, thus, the eternal miracle which befits the last Message. As such, they (i.e. the Jews) asked for tangible miracles to occur, so they could give excuses for their disbelief. Consequently they said:

‘To those who say, “Allah has commanded us not to believe in any messenger unless he brings us an offering that fire [from heaven] consumes...”’.

It is in this particular verse of *Al-'Imran* that Allah *the Almighty* tells us how the offering of Abel was accepted. We [then*] knew that it was consumed (burnt) by fire. This matter clearly proves that the Quran does not contain repetitions. Then, He *Glorified is He* refutes their allegation by means of persuasive evidence. He *the Almighty* says: ‘Say [Prophet], “Messengers before me have come to you with clear signs, including the one you mention. If you are sincere, why did you kill them?”’

This means that He *the Almighty* had, prior to the mission of Prophet Muhammad, sent Messengers with their own offerings, yet you killed them and disbelieved in them. If your allegation had been true, O, Jews, you would have believed in the Messengers who brought you offerings that were consumed by fire. Allah *the Almighty* accordingly, shows us that they lied to themselves and to Messenger Muhammad confirming that all their allegations are nothing but a matter of petulance and stubbornness, and persistence in dissension and hostility. That is why He *the Almighty* asks Prophet Muhammad to ask them: ‘If you are sincere, why did you kill them?’

He *the Almighty* wants to tell us, by offering this example, that the era of tangible miracles is over, and that the period of humans’ intellectual maturity and perfection has begun. That is why He *the Almighty* chose a miracle that addresses the intellect so that it would last to the end of time. If the sign were a material one, it would have been restricted to the time in which it took place. As well, it would have no impact on those generations who came afterwards. As for such a miracle that addresses the intellect, it is possible for any believer in our time to say: ‘Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and this is his miracle’. If the miracle was a tangible one in the form of an offering consumed by fire, what impact would be left, then, on those who would come after in next eras?

As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that He *Glorified is He* is the One Who makes signs according to His Will, and not as humans wish. In addition, He *the Almighty* tells us that His signs are accompanied by evidence to prove their veracity. Thus, humans have no right to suggest their making of a particular miracle. That is because He *the Almighty* brings the

miracle, wherein the evidence exists. But why does he do so? It is because some people said to Messenger Muhammad: 'We will not believe in you, until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us, or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us), or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven and in spite of all of this, we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read'. (*al-Isra'*: 90-93)

What the disbelievers say to Messenger Muhammad clearly indicates that all the miracles and signs they asked for were material ones. He *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad that the only reason He *the Almighty* did not* bring these miracles is that their forefathers denied them. In the Quran, He *Glorified is He* confirms this fact. He clearly states that the only reason that He *the Almighty* did not* bring these miracles is that their forefathers denied them. (*al-Isra'*: 59)

Even those Jews who said: 'We will not believe until you bring us an offering that is consumed by fire'', had Messengers with the same required miracles sent to them before Prophet Muhammad, yet they did not believe in them. It becomes immediately clear now that it was a matter of petulance and stubbornness, and persistence in dissension and hostility. Allah *the Almighty* then consoles Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by offering him examples of what had happened with the Messengers before him. It is as when *the Almighty* calls on saying: 'If they disbelieve in you, do not grieve (O Muhammad) for they had previously denied and rejected the Messengers who were sent to them himbefore you.' He *the Almighty* says:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ رُسُلٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ ﴿١٨٤﴾

**If they reject you, so have other messengers been rejected
before you, even though they came with clear evidence,
books of wisdom and enlightening scripture [184]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 184)**

Allah *the Almighty* shows us how He raised Prophet Muhammad to the highest rank, a rank that no human being can attain. He *Glorified is He* tells

him *peace and blessings be upon him* that He knows for certain that he is saddened with what the disbelievers say. He *Glorified is He* then tells him *peace and blessings be upon him* that the disbelievers know for sure that he is not a* liar. (*al-An'am*: 33)

In truth, it is not your problem, Muhammad, for they know perfectly well that you are truthful and never tell lies. The entire problem may be summarised in the following sentence, that is, '... but it is the verses of Allah that the wrongdoers reject'. This means that you are not the reason behind them denying My signs because the disbelievers do not say that you are a liar, rather, they call Me, Myself, a liar. As such, He *the Almighty* addresses His Prophet Muhammad to console him and to tell him of the stories of the Messengers before him so that he would not feel sad about the actions and sayings of the Jews. He *Glorified is He* says: 'If they reject you, so have other messengers been rejected before you, even though they came with clear evidence, books of wisdom and enlightening scripture.' (*Al-'Imran*: 184)

It is taken for granted that a condition is the cause for the existence of result. So, what is the case if the result occurred before the condition? He *the Almighty* says: If they reject your Message, they had already rejected and denied the Messages of the Messengers and Prophets who were sent before you. In other words, the result of the conditional clause happened before the condition itself. If any of those people, who superficially understand Islam, including the orientalist who do not understand the styles of the Arabic language properly, read this particular style in this verse, they may say: 'The result in this conditional clause has occurred before the condition itself.' We respond to these people by* asking the following questions, 'Is the saying of Allah *the Almighty* "... so have other messengers been rejected before you..." the resultant clause or is it an indication of it?' As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* sent down this verse to say to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'If those people reject and deny your Message, do not grieve, for Messengers before you had been denied and rejected by their people', indicating* that this statement is the reason for the resultant clause. As such, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'If they reject and deny your Message, do not grieve.' The statement in this context is not the true resultant clause; rather, it is only

the reason leading to the resultant clause ‘... If they reject you, so have other messengers been rejected before you...”’etc.

When we say: ‘Someone brought me such and such’, this indicates that this particular person might be the one who brought the item himself; it might also indicate that he only accompanied the person who brought the item. For more clarification, let us imagine that there is an employee who was sent by his employer to deliver an envelope to another person. In this case, the employee will be viewed as accompanying the envelope. As such, it can be concluded that clear and conclusive evidence was sent down by Allah *the Almighty* to prove the veracity and authenticity of the Messengers accompanying them and, thus, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘If they reject you, so have other messengers been rejected before you, eventhough they came with clear evidence...’ This means that those Messengers were supported with such clear evidence that proved the veracity of their Messages. As a matter of fact, Allah’s signs (in the universe) may pertain to natural phenomena or miracles.

We know perfectly well that all the miracles of the Messengers sent before Prophet Muhammad had nothing to do with their heavenly-revealed Book. The Scriptures of Abraham *peace be upon him*, for example, contain his Message, but they are not his miracle, for we know that his miracle is the fire that did not burn him. Similar is the case with Moses whose Book, the Torah, contains his Message, but it is not his miracle. In truth, the miracle of Moses is the stick that turned into a serpent, as well as, the sea that was divided into two parts. Similarly, Jesus *peace be upon him*, had the Gospel which contained his divine Message, yet his miracle was that he healed the lame and leprous, and raised the dead. As such, it becomes clear that all the miracles of the Messengers before Prophet Muhammad had nothing to do with their Books, with the exception of him *peace and blessings be upon him* whose Book represents also his miracle, but why?* It is because he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent with the most important and complete Message, that is, the Noble Quran. As well, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is the seal Prophet and, therefore, the miracle must go hand in hand with the Message so that it establishes the evidence. So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... they came with clear evidence...,’ indicates that they brought miracles that prove their truthfulness.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...books of wisdom and enlightening scripture’, it refers to those Books that contain the Message. So, all the Messengers (before Prophet Muhammad) were in need of two important things, that are*, a Message and a miracle.

The word ‘*Al-Bayyinnat*’ refers to the clear evidence established by Allah *the Almighty* *and not by any of human. Then, He *Glorified is He* refers to the Message by saying, ‘... books of wisdom and enlightening scripture’. The word ‘*Al-zubur*’, means the (heavenly revealed) Book. Arabs say: ‘This thing *qad zubir* (i.e. has been written down)’. This actually refers to a process of documentation, that being, as long as it is written down, it could not be erased. So, the word ‘*Al-zabru*’, means ‘writing’ or ‘admonition’ because it prevents the person from committing any sins or mistakes, and from falling prey to misguidance. It also gives the meaning of ‘the intellect’ because it protects man* from falling into ruin.

As for those who want to rely on intellect to have unrestrained liberty and licentiousness, we say to them: ‘You should understand the meaning of the word, “*aql*/intellect”, properly.’ This particular word gives the meaning of restriction, for it prevents the person from doing any act, without taking its consequences into consideration.” The word, “*aql*,” is derived from the verb “*aqal*” which means “to tie”. We must take into consideration all of these meanings. So, it means to prevent people from doing those actions for which s/he may be blamed. As for the word “*Al-zubur*”, it can also mean, “walling up the well”. For example, when we dig a well for water, we do not leave it as a hole; to the contrary, we build a rim of stone around it. In addition, we line the inside with stones so that it does not fill with soil. As a matter of fact, all the meanings given by the word “*Al-zubur*” have to do with each other, as follows: (When it is given the meaning of) “*Al-maktubaat*/the written items”, it is qualified to be described as being “enlightening” because this description means that it shows the reader the consequences of the path s/he is in so that s/he would not deviate from*.

As such, Allah *the Almighty* consoles His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and says to him: ‘Do not grieve if they deny and reject your Message, for they had already denied and rejected the Messages of the

Messengers sent before you with both the Message and the miracle'. Having immunised Messenger Muhammad and the believers against the fabricated lies of the Jews, Allah *Glorified is He* then moves on to shed light on a very important topic. But it is important here to point out that making belief steadfast in the hearts of the believers, Allah *the Almighty* informs us of the challenges we may face so that we are not surprised by what they say and do.

By the way, we do the same thing in this worldly life. If we fear a disease like cholera, for example, what do we do? We take the microbe itself, weaken it in a particular way, and then inject it in the body of a healthy person so that it causes his immunity to resist the disease.

Allah *the Almighty* then highlights a very important topic pertaining to belief and which all believers must think about all the time. If they disbelieve in you, their disbelief will not last forever, for they will come to an end by death. So, their conflict with you is limited to a certain time, and they will be held accountable before Allah *the Almighty*. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَإِنَّمَا تُوَفَّقُونَ أُجُورَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فَمَنْ زُحْزِحَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَأُدْخِلَ الْجَنَّةَ فَقَدْ فَازَ وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا مَتَعُ الْغُرُورِ

**Every soul will taste death and you will be paid in full only
on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever is kept away from
the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed.
The present world is only an illusory pleasure [185]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 185)**

We notice that the word, 'taste', has come in this context too. As well, we know that there is a difference between 'the act of killing' and 'the death', as follows: the meaning of 'death' is more comprehensive, for it means the end of life, irrespective of the fact of whether it was because of being killed, or otherwise. So, those well-versed scholars who pay great attention to 'the meanings of' words say: "If this slain person had not been killed, would he have died?!" We say: 'Yes, because his predestined time for death has come'. But was the killer knowledgeable of the time of death? The answer is 'No'. Therefore, he is punished for committing the crime of separating the soul

from the body. As for the slain person, Allah destined that they would part with life in this way.

So, every soul will taste death, either naturally or by killing. In spite of the fact that most of those who are killed are considered living martyrs [this statement is false], all mankind will die. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that.

When the trumpet is blown, all those who are in the heavens and all those who are on earth will lose consciousness, except those who Allah pleases. (*az-Zumar*: 68)

If we reflect carefully on the accuracy of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... and you will be paid in full only on the Day of Resurrection...’, we will realize that Allah *the Almighty* is warning the believers against waiting for the reward for their good deeds in this worldly life because this life will come to an end and consequently, you must be rewarded for your deeds in the Hereafter so that you will gain endless reward.

We know what happened during the Second Oath of Allegiance given to Prophet Muhammad in, Al-‘Aqba, when he *peace and blessings be upon him* took the oath of allegiance from the Supporters. They said: ‘How will we be rewarded for this (O Messenger Muhammad) if we keep our promise?’ Messenger Muhammad did not say to them that they would defeat so and so, or you will own this and that, in this worldly life. Rather, he said: “Paradise”. Whereupon they replied: ‘O Messenger Muhammad! Extend your hand so that we can give you our pledge’. As a matter of fact, if he *peace and blessings be upon him* promised them any of the worldly life’s adornments, those who are intelligent among them might have said: ‘How lowly is this’! That is why when someone said to his friend: ‘I love you exactly as I love this worldly life’, his friend replied: ‘Am I as worthless to you, as this?’ As such, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell the believers not to think that they are going to be rewarded for their deeds in this worldly life, because if they were to get it, as such in this present life, it would not be great and infinite. That is because reward comes from Allah *the Almighty* Who is infinite and, thus, it must be infinite, as well. Concerning the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... and you will be paid in full only on the Day of Resurrection...’, some well-versed scholars, relying on the word, ‘*tuwaffawn*/you will be paid in full’, understand that people will be

rewarded or punished for all they did and said in this present life, before the Day of Resurrection. That is because the meaning of the expression, '*Waffaituhu Ajrahu*/I paid him in full' implies that you gave him part of the reward and adjourned another part. That is true, because He *the Almighty* gave them those items necessary for their belief. This tremendous impact of belief on the faces of the believers is the best example of this. As such, the answer here must be consistent with the reason, for whoever listens to the verse because a person may die in battle shortly after hearing this particular verse and, thus, he took no spoil, nor did he obtain victory so what will be his reward? He will receive his reward in full on the Day of Resurrection. So, whoever obtains part of the reward in this life, like achieving victory over the disbeliever, what is comparable will be paid in full in the Hereafter, as clearly indicated from the word, '*tawfiyah*' which means that the reward will be paid in full on the Day of Resurrection.

He *Glorified is He* then says: '... Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed...' Abu Hurayrah Allah *be pleased with him* narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'A place in paradise equal to the size of a whip is better than the whole world and whatever is in it'. Recite if you wish: "... Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed..."

When you say: 'I kept someone away from this and that', it means that this person was in fear, so how could this happen in the fire? It goes without saying that disobedience is the main reason behind throwing people into the Fire. The sinful are attracted to committing acts of disobedience. When belief tries to pull them, they are fully attracted by disobedience and, thus, they will be punished in the fire. As such, the fire will have its own lure, for it will be in a state of terrible anger. Allah *the Almighty* informs us of that matter in the Quran when He stated clearly that the fire will burst with rage. (*al-Mulk*: 8)

The fire will burst with rage (to severely punish) the disbelievers. What does this mean? Have you ever seen a pot boiling over? When it boils, bubbles come out and what is inside comes out over the pot. This is the true meaning of the word, "*tamayyazu*/literally, "to separate". When a person is in a state of blind rage, something emerges from him like the bubbles of a boiling pot. These bubbles can burn whoever stands in front of them or touches them.

They come out because of the intensity of the boiling, coming out from the pot. This is exactly the same as for the fire. Why does it burst with rage? It does so because of the disbelievers who disobeyed Allah. It is known for certain that the fire, primarily, *originally* praises the Glory of Allah.

In the same vein, He *Glorified is He* tells us in the Quran that on the Day of Resurrection, He will ask the Fire whether it is filled with people or not. (*Qaf*: 30) The Fire, for its part, will ask Allah *the Almighty* for more and more people to be punished. (*Qaf*: 30) This indicates that the action of bursting with rage will take place, literally, by the fire. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tells us that the fire has a particular kind of attraction. It is taken for granted that people will be thrown in the fire because of their disobedience, which, in turn, attracts and seduces the disobedient. In this regard, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'My example and your example is that of a person who lit a fire and insects and moths were attracted to it and began to fall in it, and he is making efforts to take them out; and I am going to hold you back from fire, but you are slipping from my hand.'⁽¹⁾ It is a very striking example. In fact, when someone lights a fire in an open area, the first thing to be seen around the fire will be those insects, moths and mosquitoes. That is why the Arabs said: 'Many a soul yearned for its own ruin'. These insects were drawn to the light of the fire and came to it. When we light a fire in an open area, you find a lot of insects are killed around the fire. So, we say that these insects had yearned for their ruin; they came to the light, but the flames from the fire burnt them. This is exactly what happens to those people who are disobedient; they yearn for their ruin because they do not realise that these (forbidden) lusts will cause him to be thrown in the fire.

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed..., ' implies that just as the fire attracts people to it, as the acts of disobedience attract people to them. If a person is kept away from the fire to any other place between the fire and paradise, this will be good for him/her. So, what will be the state of the person who has been kept away from the Fire and admitted to the paradise? Such a person has undoubtedly triumphed.

(1) *Muslim, Sahih*

This is, indeed, a good thing. That is why there is a bridge over the fire that we will have to cross. Why? It is so that the believer will see the fire beneath their feet and, thus, s/he praises Allah for being a Believer because if they were not a believer, s/he would have fallen into the Fire. So, they will say: 'Praise be to Allah Who saved me from the Fire'.

'... Whoever is kept away from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have triumphed...'. 'Triumphed' in this context means salvation from what you hate and receiving what you like. As a matter of fact, just attaining salvation from what you dislike is considered a blessing; and to be indulged after that is a blessing and is considered a triumph. The saying of Allah, 'whoever is kept away from the fire ...' indicates that there is someone else who has kept him/her away from the Fire. That is totally true because it is Allah *the Almighty* Who has conferred His Favour upon him/her by guiding them to belief in the worldly life, and by keeping them away from the fire in the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse by saying, '... The present world is only an illusory pleasure'. As a matter of fact, when He *the Almighty* describes the life in which we live as '*dunia*/of a lower rank', this means that there is another life which is not like this (i.e. '*ulia*/of a higher rank"). That is why He *the Almighty* states in another verse that the Hereafter is the abode of eternal life, but people are unaware of the fact. (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) That is, it is the life that truly deserves to be called 'life' because the life-span of the person should not be calculated from the very beginning of the universe to the end of time, for this life span pertains mainly to the universe. As for mankind, every one of them has his own life span starting from their birth, and ending with their death; it is totally different from that of the universe.

As a matter of fact, one knows nothing at all about their life span; is s/he predestined to live for a moment, or a day, or a month or a century? All we know about that matter is that everyone has his/her own life span which is predestined for them.

Enjoyment of this worldly life is commensurate with the person's allotment of enjoyment, that is to say, according one's own abilities. If we contemplate this verse from this perspective, we realise that its enjoyment is simple and, thus, it is not right for a person to fall prey to its seduction. One must bear in

mind that Allah *the Almighty* warns us in the Quran that man will transgress when he sees himself as self-sufficient. (*al-'Alaq: 6-7*)

As such, delusion of this worldly life is when a short-term pleasure distracts you from the endless pleasure. People must draw a comparison between these two pleasures so that they will not be deluded by the simple (enjoyment) and, consequently, leave the great (one) in the Hereafter. You must weigh the pleasure you obtain, according to your abilities, and the pleasure you will obtain due to the Bounty of Allah. That is why this present life is of an illusory pleasure.

In reality, Allah *the Almighty* accurately and exactly describes this worldly life as “an enjoyment”. But He *Glorified is He*, meanwhile, directs our attention to the fact that man must not be deluded by this simple pleasure and, preferring it to the endless one in the Hereafter. After that, He *the Almighty* tells Messenger Muhammad and his followers, that belief alone is the best reward for them in spite of the fact that it may not result in pleasure in this worldly life. That is why He *the Almighty* informs us that belief will not be victorious all the time, for if it was, they would have been accustomed to it due to the fact that it ensures them a happy life. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* explains to them that they will be afflicted by trials. As such, He *the Almighty* says that belief entails that you (O, believers) will be afflicted with trials in yourselves and properties. He *the Almighty* says:

لَتَجْلِبُونَ فِي أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعُنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى
كَثِيراً وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

You are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons; you are sure to hear much that is hurtful from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with God. If you are steadfast and mindful of God, that is the best course [186] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran: 186*)

How is one tested through possessions? This happens by consuming all of the person's properties and possessions through a calamity. It may also happen

through monitoring how the person is going to spend their income; is s/he going to spend it charitably or not? In this particular verse, Allah *the Almighty* gives precedence to money over the soul because testing one through their soul is done either by killing, injury, or disease. As a matter of fact, not all people will be killed, but everyone will be tested with their possessions.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... You are sure to hear much that is hurtful from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah...’ indicates that there are two groups of disbelief, as follows: People of the Book and the polytheists. As a matter of fact, these two groups of disbelievers used to oppose Islam. In addition, they injured Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* severely, and his Companions, by such acts such as mocking him and his Companions. That is why Allah *the Almighty* asks the believers to prepare themselves to face these trials with pleasure.

People mistakenly think that all afflictions are inherently evil. This is not true. In fact, afflictions are nothing but a test and thus one may pass it or fail it. So, when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘You are sure to be tested’, and this asserts that He *Glorified is He* is going to test His creatures just as a teacher says to his student: ‘I am going to give you a test’.

So, the phrase, ‘We shall try you’ means that we are going to test you, but does this mean that afflictions are bad or good? It is evil only for those who do not react well. Those who pass the trial of possessions say: ‘Everything in this life will come to an end, and Allah *the Almighty* has lessened my own responsibilities. Even though I may have had a lot of money, I was not spending it in correct, lawful ways and, as a result, it would have led me to destruction. Consequently, He *the Almighty* has taken my money so that He will not throw me in the fire’. In the Quran, He *Glorified is He* tells us about human nature as it relates to money. He states that when He *the Almighty* is generous to him and favours him, he says, ‘My Lord has honoured me’. But when He *Glorified is He* tries him and restricts his provision, he says, ‘My Lord has humiliated me’. (*al-Fajr*: 15-16)

These aforementioned two verses of, the chapter of *al-Fajr* emphasize two issues as follows: when the person is given money, he says: ‘My Lord

has honoured me'; this is better than the person who reacted the opposite way. The story of that person is mentioned in the chapter of *al-Qasas* in which He *the Almighty* tells us about Qarun who claimed that he had acquired this money by virtue of his own knowledge and thus Allah *the Almighty* destroyed him completely. (*al-Qasas*: 78) Such a person, who believes that richness is an honour given to him and who believes that poverty is a kind of humiliation, is not fully aware of the fact that money is not the proof of honour, nor is poverty the proof of humiliation. But the question to be asked here is: 'When is money viewed as proof of honour?' This actually happens when one spends it charitably in its correct, lawful ways. But if one does not pay Allah's due portion of his/her money, it (i.e. money) will be proof of one's humiliation. As a matter of fact, sometime a person may be rich, but he does not pay the shares of Allah from his/her money and in this case, poverty may be better than richness. That is why He *the Almighty* comments in the following verse on these two types of people by clearly stating that these two positions are not right. This obviously means that having wealth is not an indication of honour, and nor is poverty an indication of humiliation.

He *the Almighty* thus, wants to provide the evidence to this point. So, He *Glorified is He* informs those who believe that having wealth is an indication of honour of their behaviour, as seen in what follows: 'You do not honour the orphans, nor do you encourage one another to feed the poor. As well, you consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether'. (*al-Fajr*: 17-19)

As long as you do not treat the orphan kindly, how can wealth be an indication of honour? In this case, wealth is a burden on you and so, why do you, who do not honour the orphans, think that taking it away from you is an indication of humiliation? He *the Almighty* has saved you from being abased, so you do not have to bear the responsibilities that wealth entails. As such, it becomes instantly clear that wealth is not an indication of honour, and nor is poverty an indication of humiliation. But if even you do not have money, why did you not encourage one another to feed the poor? You do not even encourage one another even by words. If you do not even want to urge one another, how do you think that money is an indication of honour? You seize inheritance, taking both your own share and the share of others without even investigating

whether this money is lawful or not. If this is the case, how can being given wealth viewed as an indication of honour and how is poverty viewed as humiliation? It is neither one, nor the other.

He *the Almighty* says: 'You are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons; you are sure to hear much that is hurtful from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah...' and thus these trials and afflictions will surely take place. O, Allah! We firmly believe that we are going to be tested, but what are the ways to overcome these trials and afflictions? The remedy is mentioned clearly in the saying of Allah, '... If you are steadfast and mindful of Allah, that is the best course'. You (O, believers) must show patience if you are afflicted by your possessions; you must also be patient if you are afflicted and tested in yourselves; and you must, furthermore, show patience for the harm you may face from the people of the Book and the polytheists. As such, if you do face difficulties from them, then patience for all these afflictions and trials is the best route for you. The word, '*Al-'azm*/determination' refers to gathering one's strength to do a particular act. So, if you intend to do a particular action, and then set your intention in your heart, you gather your strength. The saying of Allah 'that is the best course' indicates that you are supposed to be steadfast and gather all your strength to do a particular act.

As such, the matter revolves mainly around testing the person through his/her possessions and self. Additionally, they (i.e the believers) will experience a great deal of harm from the polytheists and the people of the Book. In truth, all these afflictions and trials are in need of patience. We previously explained that patience is of three kinds: patience for a calamity that afflicts you, or an act of worship to be performed, and patience when being prevented from doing something. As such, the kind of patience is defined according to the preposition used with it. One may show patience when being prevented from committing a forbidden act. As well, s/he may show patience when performing acts of worship.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'You are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons...', indicates that your enemy is not defined because you may be afflicted either in your property or in your person. But His

Glorified is He says, ‘... You are sure to hear much that is hurtful from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who associate others with Allah...,’ which explicitly defines your enemy for you. So, when you see this enemy before you, you burst with rage. He *the Almighty* therefore, clarified the matter warning us to ‘Be careful not to allow them to cause your anger to consume you, instead, you should control your anger and not be deceived by vain matters. Rather, you should be calm, and not respond, unless you are certain of victory’. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘... If you are steadfast and mindful of Allah, that is the best course’.

The phrase, ‘*ittaqu Allah*/fear Allah’ orders believers to prevent themselves from committing an action which brings the Wrath of Allah *the Almighty*. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* rode a donkey having a saddle with a fadakiyya, a velvet covering. He mounted me behind him and went to visit Sa’d bin ‘Ubada, and this was before the battle of Badr. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* proceeded until he passed by a group of people in which ‘Abdullah ibn Ubai ibn Salul was present. This was before ‘Abdullah embraced Islam. The group comprised of Muslims, polytheists, i.e., idolaters and Jews. ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha was also present... When dust from the donkey covered the gathering, ‘Abdullah ibn Ubai covered his nose with his upper garment and said, “Do not annoy us with dust”. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* greeted them, stopped and dismounted. Then, he invited them to Allah (i.e., to embrace Islam) and recited some verses of the Holy Quran to them. On hearing the verses, ‘Abdullah ibn Ubai said, “O, Man ! There is nothing better than what you say, if it is true. Do not disturb us in our gathering with it, but return to your house, and if somebody comes to you, teach him there”. ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha said, “Yes, O Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*! Bring your teachings to our gathering, for we love that”. So the Muslims, the pagans and the Jews started insulting each other until they were about to fight. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* kept on placating them until they calmed down. Subsequently, the Prophet mounted his animal and proceeded until he reached Sa’d ibn ‘Ubada. He said to him: “O Sa’d! Have you not heard what Abu Hubab (i.e., ‘Abdullah ibn Ubai) said?” He said such and such. Sa’d said: “O Allah’s Apostle! Excuse and forgive him, for Allah has given you what He has given

you. The people of this town (Medina) decided unanimously to crown him and make him their chief by placing a turban on his head, but when that was prevented by the Truth, which Allah has given you, he ('Abdullah ibn Ubai) was jealous, and that was the reason he behaved this way with you'. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forgave him.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَتُبَيِّنُنَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَكْتُمُونَهُ
فَنَبَذُوهُ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَأَشْرَوْا بِهِ مِمَّا قَلِيلًا فِئْسَ مَا يَشْتَرُونَ

**God took a pledge from those who were given the Scripture
– ‘Make it known to people; do not conceal it’ – but they
tossed the pledge over their shoulders, they bartered it for
a small price: what a bad bargain they made! [187]
(The Quran, Al-'Imran: 187)**

We knew beforehand, that Allah *the Almighty* had taken the pledge to believe in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and all the previous Prophets and Messengers. He *Glorified is He* states this matter clearly in the chapter of Al-'Imran. He *the Almighty* took the pledge of all the previous Prophets and Messengers that they must support and believe in the Message of Muhammad. (Al-'Imran: 81)

Here we are examining another pledge taken by Allah from the people of the Book who believed in the Prophets sent to them. Allah says: ‘Allah took a pledge from those who were given the Scripture– “Make it known to people; do not conceal it...”’. So, the question to be asked here is ‘What is that they must make known? And why did they conceal it?’ Did they conceal the Scripture? Yes, because they forgot some of it which means that they paid no attention to it.

This is a fact that is supported by another verse in the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* tells us that the people of the Book forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded. (al-Ma'ida: 14) But what did they do with that

(1) Al-Bukhari, Sahih

unforgotten portion of their religion? The answer to this question is provided by Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, when He *Glorified is He* states that those, who conceal clear proofs and guidance sent down by Allah, after He made it clear for the people in the Scripture, will be cursed by Allah and cursed by those who curse. (*al-Baqara*: 159)

They concealed the clear evidence that Allah sent down in the Book. So, concealment is a matter of choice. As for forgetfulness, they may be excused, eventhough it is a blameworthy action because if they had occupied themselves with their religion, they would not have forgotten it. As for that which they did not forget, they concealed some of, and what they did not conceal, they altered with their tongues [meaning, they changed the words]. Did they stop at that point? No, they did not. They, in addition, fabricated lies from their own illusions and attributed it to Allah. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells us that He prepared a severe punishment for those who write a 'Book' with their own hands and then attributed it to Allah in exchange for a small price. (*al-Baqara*: 79)

The parts that were fabricated by the people of the Book are not accepted as being from Allah unless it can be verified by another unaltered book from Allah. As for the concept of 'exchanging this Book for a small price', we have to understand it from another perspective. It is taken for granted that we use money (price) to buy objects, so how can we buy the money (price) itself? This happens when you put a price on a commodity, and here appears the first contradiction in the matter. Originally, the description of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was mentioned in their Scriptures to the extent that they used to pray for victory over those who were determined to deny the truth, but when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they denied and rejected him. (*al-Baqara*: 89)

So, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '*Latubayyinunnahu/to make it known*', means to tell people about the description of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, as they are mentioned exactly in your Books, with neither alteration nor distortion. As a matter of fact, when they do so, they will be conveying the same message that was revealed in their Books, sent down to them from Allah *the Almighty*.

As such, the various meanings are interrelated. Accordingly, in case they (i.e. the people of the Book) showed the Book revealed from Allah, the characteristics of Prophet Muhammad would then be found within. As a result, we find a correlation between the meaning of “showing the Book” and that of ‘showing the description of Prophet Muhammad.’

The word, ‘*nabadh/to toss*’, is in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Make it known to people; do not conceal it’— but they tossed the pledge over their shoulders...”’, means to toss something away in such a way that reveals hatred because the person who dislikes something wants to get rid of it quickly and completely. For instance, if a person gives another something to keep, but while holding the item, finds that it is an ember of fire, how will he act? He will undoubtedly, and unconsciously, throw it away. When one throws something away, they can throw it to right, left, or in front. But when he tosses it over his shoulder, this means that he never wants to see it again. So, if we contemplate the expression ‘but they tossed the pledge over their shoulders’, we will find that the act of tossing itself, indicates deep hatred. If a man throws something in front of him, he may want it when remembering it, but if he tosses it over his shoulder, this indicates a deep and intense hatred. That is why the Arabs used to say: ‘Do not make my demand behind your back,’ that is, do not ignore my demand. The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...but they tossed the pledge over their shoulders...,’ means that those who committed this crime were a group. Using the plural word ‘shoulders’, points out that every one of them did the act of tossing the pledge over his shoulder. This clearly signifies that they unanimously agreed to do this, as if they all agreed on misguidance. They (i.e. the people of the Book) did not stop there; rather, they exchanged it for a small price and, certainly, what a bad bargain they made! If we reflect carefully on this Quranic expression, we will find that the thing to be purchased here is ‘the price’. This is used, in spite of the fact that we use ‘the price’ to indicate a purchase. As such, we may deduce that there are some people who may barter the matter for a meal, while others may do so for a beautiful piece of clothing; there are still some who may exchange it for some need. They simply say: ‘We want money so that we can buy anything we desire with it’. This is the meaning of the saying of Allah ‘...they bartered it for a small price...’

Commenting on the item they purchased, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... What a bad bargain they made’! Why? It is because one may think that they can buy everything they want with money (referred to as the price in this particular verse). This is incorrect because meeting one’s urgent needs is more important to him than money. We have actually explained this point before and said: ‘Imagine that there is a person in the desert and he owns a mound of gold, but he is in a dire need for a glass of water.’ It is true that we can buy items with money, but there are, in the meantime, some things which may be more useful than money and gold. In such a situation, that person will purchase a glass of water with all the property he has. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْرَحُونَ بِمَا آتَوْا وَيُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يُحْمَدُوا بِمَا لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا
فَلَا تَحْسَبْنَهُمْ بِمَفَازَةٍ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿١٨٨﴾

**Do not think [Prophet] that those who exult in what they
have done and seek praise for things they have not done will
escape the torment; agonizing torment awaits them [188]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 188)**

The word ‘*al-husban*/to think’ means that a person thinks that something is not true. As a matter of fact, when one listens to something, they view it in the light of what is obvious, without even reflecting on the reasons behind it. So, those who exult in what they have done are of two kinds: the first kind includes those who exult in what they do to oppose the call of Truth. It includes the hypocrites who, pretending to be believers, exulted in their deception to the believers. This actually happened before Allah *the Almighty* exposed them to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers. The other kind includes those who exulted in what they do to support the Call of Truth. As such, we have two kinds; the first are hypocrites, while the second have to do with the believers whose exultation is judged lawful. Allah *the Almighty* states in the Quran that the believers are allowed to rejoice in the Bounty and Grace of Allah. (*Yunus*: 58)

So, Allah *the Almighty* did not forbid all kinds of exultation; rather, they were permitted to exult in His Bounty. But in another place in the Quran, we find Him *Glorified is He* forbidding exultation, exactly as it happened in the story of Qarun.

In the Quran, He *the Almighty* states that the people of Qarun advised him not to exult, for Allah *the Almighty* does not like the exultant. (*al-Qasas*: 76)

As such, we find that there are verses in the Quran that declare exultation forbidden, and others allowing the believers to rejoice and exult. So, the essence of exultation itself is not detested, but what is detestable are the reasons behind the exultation. As for the believers, they rejoice the Victory of Allah and with making His Word supreme which are legal reasons. As for the forbidden reasons, they include expressing opposition to any divine law for the sake of eradicating it. As a matter of fact, this is what the disbeliever rejoices in. But the genuine exultation is that which is not followed by regret and, thus, the exultation of the believers is continuous to the end of time, and even after that. As for the exultation of the disbelievers, the hypocrites and the people of the Book, who lied to Allah *the Almighty* it is forbidden, and they will regret their actions. In reality, the person who shows his true feelings is always sad.

So, Allah *the Almighty* wants to protect the believers against the forces of disbelief that oppose them, and who exult in what they did against you, so what they did should not weaken you. As well, you should not think that they will be saved from the fire. As long as their exultation leads to their eventual punishment, it is, in effect, something which is worthless.

But what did those, who are referred to by Allah saying ‘Do not think [Prophet] that those who exult in what they have done...’ do? This verse may refer to the people of the Book who concealed the description of Prophet Muhammad in their Book because the previous verse says: ‘Allah took a pledge from those who were given the Scripture– ‘Make it known to people; do not conceal it’– but they tossed the pledge over their shoulders....’” So, what did these people do? They concealed the description of Prophet Muhammad mentioned in their Book and revelled in what they did. In addition, they sought praise for things they had not done, by those disbelievers who are like them.

As a matter of fact, a person may sin but regrets committing the sin. However, if they persist in taking pride in what they did, this is considered another sin. As such, committing this (forbidden) act is viewed as sin and exulting in it is another sin because if they regretted the sin, it would be considered an indication of his repentance. As for that person who commits

the sin, and then takes pride in what they did, is foolishness; they committed a sin, exulted in it and sought praise for what they did.

Was he to be praised for what he did not do, or for what he did? It goes without saying that he was to be praised for what he did not do because he deviated from the right path. If someone says that this verse was sent down concerning the hypocrites who left Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during his war against the disbelievers of Mecca, it is also true. That is because those hypocrites were happy not to have the burdens and hardships of the journey, and *Jihad* with the believers. After the battle was over, they gave weak excuses to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If they regretted what they did, it would have been good for them. As for the believers, they were not aware of their lies and, consequently, they were praised. Those hypocrites committed the sin and were happy doing it; they were also safe from the hardships of war and were happy for that too; their apology was a kind of hypocrisy. In fact, this verse lays down a general principle, that is, opposing the truth is a sin and exulting in it is another sin. In addition, seeking praise for it is a third sin. So, it is a complex sin. As a matter of fact, they conceal the sin and show otherwise so that we thank them and praise them. That is why He *the Almighty* establishes an everlasting principle which is applicable for all times and places.

Concerning the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... and seek praise for things they have not done...,’ there are very important questions to be asked here: ‘Are they blamed for seeking praise? Or are they blamed for seeking praise for that which they did not do?’ In truth, they are blamed for seeking praise for that which they did not do. There is no blame if the person wants to be praised for an act they have done. When the Quran addresses the faculties of mankind, it knows perfectly well how to do it because it is the revelation of Allah *the Almighty* Who is fully aware of the nature and essence of mankind. The nature of man seeks praise from others because this act gives the person a sign of prestige which results, in turn, from one’s own work. It is known for certain that people do not praise one’s existence, except for their actions and deeds.

As long as people love praise, it will encourage them to do good deeds so that they will receive praise; and as long as they are praised, they will perfect

their work. Accordingly, all people around them will benefit from their perfect work. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* wants benefit to spread an, hence, He does not prevent the act of praising others so that people will work more and more. If Allah *the Almighty* forbade the act of praising, this would necessitate that only those people with outstanding abilities would be the ones who work, while those with poor abilities would not benefit the society any more. As such, those people with poor abilities are in need of praise so that they work more and more, and so on. It goes without saying that the person who seeks the praise of people will not gain the rank of the person who seeks the praise of Allah *the Almighty*. However, we will praise them so that they will utilise their instinct for loving praise and, as a consequence, increase the number of workers. When Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the issue of praising the good and criticising the bad in the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn, we find that He *Glorified is He* tells us through Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He is the One that established him in the land and granted him means of access to everything. (*al-Kahf*: 83-84)

This verse clearly indicates that people have no power to establish themselves, but it is the Power of Allah *the Almighty* that does so. Therefore, if he is a true believer, he will not be deluded by those means that cause him to disobey. That is because belief makes the believer fully aware of the fact that means are established by Allah *the Almighty*. To conclusively prove that He *the Almighty* is the One Who makes means, He *Glorified is He* tells that He takes the Kingdom from whomever He wants, and grants it to whomever He wants. Accordingly, we say to such people who understand otherwise: 'If the means were established by you, you should firmly adhere to them. But they are a gift from Allah *the Almighty* Who tells us in the Quran that He granted means of access to whomever He wants'. In reality, means are of various kinds; they are means that directly accompany actions, and means that precede them. For instance, if you wear a beautiful dress, this means that you brought a beautiful piece of cloth and gave it to a tailor who made it perfectly. But even before the tailor made it, it was woven from cotton which is the fruit of the processes of ploughing, planting and irrigating. If you reflect on the direct means, you should then follow them back to their source, and you will come to something

which has no cause, a matter which obviously indicates that He *the Almighty* is the One Who makes and establishes causes.

If you carefully examine the chain of anything in existence, you must reach the most preliminary source which is Allah *the Almighty*. Electric light is a striking example of this. You will find factories that manufacture the special glasses for these bulbs, whereas another factory manufacture the wires within the light itself, and so on, until you will arrive at something human hands have nothing to do with, and as a result, you will admit that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who makes all causes. For example, when you sit on a chair, you may say: 'The carpenter made it after getting the wood from the dealer who, in turn, brought it from the woods. But how did the wood get into the woods?' You will say: 'I do not know'. Yet, if you are a true believer, you will say: 'Allah is the One Who created it'. As such, you will find, from examining the chain of anything in this life, that Allah is the One Who created everything. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells that He granted Dhu Al-Qarnyn the means of access to everything. Thus, when Allah gave him the means, he achieved the results. He *the Almighty* continues the story of Dhu Al-Qarnyn. He *Glorified is He* tells us that when Dhu Al-Qarnyn reached the place where the sun sets, he found it going down into a black sea, and found by it, inhabitants. As a matter of fact, when you are on a ship, you will see the sun at the time of sunset sinking in the sea, but when you reach that particular place, you will find that the sun is intact. That is because it never vanishes, it 'sets in a spring of dark mud'. He *the Almighty* continues the story of Dhu Al-Qarnyn, confirming that he found inhabitants by this place, and they asked him either to punish [them], or else adopt among them [a way of] goodness. (*al-Kahf*: 86)

If we carefully examine it, we will find that Allah *the Almighty* authorises Dhu Al-Qarnyn either to punish these people or to guide them to righteousness. Dhu Al-Qarnyn understood that this is an authorisation from Allah to him, but he chose to impose severe punishments on the people. He declared that he would punish those who did wrong in this present life so as to prevent evil from spreading among people. But this is not the only punishment they are going to be afflicted with; they will return to their Lord to be punished with a terrible punishment. We notice that Dhu Al-Qarnyn did not describe his

punishment as “*nukran*/terrible,” but he did so while describing the punishment afflicted by Allah; why? That is because when a human inflicts punishment on another, they do so according to their human ability. Accordingly, the punishment of Allah is in accordance with His Power. So, can we endure the punishment of Allah- we seek Refuge in Allah? Of course, we have no power to endure it. As for those who believed, Dhu Al-Qarnyn took another position. Allah *the Almighty* tells us that Dhu Al-Qarnyn gave a goodly reward to those who believed and did righteous deeds. As well, he spoke to them using his authority with ease. As such, those people who like to be praised ask: ‘Why did he honour him?’ Accordingly, he acted like one that should be honoured. It is for this reason that you will find youths competing with one another to play football, but why? That is because they see that people honour those who score goals and, therefore, they want to score goals.

Moreover, our pure religion instructs us to thank those who do us favours so that they are encouraged to continue to do favours. In this regard, the following *athar* (i.e. a statement said by pious people) may be quoted: [‘He who does not thank people, do not thank Allah.’] So, the love of praise is something which is naturally and inherently embedded in man. In order to motivate people to work, you should ask them to do those kinds of jobs which fit their various abilities. But in case the excellence of work is confined to those people who do not like praise, we will reduce the number of the workers. That is why you will find the flawlessness of work where you find encouragement to those who perfect their work and determent for those who are careless. So, bosses should not reward those who act according to their own whims; rather, they should reward those who flawlessly perform their work. When others see that it is only those who perfectly do their work, who are rewarded and praised, they all will work hard. But if the opposite occurs, that is when disaster strikes.

Allah *the Almighty* says ‘... Do not think [Prophet] that those who exult in what they have done....’ This establishes a principle and a constitution of belief applicable to all aspects of life including the relationship between the ruler and the subjects, the relationship between the individual and himself and those around him, and the relationship between a person and good deeds or

sins. When a person sins, this means that they might relieve some emotion, by committing this sin. But when they realize what they did, they must regret that sin and not take pride in it.

This is the first stage. Then, they should not persist in committing the sin. But if they commit a sin and claim that they are doing a good deed to the extent that they want to be praised for this act; this sin, as such, is a compound sin. Such a person will fall under the category about which Allah says: ‘... never think them [to be] in safety from the punishment...’

The word ‘*Al-mafazah*/escaping the punishment,’ means to go to a place where a person thinks they are safe, i.e. that they will find success in this place. The word, ‘*Al-mafazah*’ in Arabic is used to describe the desert in terms of optimism. They do not call it ‘*mahlakah*/a place of destruction’ because the person who travels through it will die. So, they call it ‘*Al-mafazah*’ to encourage optimism, or because the person who passes it will win, or because it is an open area and, by doing so, man will not be faced with any wild animals or enemies. All of these meanings are true, for one has escaped all the dangers. In reality, hills and valleys may not protect a person from the fierce attacks of the wild beasts that can injure him. But when he is in open land, he can see these wild beasts and animals and manages to be safe. Whoever believes that the desert is a place of destruction let him know that it has been called so to inspire optimism, exactly as Arabs call the person who is stung by a snake ‘*Al-Salim*/The Healthy Person’.

Due to the fact that we are optimistic, our customs necessitate us to call an item by its opposite. For example, if you are someone’s guest and you are offered coffee and after you finish, the servant comes and the employer says to him: ‘Take the cups which are full’, instead of saying: ‘Take the empty cups’. This is a kind of optimism.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... never think them [to be] in safety from the punishment, and for them is a painful punishment’ indicates that those people think that they will escape punishment even though they do not believe in the Truth, and nor do they believe that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who is the One Who has control over all their affairs. As such, they wrongly think that their victory in this worldly life will not be followed by defeat. But Allah *the Almighty* follows

this verse by saying: '*Walillahi mulku as-samawati*' 'Control of the heavens and earth belongs to Allah...' He *Glorified is He* has control over what He possesses, and no one is beyond His possession. As long as Allah has dominion over the heavens and the earth, for instance, when He says: 'Do not think [Prophet] that those who exult in what they have done and seek praise for things they have not done; do not think they will escape the torment. An agonizing torment awaits them.' (*Al-Imran*: 188)

This promise will certainly be fulfilled because no one can escape it. Due to this, people who have been granted insight, smartness and abundant wisdom say, 'Save your obedience for the One you cannot do without, and save your gratitude for the One Whose favour never leaves you, and save your submission for the One Whose dominion and sovereignty you could never leave, So Allah's words,

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٨٩﴾

Control of the heavens and earth belongs to God; God has power over everything [189] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 189)

indicate that when Allah *Glorified is He* promises, He is quite able to enforce what He promises, and no one is able to evade Him. This confirms the meaning. If the enemies of the religion delight in the immediate aftermath of their apparent victory, the believers apprehend the end result and what it will be. For this reason, you find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too!* neither his wealth nor his gains will help him: *he will burn in the Flaming Fire,* and so will his wife, the firewood-carrier,* with a palm-fibre rope around her neck' (*al-Masad*: 1-5). This chapter was revealed about the uncle of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it is one of the evidences of believing in the truthfulness of Muhammad's conveyance of the message of Allah, for Abu Lahab was a disbeliever. There were many disbelievers just like him. Was not 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* one of them? Was not Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* one of them? Was not 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl *Allah be pleased with him* one of them? Was not Safwan *Allah be pleased with him* one of them? All of these people were disbelievers,

and then became believers. Who informed Muḥammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about Abu Lahab when He said: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined! May he be ruined too!* neither his wealth nor his gains will help him: *he will burn in the Flaming Fire,* and so will his wife, the firewood-carrier,* with a palm-fibre rope around her neck.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5); this chapter of Quran was recited and memorised by many believers. After all that Abu Lahab would not say: 'I testify that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is the Messenger of Allah. He might have added, 'If Muhammad says that I will enter a blazing fire, I am a believer!' Who informed him *peace and blessings be upon him* that Abu Lahab would not do these, whereas ibn Al-Khattab and 'Amr ibn Al-'Aṣ, *Allah be pleased with them*, did? The One Who informed Muḥammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this knew well that Abu Lahab would never choose faith, thus the Quran states this as evidence of its truthfulness. After that, indeed, Abu Lahab died a disbeliever.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* wants to emphasise this by clarifying: 'Do not imagine that this threat of punishment would fail to materialise, for I am the One, the Eternal Refuge and Self-Sufficing, and no one can oppose this judgement of Mine.' And so He says in the chapter of *al-Ikhlāṣ*: 'Say, 'He is Allah, [who is] One Allah,* the Eternal Refuge.* He begot no one nor was He begotten.* No one is comparable to Him.' (*al-Ikhlāṣ*: 1-4)

As long as He Alone is Allah, the One, what He says would not be contradicted by any other assumed god, and His word will last forever. So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* after saying, 'Do not think they will escape the torment. An agonizing torment awaits them.' (*Al-'Imran*: 188), and says, 'And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth' (*Al-'Imran*: 189), He wants to make it clear that He added the threat to this new fact of faith: 'And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth' (*Al-'Imran*: 189). He mentions the heavens and the earth as if they are two brackets since the heavens overshadow, while the earth carries. Therefore, we are all enclosed between two things that belong to Allah *Glorified is He*. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to mankind: 'As long as you are all surrounded by Allah's dominion, where can you go?' 'And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth' (*Al-'Imran*: 189). There might be someone who has

dominion over something, yet has no power to rule it. As such, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this by saying His case is unlike that since He possesses both dominion and power: 'And Allah has power over everything.' (*Al-Imran*: 189) Then, He depicts another image of faith, to help believers realise it in the souls. After the introduction which confirmed Allah's truthfulness in all that He says, which is witnessed in real-life events:

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾

There truly are signs in the creation of the heavens and earth, and in the alternation of night and day, for those with understanding [190] (The Quran, *Al-Imran*: 190)

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to build a religious conception on solid foundation in the human soul, amazed by this universe, in which there is a sky designed by Allah *Glorified is He* that has no pillars to support it, while beneath it lies the celestial bodies and the firm earth, would it not reflect on the One Who created these things? By Allah *Glorified is He* if someone were to wake from his sleep and find that a canopy had been erected in the field during the night, he would get up saying, 'What's going on?' So what about someone who opens his eyes and finds this well-organised universe which provides him with the means by which he lives?

For this reason, in another chapter, He explains this point in a way that clarifies to us the concept of faith in the human mind. We do not simply wait for the admonisher who comes to us with a message and a prophecy to show us the path chosen for us by the Creator. Rather, he made it mandatory that we use our natural disposition to be directly be aware of the Creator. As we said before, if a person's plane crashed in the desert, and he found no water, no trees or no people there, then, he fell asleep due to exhaustion and woke up to find a table laden with delicious food, by Allah *Glorified is He*, and before stretching out his hand to partake of it, would he not stop to wonder who it was that made or gave all this? His amazement at what had happened would make him wonder who it was that brought it. He would think about this for even tasting the food, before giving in to his hunger. The same can be said of those people who open their eyes to find this amazing universe in which not

one of them would have claimed to have created it. If one of them had claimed to have created it, the argument would have been simplified; yet none have claimed this. Has anyone ever claimed to have created this universe which we all see in its wonderful order and with its sound laws? No, never. Therefore, whoever did indeed claim to have created it would be safe in his claim until someone else came along and claimed to be the one who created it. Yet this has never happened, despite the existence of atheists and fabricators who invent lies about Allah *Glorified is He*. For this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Who created the heavens and earth?' (*an-Naml*: 60)

It is as though the True Lord says: 'If it were not Me Who created them, then who did?' No one has ever dared to ascribe the universe to himself, especially since atheists and disbelievers are unable to create even the most trivial of things out of nothing. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* chose not to create a drinking glass with its man-made shape in order that mankind would manufacture it with their hands; therefore they would understand that everything is accomplished by using the means of His creation. A drinking glass is a trivial matter that adds luxury to life. Before it was invented, we had been able to drink. There had been no tree that had borne glasses as its fruit; instead, a human being designed it simply out of a desire to make life easier. This small thing required a designer with great knowledge of different sciences and materials. He then searched the earth for the material that, when melted, resulted in this transparency and shine. He experimented with different elements of the earth and found that only sand would do.⁽¹⁾ He discovered this material and mixed it with other substances in order to melt it. The design of the drinking glass required skilled workers and scientists; all of this just for a little glass cup which could have been done without. Think about what was required to create it: great effort was needed to roam the earth, examining all its elements and many means of production. Then, people deduced the correct chemical proportions for the original materials and what was required to create them.

Every production needs matching requirements; as such, no one ever claimed to have created these. Thus, the True Lord asks who created all this. When He asks a question, He does not do so because He wants to find out the

(1) It is said that the sand of Sinai is one of the best materials for this production.

answer; He is perfectly able to say: 'I am the One Who created the sky and the earth.' So what would the one who is asked do? He would search for an answer, and eventually, would find no one but Allah *Glorified is He*.

The questioner would not put forth a question like this unless he was sure that the answer could only be the one he intended. 'Who created the heavens and earth? Who sends down water from the sky for you— with which we cause to grow...' (*an-Naml*: 60). In this verse, He mentions the matter directly: '...with which We cause gardens of delight to grow...' (*an-Naml*: 60), i.e. pleasing to the eye with their greenery, vigour, freshness, shade, flowers and fruits. He does not restrict His words to saying: 'that you may eat therefrom' because only the owner eats the fruits, whereas the beautiful view cannot be withheld from anyone to look upon it and enjoy what they see. When any of us sees a beautiful garden, it pleases us to see it. True, you cannot stretch out your hand to eat its fruits since it does not belong to you, but can anyone stop you from enjoying its view or its pleasing smell? No.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the bounties that are available to all, both those who own and those who do not, by saying: 'gardens of delight'. We know that when the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* reminds us of the favours he bestows upon us, He does so to clarify to us that we should not mistake the purpose of these things as just with which to fill our bellies. In essence, there are many beautiful delights from a garden that we are capable of enjoying in other ways rather than simply eating. There are kinds of trees that produce no edible fruit, yet they must have other purposes: their beautiful leaves give shade, and they perfume the air with their scent and they produce needed wood. In addition to this, some trees also produce fine fruits that are beneficial.

For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'It is He who sends down water from the sky. With it, We produce the shoots of each plant, then bring greenery from it, and from that, We bring out grains, one riding on the other in close-packed rows. From the date palm comes clusters of low-hanging dates, and there are gardens of vines, olives, and pomegranates, alike yet different. Watch their fruits as they grow and ripen! In all this there are signs for those who would believe.' (*al-An'am*: 99)

Allah asks mankind: 'You have no power to make the trees grow in them— is it another god beside Allah? No! But they are people who take others to be equal with Allah.' (*an-Naml*: 60)

One of the orientalisists gave the following shallow remark: 'Does Allah censure and reproach His creatures for being just?' Since the Arabic word '*ya'diloon*' usually means 'to be just'; however in this verse it means 'take others to be equal with Allah '. He did not understand the true meaning since the meaning of the word '*adl*' (justice) in this verse is to deviate and swerve away from the truth. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Who is it that made the earth a stable place to live? Who made rivers flow through it? Who set immovable mountains on it and created a barrier between the fresh and salt water? Is it another god beside God? No! But most of them do not know.' (*an-Naml*: 61)

It is He *Glorified is He* Who created the earth and placed within it rivers and firm mountains. The True Lord *Glorified is He* explains the reason for the existence of the firm mountains in another place in the Noble Quran: 'Say, "How can you disregard the One Who created the earth in two Days? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds! He placed solid mountains on it, blessed it and measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them - all in four Days without distinction for those who ask.' (*Fussilat*: 9-10).

Why did you bless the earth, O, Allah? Allah *Glorified is He* blessed the mountains and determined therein the sustenance for the inhabitants of the earth. 'Sustenance' means anything that is useful to preserve life. We know that sustenance is derived from crops and that crops always grow in fertile land. We also know that fertile land exists in valleys and that a valley is land between two mountains. Why is a valley between two mountains fertile? It is because when rain falls from the sky, it lands on the mountains; and as we know, mountains are affected by factors of erosion. Hot weather comes after cold; heat makes the land expand, while cold makes it contract. This constant expanding and contracting makes the surface of the mountains split. Therefore, when rain falls, it sweeps through these cracks, so that the mountain's surface flows down from the summit powerfully and turns into a soft substance, which is called alluvial mud or silt. This is what used to happen to us (in Egypt) from Ethiopia and, in turn, caused the fertility of the Nile Valley.

Thus, mountains are stores of sustenance. Out of Allah's bounty, He made mountains firm. If they had been brittle, a small amount of rainfall would have been sufficient to bring them down entirely making the earth a single flat plane; as such, humanity would not have had the benefit of even half a metre of fertile land, thus causing famine to soon follow. We know that the True Lord *the Exalted* brought about, along with the manifold increase of humans, the increased manifold of the means of sustenance. How did the True Lord *Glorified is He* make sustenance increase?

We see that mountains have summits and bases and that between every two mountains there is a valley. We know that the narrowest part of a valley is the lowest part, and the widest part is the highest. Contrary to valleys, mountains are narrowest at the peak and widest at the base; in other words, the peak of a mountain is narrower than its base. When silt descends from the mountain by means of rain, it descends to the valley, raising the level of the valley floor and increasing the area of the valley. Every time rain falls on the mountain, the area of the adjacent valley increases, and the rain carries with it pieces of the mountain; this is silt. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* decides to bring about the end, every mountain will break into fragments, and He will bid the Hour to begin by saying, 'Begin now.'

He says: 'Who set immovable mountains on it and created a barrier between the fresh and salt water? Is it another god beside God? No! But most of them do not know.' (*an-Naml*: 61) Elsewhere in the Quran, He says: 'He released the two bodies of [fresh and salt] water. They meet, yet there is a barrier between them that they do not cross.'" (*ar-Rahman*: 19-20)

Water moves freely in its own course; Allah made it flow as springs and rivers in the earth. Man might dig in a certain place and find sweet water, while in another place, someone else digs and finds salt water. Why, then, does the salt water not seep into the sweet when they are both underground? It must be the case that salt water has courses different from those of sweet water, and, as such, neither one transgresses and mixes with the other. Why is this? It is due to the fact that we find that sweet water comes from above, and we find that the sources of rivers are always high up. Then, they flow down into the sea. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not make the level of salt water

higher the level of sweet water so that salt water would not flow into sweet water. Rather He wanted to allow people to quench their thirsts with water, and He wanted plants to grow. Thus, sweet water would flow into stores of water, whether on land or at sea. Then, afterwards when evaporation occurs, the water rises as vapour and turns into clouds, which, in turn, rains back down as fresh water. The amount of water that Allah *Glorified is He* created in the beginning remains the same, without increasing or decreasing.

A person drinks much water throughout his life. Does all this water he drinks remain in his body, or is it expelled as bodily waste? A person does not store up any water except the amount of water that is currently in him. The human body is around ninety percent water. After a person dies, the water evaporates from him, while the rest of his body goes beneath the ground. Therefore, the amount of water remains the same, but it submits to the different roles that Allah *Glorified is He* decrees for it.

After this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another god with Allah? Little is that you reflect. (*an-Naml*: 62)

The meaning of 'distressed' is the person who expended his human means yet finds nothing with which he can preserve his life. Due to this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'When trouble befalls man, he cries out to Us, whether lying on his side, sitting or standing, but as soon as We relieve him of his trouble, he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Us to remove his trouble. In this way, the deeds of such heedless people are made attractive to them.' (*Yunus*: 12)

In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified is He* also says in another verse in the Noble Quran: 'When you get into distress at sea, those whom you pray to besides Him desert you, but when He brings you back safely to land, you turn away: man is ever ungrateful.' (*al-Isra'*: 67)

When man is afflicted with a great calamity, he does not lie to himself, even if he is a disbeliever. When he finds that none of the material means before him can help him, he seeks refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* and admits that there is only one god, Allah and Creator. Thus, he calls, 'O, my Lord!'

So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another god with Allah? Little is that you reflect. Who is it that guides you through the darkness on land and sea? Who sends the winds as heralds of good news before His mercy? Is it another god with Allah? God is far above the partners they put beside him! Who is it that creates life and reproduces it? Who is it that gives you provision from the heavens and earth? Is it another god with Allah? Say, "Show me your evidence then, if what you say is true.'" (*an-Naml*: 62-64)

All of these verses serve to emphasise the word of the True Lord: 'In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day there are indeed signs for men of understanding.'

These are phenomena of creation. The succession of night and day means that there is one thing that follows the other, or comes after it. So, the succession of night and day has two meanings: the coming of night after day means that they are in succession, i.e. each of them is the successor of the other. Such is the case with time. Another succession is represented by the fact that the day is bright, whilst the night is dark; the day is a time of activity, whilst the night is a time of inactivity. Therefore, the succession of night and day is not just one sign; the signs are manifold for many people.

It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* and explains to us: 'A single individual is incapable of inferring all that lies in the signs. Rather, each one of you, O, humans, must perceive one sign, and everyone who perceives a sign can benefit from it, as with others and so on.' Inferring that the signs are widespread for most people who possess insight and utilise Allah's *Glorified is He* means, this implies that the Truth can be spread. Inferring is among Allah's secrets to all of His believing creatures till the coming of the Hour. By inferring, Allah *Glorified is He* shows us people of true intelligence, who are not distracted by any blessing from the Giver of all blessings. This is due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* grants help when He created everything out of nothing. He gives divine support when He lends aid to those who have nothing, and He grants help when He places extra blessings upon His favours. Those who receive Allah's favours, which had existed before they did,

became heedless of the True Lord *Glorified is He*; the favours benefit them, yet, these favours lack His blessing.

The meaning of 'blessing' is whatever you derive from your effort that does not result in but every good to you and to other people as well. Allah *Glorified is He* might grant you many ways and means, but He does not give you any blessing if you take the favour and forget the One Who granted it. If only you mention Allah *Glorified is He* at all times, you would have been granted both the favour and the blessing. When you see that you have something that you love, you must therefore say, 'only that which Allah wills comes to pass. There is no power save in Allah.' (*al-Kahf*: 39) It is not by your own doing; it is Allah's *Glorified is He* Will and Power.

For this reason, they say that if you see any favour that you have, whether wealth, children, character, or attire, you should say when you see it: 'Only that which Allah wills comes to pass. There is no power save in Allah.' (*al-Kahf*: 39) And you will never experience anything bad from it. This is due to the fact that you have returned it to the One Who created it, and you have been guaranteed Allah's protection for it by doing so; and what ensures this protection is the plain statement: 'Only that which Allah wills comes to pass. There is no power save in Allah.' (*al-Kahf*: 39)

Due to this, we see Allah's *Glorified is He* words: 'Tell them the parable of two men: for one of them We made two gardens of grape vines, surrounded them with date palms, and put corn fields in between; both gardens yielded fruit and did not fail in any way. We made a stream flow through them, and so he had abundant fruit. One day, while talking to his friend, he said, "I have more wealth and a larger following than you." He went into his garden and wronged himself by saying, "I do not think this will ever perish or that the Last Hour will ever come— even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, I would certainly find something even better there.' (*al-Kahf*: 32-36) What did his companion say? 'His companion retorted, "Have you no faith in Him Who created you from dust, from a small drop of fluid, then shaped you into a man? But for me, He is Allah my Lord, and I will never set up any partner with Him. If only, when you entered your garden, you had said, 'This is Allah's will. There is no power not [given] by Allah Although you see I have

less wealth and offspring than you, my Lord may well give me something better than your garden, and send thunderbolts on your garden from the sky so that it becomes a heap of barren dust.' (*al-Kahf*: 37-40)

He should not have allowed himself to be deluded by the presence of a favour; instead, he should have ascribed it and returned it to the One Who granted it. This explains for us the meaning of the True Lord's words: 'If you are thankful, I will give you more.' (*Ibrahim*: 7)

The means might grant you the ends, but without the increase above these ends that Allah *Glorified is He* bestows in the form of blessings. Rather, they might end up causing disaster for their owner, at first giving to him and then withholding from him so that they are for him a source of deep sorrow.

So, who are 'those with understanding' (*Al- 'Imran*: 190)?

The True Lord's answer is the following:

الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

who remember God standing, sitting, and lying down, who reflect on the creation of the heavens and earth: 'Our Lord! You have not created all this without purpose – You are far above that! – so protect us from the torment of the Fire [191] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 191)

They say: 'Our Lord, you have not created this universe in vain.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 191) They believe that Allah is the Truth, and He has created the heavens and the earth with Truth. He ordained their laws and natural order with Truth; therefore, we must receive the favours that He created for us with Truth. If some people receive these favours according to other than the Truth, it will bring to them evil consequences. It is said that if a true believer of the sons of Israel, before the message of Jesus *peace be upon him*, worshipped Allah with sincerity for thirty years, a cloud would overshadow him wherever he went. When people were overshadowed with a cloud, others knew that he had worshipped Allah *Glorified is He* sincerely for thirty years.

One of them worshipped Allah⁽¹⁾ *Glorified is He* for thirty years, but saw no cloud had come to give him shade. He complained of this to his mother⁽²⁾. She said to him, 'Perhaps you were negligent of something.' He said to her, 'O, mother, I cannot remember anything of the kind!' She replied, 'Perhaps, you once looked to the sky and did not reflect upon it.' He said, 'Perhaps, this did indeed occur.' She replied, 'This is why this has happened to you.' This story reminds us of the importance of reflecting on Allah *Glorified is He* constantly.

It is narrated that our master 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'When the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* woke up during the night, he would clean his teeth and then look to the sky.'

To look to the sky is to look to something high above. Looking to the earth is also a means of reflecting on the wisdom of the Creator, but looking to the sky makes one aware of the loftiness of the Creator. For this reason, the Arab who lies down on his back, while sleeping, and then wakes up to see the beautiful blue colour of the sky and the stars shining, and therein, says: 'I bear witness that you have a Lord and Creator. O, Allah, forgive me!' This man knows when to call upon Allah, and how to call, so Allah forgives him.

The books of Prophetic biography narrate that 'Once the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to sleep one night, a night he happened to be spending with 'Aisha, *Allah be pleased with her*. 'Aisha said to 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, *Allah be pleased with them*, "He slept next to me so that my skin was touching his, and then said, 'O, 'Aisha, do you give me permission to worship my Lord this night?'"⁽³⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked her permission because the night was her right. 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* and then said, "O, Messenger of Allah, I love your closeness, and I love what your inclination, so I give you permission."

She graciously acted with cautiousness, for she loved Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and so she said, 'I love your closeness.' This

(1) The story of the Arab who contemplate the sky

(2) The story of the devout Israelite with his mother

(3) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi on the authority of 'Aisha, and by Ibn Majah on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, and by At-Tabarani on the authority of Mu'awiya

statement has a nice meaning. It so happens that one of those who are stubborn in their opposition to Islam said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was much older than 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* and this statement of hers was due to her indifference to him. However, 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* had already put this suspicion to rest by saying, 'O, Messenger of Allah, I love your closeness, and I love your inclination, so I give you permission.' This is a lesson that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us in order that we would know how to behave with our spouses, even if the thing that keeps us from them is worship. He did not want believers, who perform everything that is obligatory upon them, to be distracted from taking care of their family, even by worship, except after obtaining their families' permission first.

Why is this? It is due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* requires that the wife not perform any supererogatory act of worship without obtaining permission from her husband first. If the wife wishes to offer a supererogatory prayer or fasting, she must ask her husband's permission first. If he grants it, she can offer the supererogatory act of worship, but if he does not, she should not perform this extra act of worship. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'the best of you is the one who is best to your family, and I am the best of you to my family.'⁽¹⁾

When the husband approaches his wife, he wants to fulfil her human needs. For this reason, when the wife wants to have her time, especially if she has co-wives, this time is her right. If the husband wants to use this time for supererogatory worship, he must, therefore, ask her permission first. A woman's state of mind, when she has no co-wives, might make her more accepting whenever her husband asks her permission to engage wholly for worship. Because of this, we see that the scholars entitled to interpret Islamic law have successfully explained this issue: A woman⁽²⁾ went to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* to complain about her husband because he would not be intimate with her. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was with another companion of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* whom he asked to give her a legal

(1) Narrated by Ibn Majah, and Darimi in (*Kitab Al-Nikah*)

(2) The story of the woman who complained of her husband to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *peace be upon him*

opinion on the matter. The Companion said to the husband, 'Suppose that you had four wives. So, if that were to be your case, your wife has the right to one night out of every four.' If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked permission of 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* to worship his Lord, this implies that this is a lesson to all husbands to treat their spouses well so that they do not leave them unfulfilled.

However, we find that many people do not ask their spouses for permission to offer supererogatory worship and may even spend their nights engaged in sin. This is what ruins households and families. Households are ruined because the husband is distracted from his wife, going to see his friends in cafes and other places, not caring about the members of his family.

Why does he not go home to comfort his family, fulfil their needs, and spend time with his wife and children? Would his wife not want to feel reassured that her spouse is with her and not somewhere else? This would make things stable. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked permission of 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* and she gave it to him. 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* then continued, 'He headed to the water skin and performed ablution. Then, he stood in prayer and wept. After that, he recited the Quran and wept more. He then praised and glorified Allah *Glorified is He* and wept more until the ground became wet. Finally, Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* came and said, "O, Messenger of Allah, it is time for dawn prayer!" He saw him weeping and asked, "O, Messenger of Allah, do you weep, while your past and future sins have been forgiven?" Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, "Should I not be a grateful servant? O, Bilal, this night a revelation has been sent to me": "In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day there are indeed signs for men of understanding. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth; and say, 'Our Lord, you have not created this universe in vain. Holy are You. Save us then from the punishment of the fire. Our Lord, whomsoever you cause to enter the fire, him You have surely disgraced. And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers. Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling us unto faith, saying, "You believe in your Lord," and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore,

our sins and remit from us our evils and in death join us with the righteous. Our Lord, give us what You have promised to us through Your Messengers and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, You break not Your promise. So their Lord answered their prayers by saying, "I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female. You are from one another." Those, therefore, who have emigrated and have been driven out of their homes, and have been persecuted for My cause, and have fought and been slain, I will surely remit from them their evil deeds and will cause them to enter gardens through which streams flow - a reward from Allah, and with Allah is the best of rewards. Let not the moving about of the disbelievers in the land deceives you. This is only a brief enjoyment, after which hellfire will be their home— a miserable resting place! But those who were mindful of their Lord will have Gardens graced with flowing streams where they will stay as a reward from Allah. What Allah has is best for those who are truly good. Some of the people of the Book believe in Allah, in what has been sent down to you and in what was sent down to them,; humbling themselves before Allah., They would never sell Allah's revelation for a small price. These people will have their rewards with their Lord. Allah is swift in reckoning. O, you who believe, be steadfast and strive to excel in steadfastness. Be on your guard and fear Allah so that you may prosper.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 190-200)

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then added, 'Woe unto him who recites it and reflects not upon it, and woe unto he who lets it pass between his lips and ponders it not!'⁽¹⁾ This is what has been told from our master Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning the verses of the chapter of *Al- 'Imran*, beginning with Allah's *Glorified is He* words: 'In the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of the night and the day....' (*Al- 'Imran*: 190-200)

These verses contain guidance within them, sound reasoning and remembrance of the True Lord at all times, whether standing, sitting or

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in (*At-Tahajjud*), and by Muslim and At-Tirmidhi in (*As-Salat*), and by An-Nasa'i in (*Qiyam Al-Layl*), and by Ibn Majah in (*Al-Iqama*), and by Imam Ahmad in (*Al-Musnad*).

reclining. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, "Our Lord, you have not recreated this universe in vain. Holy are You. Save us then from the punishment of the Fire.'" (*Al-'Imran*: 191)

In this verse, we see the requirement of 'those who are with understanding' is that they remember Allah *Glorified is He* sitting, standing and lying on their sides. Some of the scholars explain that the meaning of the True Lord's words 'Those who remember Allah standing, sitting and lying on their sides,' (*Al-'Imran*: 191) is the prayer, since those who are unable to pray standing pray seated, and those who cannot pray seated pray lying down. We say to these scholars, 'Why have you made the meaning of this statement so specific, when the occasion here is that of generalisation? The Quran does not contradict itself; rather, parts of it serve to explain others.' The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about the Prayer of Peril: 'When you [Prophet] are with the believers, leading them in prayer, let a group of them stand up in prayer with you, taking their weapons with them. When they have finished their prostration, let them take up their positions at the back. Then let the other group, who have not yet prayed, pray with you, also on their guard and armed with their weapons. The disbelievers would dearly like you to be heedless of your weapons and baggage, in order for them to take you in a single assault. You will not be blamed if you lay aside your arms when you are overtaken by heavy rain or illness, but be on your guard. Indeed, Allah has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers!' (*an-Nisa*': 102)

The believer should not misunderstand and think that he should remember Allah *Glorified is He* only during the five obligatory prayers. Thus, He says: 'And when you have finished your prayer, continue to remember Allah - standing, sitting, and lying on your sides - and once you are safe, keep up regular prayer, for prayer is obligatory for the believers at prescribed times.' (*an-Nisa*': 103)

In other words, the prayer is performed first, and then performed again, making the remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* as a continuous state, obligated both within the prayer and outside of it. After that, believers reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth, realising that Allah *Glorified is He* did not

create this in vain. They are required to say: 'Holy are You. Save us then from the punishment of the Fire.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 191)

Why? Because all of this remembrance does not, in any way, fulfil our Lord's right upon us, and for this reason, they then say in the next verse:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ مَنْ تُدْخِلُ النَّارَ فَقَدْ أَخْزَيْتَهُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾

Our Lord! You will truly humiliate those You commit to the Fire. The evildoers have no one to help them [192]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 192)

This is the Greatness. They do not mention the suffering of those who enter hell; they mention the disgrace that Allah *Glorified is He* will envelope those who enter hell, as though the disgrace is worse than the torment of the fire. Then, who was it that gave us this bounty? It is He *the Glorified* Who helped us to remember Him and enabled us to reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. Is it right that we repay this with ingratitude? And what will happen to those people who enter hell? They will be disgraced [Allah is our refuge]. 'And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 192), i.e. they will have no one to protect them from the torment of the fire.

After this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْإِيمَنِ أَنْ ءَامِنُوا بِرَبِّكُمْ فَآمَنَّا ﴿١٩٣﴾ رَبَّنَا فَاعْفُ رَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَكَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَتَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ

Our Lord! We have heard someone calling us to faith, "Believe in your Lord", and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, wipe out our bad deeds, and grant that we join the righteous when we die [193] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 193)

It is as though before any messenger comes, mankind must use their hearts and intellects to recognise the signs inherent in the universe, and they must notice that behind the universe is a power, but this power is obscure to their minds. What is this power? They observe this amazing universe and say to themselves, 'It is impossible that this universe could have no creator. There must be a power behind it that has wisdom and omnipotence.' This is the least that the intellect

should be able to arrive at, but can the intellect realise that the name of this power is Allah? Can the intellect realise what this power wants from it?

The answer is no. Therefore, it is necessary that a messenger should come to pass on this power's will. For this reason, we said that this is the error that the philosophers fell into, for it is they who sought for meaning behind the material world. We know that knowledge is of two kinds: material knowledge based on experiment and metaphysical knowledge that searches beyond the material realm. This kind of knowledge forms the labyrinth of philosophers; it is a confusing place, where no school agrees with another, along with no student in a school agreeing with another.

Why do they not agree? It is due to the fact that they are searching for what lies beyond the material realm, which is the unseen, and the unseen cannot enter a laboratory, whereas material things can. When a laboratory gives the results of an analysis, there is no bias in these results. If someone performs a scientific experiment in a laboratory with true impartiality, the laboratory will give him results. If he does so without impartiality, it will give him nothing.

Due to this, we always say that there is no difference in the material sciences between Soviet communist science and American capitalist science; there is no 'capitalist chemistry' or 'communist chemistry', or 'Russian electricity' or 'American electricity'. Chemistry is one, and electricity is one since they are the products of laboratories and material experimentation.

It is amazing that these deluded people do not realise that material science, which is subject to experimentation, laboratories and inanimate materials that do not prejudice, has become something that each side attempts to steal from the other. We find that spies travel from one power to the other to steal plans for aircraft and rockets, and they spy on one another so that they can gain knowledge of material science.

However, what about the science of desires and theories! We find that each side builds walls so that desires cannot infiltrate the society. They build barriers when it comes to desires, but when it comes to material science, they turn into thieves. Why do they not include desires along with material science? Each side is bent on enmity towards other's convictions in terms of law, society, and economics, but when it comes to material science, they steal from one

another. This is due to the fact that theoretical convictions follow desires, while material sciences, as we have said, follow practical facts that cannot be biased.

So, when man uses his intellect, he will certainly conclude that there is an overwhelming power behind the universe. Arabs innately knew this by saying, 'Camel droppings indicate the presence of a camel, and footprints indicate footsteps. Does all of this not indicate the presence of the Most Subtle, the All Aware?'

It is innate evidence, which proves the existence of power, but what is this power called? We do not know. So, the ear calls for someone to tell it the name of this power. If someone comes and says, 'I have been sent from this power, and its name is Allah', it is necessary that people should flock to him since he will have solved the puzzle that has absorbed them. For this reason, believers say: Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling us unto faith by saying, "You believe in your Lord, and we have believed." (*Al- 'Imran*: 193)

It was as though the intellect of each one of them was obsessed with the need to know the Creator. After this, they said: 'Our Lord, whomsoever You causes to enter the Fire, him You have surely disgraced. And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 192)

The first thing they that came to their mind, was averting evil, since virtuous people always find fault in themselves. Thus, they said: Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our sins and remit from us our evils and in death join us with the righteous.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 193)

When we look at the details provided in the Quran, we find that a *dhanb* (a sin) is one thing, and a *sayyi'a* (a misdeed) is another. A sin requires forgiveness, whereas a fault requires expiation; such is the expiation made when a believer swears an oath and then breaks it. This expiation is a compensation to make up for the breaking of the oath. As for things related to the servant disobeying his Lord, these are sins. A misdeed is when one goes against Allah's guidance with respect to His other servants. When you commit an act of disobedience, regarding something between you and Allah *Glorified is He*; you have not harmed Allah in any way. In essence, what are you, O human, concerning Allah's Glory? However, by this act of disobedience, you sin, and this sin is followed by retribution. As for going against Allah's guidance, regarding His other servants, this is a misdeed since by committing it, you have wronged them. For this reason,

the believers say: 'Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our sins and remit from us our evils and in death join us with the righteous.' (*Al-'Imran*: 193).

Who was it that guided them to the knowledge that there is a difference between a sin and a misdeed and that sins require forgiveness, whereas faults require expiation? It was Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who bore a message from Allah *Glorified is He*. It was he who taught us the difference between a sin and a misdeed. Once, when he was sitting with his companions, he became drowsy and took a light nap. When he woke up, he smiled. Anas *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Once, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sitting, we saw him smile until his incisor teeth showed. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, "What makes you smile, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Two men from my community will fall on their knees before the Lord of Might. One of them will say, 'O Lord, take recompense for me from the wrong my brother did me!' Allah will say, 'Repay your brother the wrong you did him.' He will say, 'O Lord, none of my good deeds remain.' (The other) will say, 'O Lord, he can take the burden of my sins from me.'" The eyes of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* filled with tears, and then he said, "Indeed that will be a grave day, the day when people will need their sins to be carried for them! Allah will say to the requester, 'Lift your gaze and behold Paradise.' He will lift his head and say, 'O, Lord, I see cities of silver and palaces of gold adorned with pearls. For which Prophet is all of this? For which man of truth is this? For which martyr is all of this?' He will say, 'It is for he who gives the price.' He will say, 'O, Lord, who owns its price?' The Lord will say, 'You do.' He will reply, 'What is it?' The Lord will say, 'That you pardon your brother.' He will say, 'O, Lord, I pardon him!' He will say, 'Take your brother's hand and enter Paradise.' "Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Be conscious of Allah and make peace between one another, for Allah will make peace between the believers on the Day of Resurrection."⁽¹⁾

This is the meaning of expiation: that we are born for. That's why we were taught to say in the prayer, 'O, Allah, I ask you forgiveness for what is owed to you and ask You to bear for me (compensate on my behalf) for what is owed to Your

(1) Narrated by Abu Ya'la and Al-Hakim, who declared it rigorously authentic, and by As-Suyutii in (*Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*) and by Ibn Kathir in (*At-Tafsir*)

servants.' That is, the servant asks the True Lord to satisfy His servants (whom he may have treated unjustly) on his behalf, and His bounty has no limits.

The believing servants say: 'Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our sins and remit from us our evils and in death join us with the righteous.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 193). That is, grant us the end that the virtuous enjoy. After this, Allah continues to convey to us their words:

رَبَّنَا وَعَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَتْ عَلَيْنَا رُسُلُكَ وَلَا تَخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْوَعْدَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

Our Lord! Bestow upon us all that You have promised us through Your messengers do not humiliate us on the Day of Resurrection. You never break Your promise' [194]
(The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 194)

This can be said in another way, 'Our Lord, give us that which you promised on the tongues of Your Messengers.' Now listen to the True Lord's reply to them:

فَأَسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنثَىٰ
بَعْضُكُم مِّنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُودُوا فِي سَبِيلِي
وَقُتِلُوا أَوْ فُتِلُوا أَوْ كَفَرُوا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا أَدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ بَّحْرِىٰ مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾

Their Lord has answered them: 'I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female, each is like the other [in rewards]. I will certainly wipe out the bad deeds of those who emigrated and were driven out of their homes, who suffered harm for My cause, who fought and were killed. I will certainly admit them to Gardens graced with flowing streams, as a reward from God: the best reward is with God' [195] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 195)

Look at the beautiful way the answer is phrased: 'So their Lord answered their prayers by saying, "I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female. You are from one another."' (*Al- 'Imran*: 195) They used to remember Allah *Glorified is He* while standing, sitting, and lying down and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, fearing the disgrace of entering hell. They prayed to Allah *Glorified is He* to forgive their sins and erase

their bad deeds. They prayed to Allah *Glorified is He* to grant them what He had promised them on the tongues of His Messengers, *peace be upon them*.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not say: 'I answer your prayer.' Rather, His answer is the acceptance of their works by saying: 'I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female.' (*Al-'Imran*: 195) It is not a case of empty words being spoken; Allah *Glorified is He* wants believers to apply themselves to this verse and to incline towards always putting this in practice. It is not just a matter of wishing, for Allah *Glorified is He* has put a clear condition, which is work. Whosoever wants the True Lord to answer his prayers, he must be prepared to work. Reflection on Allah's *Glorified is He* creation is not a replacement of work because the True Lord wants to be reflected upon, while believers are utilising His means, and the means granted by Allah *Glorified is He* should not distract believers from Him.

'So their Lord answered their prayers by saying, "I will not allow the deeds of any one of you to be lost, whether you are male or female. You are from one another." Those, therefore, who have emigrated, and have been driven out of their homes, and have been persecuted for My cause, and have fought and been slain, I will surely remit from them their evil deeds and will cause them to enter gardens through which streams flow - a reward from Allah, and with Allah is the best of rewards.' (*Al-'Imran*: 195)

There are those who migrated from their countries, their families, their homes and their loved ones, and did so freely and without coercion. Their migration was driven out of a need to survive, along with being a move from one place to another in Allah's cause. There are those who migrated and went out of their own free will, and there are those who left their homes and fought, and were hurt or killed in Allah's cause, they will have their sins erased and will enter paradise.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* shows a visible way in which faith is manifested, for man is busy with his possessions, families, homes and the preservation of his life; if he sacrifices all of this firstly for the sake of remaining firm on Allah's Word and then secondly for the sake of raising and spreading Allah's Word, then, as a believer, he extends this to people other than himself. He struggles in Allah's cause to extend this way of life with all the goodness it contains to others. In this way, he loves for others what he loves for himself.

As a result, we arrive from all of this with a clear perspective or conclusion: reflection alone is not enough. If someone were to say, 'My faith is fine. Do not bother me with formalities'; we reply by saying, 'Allah does not need this. Rather, He requires that you make the universe flourish by means of your endeavours. The most blessed and best of endeavours is that you work to make Allah's guidance firm on earth since this is the way to exist and preserve existence in a beautiful way.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا يَغُرُّكَ تَقَلُّبُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي الْبِلَادِ

[Prophet], do not be deceived by the disbelievers'
[lucrative] trading to and fro in the land [196]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 196)

When we hear the words: 'Let not the moving about of the disbelievers in the land deceive you' (*Al-'Imran*: 196) we should know that this requires the ability to act. A person's ability to act lies within his domain and homeland. If someone's ability to act widens and they move somewhere else, it is said about them, 'So-and-so is widely active.' i.e. the environment in which he lives is not equal to his capability; in fact, his capability is greater than his environment. Therefore, he leaves his homeland. This indeed happened with the idolaters of Quraysh who travelled from their homeland and journeyed abroad. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Let not the moving about of the disbelievers in the land deceive you.' (*Al-'Imran*: 196)

Movement, as we said, requires capability, activeness, expansion, and ambition. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to show us that life's allurements might be granted to other than believers, for every enticement is only a pleasure of this worldly life and is connected with a person's life span. No matter how much they take, they are only taking adornment of worldly life and its delusion. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.' (*Al-'Imran*: 185)

It is a life that has an end; as for the one who desires to increase the favours given to him by Allah *Glorified is He* and amplify their benefits, he works for the sake of a life that has no end. Disbelievers might take that which is immediately available yet ends, whereas believers take that which comes eventually and never ends.

When we compare one who seeks the life of this world with one who seeks The Hereafter, we see that the situation needs to be discussed from different aspects, which are as follows: do not measure the life-span of this world according to itself, but measure it in respect to the life span of a single individual; for the life span of this world with respect to each individual is no more than the time he remains in it. Suppose that the world still exists for other than yourself. What do you have to do with it? The life span of this world is as short as the time a person remains in it. Be careful not to measure it by saying, 'The world will remain for millions of years.' Indeed, it will remain for millions of years for millions of people – but not for you. The life span of this world, as far as you are concerned, is how long you live in it, and your life within it is limited. This is assuming that you will live an average life span. What about the fact that the length of your life is only a matter of speculation? Death comes at any age; it is not related to a particular reason or time. Due to this, a person has no guarantee that he will enjoy an average life span. The life span of the Hereafter is absolutely certain to be eternal.

The exact duration of the human life is unknown, and a person's exact life span in this worldly life is not definite. However, their life in the Hereafter is certain and definite. This worldly life is limited as opposed to the Hereafter in which life is unlimited or in other words, eternal. The pleasures a person relishes in this worldly life are dependent on his perception of them and the possibility of attaining them. However, the pleasures in the Hereafter are commensurate with the greatness of their Lord and His All-Encompassing Bestowal of abundant blessings. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* describes the worldly life as 'an illusory pleasure' in the concluding sentence of the verse reading.

'And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion.' (*Al-'Imran*: 185) He describes the worldly life with the demeaning description *dunia* which literally means 'the lowest'. There are no lower or more demeaning descriptions than this. Anyone who is deceived by the worldly gains obtained by those who abandon divine guidance through travelling and movement throughout the land should remember that the entire worldly life will eventually come to an end. We should compare their travelling and movement throughout the land (as well as their gains and achievements) with what Allah *Glorified is He* has promised us in the Hereafter. Such an analogy according to this criterion sounds fair.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* continues His description of the disbeliever's (lucrative) trading and travelling through the land by saying:

مَتَّعُ قَلِيلٌ ثُمَّ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ ﴿١٩٧﴾

**This is only a brief enjoyment, after which Hell will
be their home – a miserable resting place! [197]
(The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 197)**

The Arabic word *mahd* used in the verse literally means a cradle in which an infant sleeps. This means that Allah *Glorified is He* will place them in hellfire wherever He wishes since he will be unable to do or object to anything. He shall be as helpless as an infant, who is placed in his cradle turned over, and moved by others from one place to another as they see pleasing. This is contrary to the situation of believers described in the following verse that reads:

لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نُزُلًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِلْأَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٨﴾

**But those who were mindful of their Lord will have
Gardens graced with flowing streams where they will stay
as a reward from God. What God has is best for those who
are truly good [198] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 198)**

The Arabic word *nuzul* used in the verse means a place allocated for guests. When such guest rooms are arranged by humans, the guests find repose and comfort therein according to their capability. I was once travelling with a group of people, and we stayed in a luxurious hotel. My companions remarked, 'How great and luxurious this hotel is. This is a manifestation of human greatness!' I responded, 'This is what human beings prepare for other human beings. Can you imagine what Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for the believers in paradise?'

When you see the disbelievers lucratively trading, moving throughout the land and obtaining worldly gains and achievements as described in the verse, you should know that they do not believe that Allah *Glorified is He* would punish them during their lives in this world. He says: 'Say: Have you considered if the punishment of Allah should overtake you suddenly or openly? Will any be destroyed but the

unjust people?' (*al-An'am*: 47) He also says: 'Or that He may not seize them in the course of their journeys, then shall they not escape.' (*an-Nahl*: 46)

The disbeliever surrenders to arrogance and delusion in their lucrative trading and moving throughout the land doing whatever he pleases and then suddenly the divine punishment befalls him. Sometimes the divine punishment strikes the sinners all of a sudden, and sometimes it may be expected. When the divine punishment befalls abruptly, people have expected at any time; it may also strike when it is least expected, which triggers greater fear within people. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when you said, "O, Musa! We will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly." So the punishment overtook you, while you looked on.' (*al-Baqara*: 55)

If death befalls people abruptly, they would not be aware of its horrors except at the very moment when it befalls them. However, if death befalls them, while they are mindful of it, they would face with a heart filled with terror and fear. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ
خَشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتُرُونَ بِعَابَتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿١٩٩﴾

Some of the People of the Book believe in God, in what has been sent down to you and in what was sent down to them: humbling themselves before God, they would never sell God's revelation for a small price. These people will have their rewards with their Lord: God is swift in reckoning [199] (The Quran, *Al-'Imran*: 199)

Allah *Glorified is He* always relates honest and truthful historical accounts concerning past events in the Quran. The Quran is never biased against the people of the Book (Christians and Jews) because of their stubborn opposition to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They showed enmity towards his call, and they contrived evil schemes to undermine his efforts and hinder the spread of his call.

The Quran speaks about some of them in all honesty: 'Some of the People of the Book believe in Allah ...' (*Al-'Imran*: 199). We have underlined earlier

that this is known as 'Preservation of Probability'. When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Some of the People of the Book believe in Allah ...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 199), and some of the people of the Book who were actually considering believing and following Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* listen to it. What would their position be since they were thinking about believing in what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* preached? Concerning this, they would certainly ask themselves, 'These very thoughts were buried deep inside our souls. How could Muhammad possibly know of them? This proves that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not speak based on whims and that Allah *Glorified is He* imparted to him the knowledge of what was hidden within people's very souls! These people of the Book would have said to themselves, 'As long as Allah *Glorified is He* is imparting to him the knowledge of things that have not been made open to anyone else, he (Prophet Muhammad) *peace and blessings be upon him* must be telling the truth (about being a Messenger of Allah)!' If the verse had been revealed after they had believed, it would not have had this effect.

Therefore, this statement must have been part of the glad tidings that many of the people of the Book were thinking about believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the Messenger of Allah. This statement of Allah *Glorified is He* made the process of their believing come to fruition because they said, 'The Messenger of Allah who tells us such hidden things the knowledge of which must be imparted to him by Allah *Glorified is He* Who knows the treachery of the eyes and whatever the breasts conceal.'

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾

You who believe, be steadfast, more steadfast than others; be ready; always be mindful of God so that you may prosper [200] (The Quran, *Al- 'Imran*: 200)

The chapter of *Al- 'Imran* concludes with this beautiful verse. This chapter comes right after *al-Baqara* (Chapter 2), and they both address one of the fundamental doctrines, namely to believe in Allah *Glorified is He* Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Divine Message with which

he was sent that concludes and supersedes all the past divine messages (sent with previous Messengers of Allah). This is why Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about faith, divine guidance, and revelation, and then mentions the remaining teachings of those who followed previous divine messages which had been distorted and deviated from the true divine guidance being affected by human whims. In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah speaks about the Jews and in *Al-'Imran* He speaks about the Christians. Then, He illustrates a faith-related point pertaining to the position of those who believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and place their trust in His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He also describes one of the situations in which believers were tested with a bitter adversity. He, then, mentions another faith-related point pertaining to the believers' return to the divinely revealed way of life set by their Lord after falling into the abyss of neglect. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O, you who believe...' (*Al-'Imran*: 200). He is addressing those who believe in all that which was mentioned above: Allah *Glorified is He* His Book and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* He also addresses the actual and genuine purification of truth with the Jews (polytheists of Quraysh) and all the people of the Book in the Battle of Uhud. The verse means, 'O, you who have sincerely believed in Allah *Glorified is He* pay heed to Me. O, you who believe in Me, be patient...' (*Al-'Imran*: 200). This is the first commandment stated in the verse. The second is 'be steadfast,' the third is 'Be on your guard' and the fourth is 'fear Allah.' (*Al-'Imran*: 200)

These are four divine commandments listed in the verse and addressed to believers, and the ultimate objective is clearly stated in the verse as well: 'so that you may prosper.' Whoever yearns for attaining genuine happiness and prosperity must fulfil these four requirements: be patient, be steadfast, be on guard, and fear Allah so that he may prosper.

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to prosperity with a tangible term, reflecting that which is easily recognisable by all people. He does not say to you, 'Abide by such commands so that you that you may succeed' or 'win'; rather, He uses the word 'prosper'. As we have previously underlined, the Arabic word for prosperity is *falah* which is derived from the verb *falaha* which means to cultivate the land by tilling the soil and allowing air and water to penetrate the ground more readily. This opens up the soil structure, allowing air, water, and nutrients to penetrate more

deeply, reaching the roots. When you till the soil, plant seeds and irrigate the land, what will be the results? Your efforts will yield the plants and crops as desired. It is a material with a tangible and visible outcome. The usage of the Arabic word "*tuflihun*" (that you may prosper) in the verse reflects this connotation.

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to prosperity in a tangible sense so that all people can grasp the intended meaning. What is the nature of the prosperity promised in the verse? It is the ultimate prosperity and genuine happiness in the worldly life and the Hereafter.

Prosperity in this worldly life could mean triumphing over one's enemies or leading a safe, secure, and pleasant life. On the other hand, prosperity in the Hereafter means obtaining one's share of the eternal and enduring bliss. Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to be patient, which indicates that hardships and difficulties are inevitable on the path of truth. Faith leads to paradise, and the path to paradise is filled with adversities; hardships are inescapable.

As we reflect over hardships and adversities a person faces on the path to truth, we come to realise that some of them may be related to personal concerns, whereas others are related to the broader society. As for personal concerns that are not connected to society, the enjoined steadfastness entails adhering to endurance, while performing acts of obedience and bearing the discomfort of abstaining from the prohibited acts, even if this prevents a person from obtaining some worldly pleasures and fulfilling his desires. A person should patiently abstain from surrendering to temptations. The struggle of believers is to be steadfast in abstaining from indulging in the fulfilment of the sinful desires and acts that Allah *Glorified is He* has deemed forbidden and to endure the tribulations that befall them in the process. Believers should patiently bear the personal hardships they shall inevitably face on the path to truth and abstain from pursuing the sinful pleasures, vices and the prohibited acts that Allah *Glorified is He* has prohibited.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to you, 'I have created you, and I know how your soul inclines towards sinful desires because you love them. Therefore, be patient and steadfast in abstaining from pursuing them. You should also adhere to endurance because carrying out acts of obedience will cause you some discomfort, possibly leading you to face hardships in the process, which you should bear patiently.' Thus, endurance is required in the adherence to the

divine commandments, as well as the avoidance of prohibitions. This is related to the personal context. If a matter goes beyond the scope of personal concerns and into that of the broader society, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflicts- these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil).' (*al-Baqara*: 177).

Therefore, patience is required, while enduring unpleasant situations, abstaining from prohibited acts and withstanding misfortunes caused by society. Could they be afflicted with misfortune by society? Yes, they could be due to divine guidance and the way of life revealed to rectify the mistakes committed by society. The people, who benefit from such mistakes in society, do their best to lead astray those who wish to follow divine guidance. They do not hold back from hurting, ridiculing, harassing, and even fighting against them. This is the meaning of patience, while enduring misfortunes and hardships and in times of peril. If your opponent adheres to patience and endures your harm, Allah *Glorified is He* commands you to compete with him in patience and be more steadfast.

What does this mean? It means that the divine command 'be patient' is not the same as 'be more steadfast than others' (*Al-'Imran*: 200). Being patient is an attitude that can be further developed to enable you to cope better during hardships and unpleasant events. What would be the case if your enemy also endures your struggle against him patiently and has enough strength to face you? Allah *Glorified is He* commands you to be more steadfast than him. In other words, if your enemy adheres to patience, you must be more steadfast in patience. This meaning is conveyed in the Arabic root *fa'il*, which is a form for the exaggeration of description in the Arabic language, e.g. the Arabic verb *nafasa* means to compete with another party in doing something or obtaining a goal. The verb is used to describe competition between two parties who seek to accomplish the same goal. The one who strives more to attain the objective and beats the other party to it wins. This is the essence of competition; it is a struggle for victory. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...So, for this let the competitors compete.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26)

The origin of the Arabic verb describes holding one's breath under water. The Arabic word *nafasa* is derived from the Arabic verb *nafas* 'to breathe'. 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* once said to Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* 'Would you compete with me in holding your breath under

water?' He challenged him to hold their breath under water and see which of them could hold his breath under water longer. The wise skilful person in such a situation trains himself ahead and does not hasten to go into water. Rather, he takes a deep breath and fills his lungs with air so that he can stay under water for longer than his opponent can. The one who goes under water without taking these preparations will only be able to stay under water for a shorter period of time. Therefore, the Arabic verb *nafasa* means competing with another party in holding his breath under water. This entails that the two parties are able to take deep breaths and can hold their breath under water for a period of time. This is why a physician may examine the lungs of his patient by asking him to take a deep breath since he wants to see how long the patient would be able to hold it.

Thus, we come to realise that the verse encourages a Muslim to be patient and more steadfast than his opponent in adhering to patience. Thus, the whole society should collectively adhere to patience and enjoin one another to do so. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I swear by Time. Most surely mankind is in loss except those who believe and do good, enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3).

This means that when you see one of your Muslim brothers lagging behind and his adherence to patience is undermined or fading away, you should wholeheartedly encourage him to be more steadfast in adhering to patience. This is because the human soul is innately prone to change. Sometimes a person is strong and can adhere to patience as due, and at other times, he may have weak willpower. However, a believer's willpower is fostered all the time since he has their fellow brothers' breathe steadfastness into their heart. The verse underscores that believers enjoin one another and does not state that there is one group of people enjoining others all the time. Rather, sometimes a person is the one being enjoined to adhere to steadfastness and patience, and sometimes he is the one enjoining others. We cannot uphold this mutual exchange of advice to adhere to patience unless we first enjoin one another to adhere to truth, the very pillar on which the struggle between those who compete with one another in patience is founded.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O, you who believe, be steadfast, and strive to excel in steadfastness. Be on your guard and fear Allah so that you may prosper.' (*Al-'Imran*: 200)

We start to realise the meaning of patience and being more steadfast than others in patience. What does 'be on your guard' in the verse mean? It is to make your enemy feel that you are always prepared to meet him. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And prepare against them what force you can with horses tied at the frontier so as to thereby frighten the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them. Whatever thing you will spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.' (*al-Anfal*: 60)

The verse means that they have their horses tethered and ready for riding whenever war is declared. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The best lifestyle (at times of war) is that of the man who holds his horse's rein in Allah's Way and flies on its back to the places from whence he hears a war cry or the clatter of arms, seeking martyrdom or killing on the battlefield.'⁽¹⁾ This means that we should be ready before the unpleasant events occur so that when adversities suddenly befall, we are ready to face them. We should take the required preparations before any unexpected events take place. When your enemy knows that you are ready to meet him and well prepared at any time, they will fear you. [The preparation of military strength (and other aspects of material and spiritual preparation) serves as deterrent to possible enemy attack.] If, however, you are lax and heedless, your enemy can easily take you by surprise and defeat you. Until you prepare yourself, they are one step ahead of you. What is the benefit of preparation in this aspect? The benefit of such preparations is that it will be indicative of your awareness of your enemy and that you have not given up the duty of taking the required preparations in case he assaults you. Rather, you will be ready for his attack at all times. Being prepared and ready in the verse does not merely mean that you prepare the warhorses, weapons and equipment for material strikes and attacks of your enemy; it also means that you prepare yourself for any moral assaults in order to be able to ward off falsehood and defend the Truth. An aspect of the enjoined preparation is equipping the Muslim youth to redress atheism before it befalls the Muslim community. Why should this be considered part of the required preparations? It is due to the fact that the preparations in the verse are not confined to warhorses, weapons and equipment

(1) [*Muslim*]

needed for the fighting on the actual battlefield. Rather, they are also required for any potential mental invasion of evil ideas spoon-fed to Muslims. Therefore, a believer must be equipped with the mental ability to redress any potential atheism-related ideas that might be introduced to Muslims so that all believers would be immune to such evils and able to remedy them as due.

We have previously underlined that the problem of the current educational curricula (in the Muslim world) is that they borrowed all the western scientific methodologies and concepts. Muslims study history in the light of the western methodologies and learn about nature just as the western scientists do, forgetting that we have been blessed with a religion that protects us from some misleading methodologies. For instance, when a western historian says that the French Revolution was the first to recognise human rights, we must pause, reflect, and ask ourselves when the French Revolution erupted. It erupted about two hundred years ago. These western historians are ignorant of the fact that Islam recognised human rights fourteen centuries ago as stated in the Quran and the authentic *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If every Muslim student upon hearing the inaccurate statement suggesting that the French Revolution was the first to recognise human rights, should respond by saying, 'No, this is not accurate. The French Revolution took place in the late 1700s. Did you not know that Islam recognised human rights fourteen centuries ago? The fact that you do not believe in Islam should not lead you to distort the truth.'

When a western biology student may say that nature has given a certain animal a skin colour suitable to its environment so that its enemies could not identify it, a Muslim should say, 'Nature does not give anything to any being. Nature itself is created by Allah *Glorified is He*. It is not true that nature has given any powers or abilities to any created being. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* has created the whole universe and has caused all things to come into existence in such forms.' The required preparations, then, are not confined to military power; rather, they extend to include knowledge as well. The enemies of Islam have given up hope that they could eradicate the call of Islam with military force after the failure of the Crusades. Their only alternative was to invade Muslim communities with their distorted methodologies and ideas introduced by their orientalisks and our occidentalists that export their cultures that are incompatible with the divinely revealed way of life to us. In fact, they

are excused since they do not know the divinely revealed way of life. Thus, we have come to realise that the preparations must also and completely be on the military, mental, moral, spiritual, and scientific levels.

The enemies of Islam employ different techniques to implement their schemes, all of which we should educate the younger Muslim generation to them. They claim that European civilisation prospered, while Muslims lagged far behind. We may respond by saying, 'Was it because of Islam? The Muslim civilisation prospered and moved ahead to be the vanguard of civilisation for a thousand years, while Europe, about whose civilisation you boast, was living in the Dark Ages.' Either these people do not know our history, or they are speaking to people who are ignorant of their own history.

The enjoined preparedness entails that Muslims should be edified on their religion in order to be able to address such borrowed ideas and beliefs before they are equipped with military power to repel the military attacks of their enemies. Muslims should stand up to face the invasion of alien ideas and the attacks on the principles of Islam as devotedly as they stand up to face a military invasion. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O, you who believe, be steadfast, and strive to excel in steadfastness.' (*Al-'Imran*: 200) This divine command encompasses 'patience, while enduring hardships, abstaining from prohibited acts and being more steadfast than opponents concerning enjoining patience and making necessary preparations, on both the material and moral levels. Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse with saying: 'Be on your guard and fear Allah so that you may prosper.' (*Al-'Imran*: 200)

The divine command 'fear Allah' is similar to the command 'fear Hellfire' because fearing Allah means to make a barrier between yourselves and your Lord's wrath. What is this protective barrier? It is the obedience to your Lord. What does obedience mean? It means adhering to the commands of Allah *Glorified is He* and abstaining from committing the actions He has deemed prohibited. Those who interpret fearing Allah as obedience to His commands are correct because it is the means to protect oneself from the wrath and punishment of Allah *Glorified is He*. Some may interpret it according to the end. When it is said to you, 'Fear Allah', it means, 'Make a barrier between yourself and Hellfire', which is one of the tools of divine punishments. If it is said to you, 'Fear Allah', it means that you should obey His commands and

avoid His prohibitions. What is the meaning of fearing hellfire and the wrath of Allah? It means the obedience to Allah *Glorified is He*. The fearing of Allah is sometimes interpreted by its means and at other times by its end.

We have previously underlined the 'prosperity' in the concluding statement 'so that you may prosper' as either attained in this worldly life or in the Hereafter. In this worldly life, prosperity means triumph of truth and faith and attaining victory over the enemies as opposed to being humiliated and becoming subservient to others. This is one aspect of prosperity. However, suppose that your opponents prosper, and you are weakened at some point in time. In this case, you should be assured that you are on the way to attaining another aspect of prosperity, namely the prosperity in the Hereafter. If this were not true, how did those addressed by this verse interpret prosperity before they witnessed the triumph of Islam over its enemies? How did those who had struggled and were oppressed in their unstable lives and died before Islam prevailed attain prosperity? Their prosperity lies in the Hereafter. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* prudently relates the story of the People of the Cave in the Quran. He says: 'And thus did We rouse them that they might question each other. A speaker amongst them said, "How long have you tarried?" They said, "We have tarried for a day or a part of a day." (Others) said, "Your Lord knows best how long you have tarried." Now send one of you with this silver (coin) of yours to the city, then let him see which of them has purest food. Let him bring you provision from it and behave with gentleness. By no means make your case known to anyone. Most certainly, if they were to prevail against you, they would stone you to death or force you back to their religion, and then you will never prosper.' (*al-Kahf*: 19-20) We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They would stone you to death'. The verse continues: 'or force you back to their religion, and then you will never prosper.' (*al-Kahf*: 20)

If they were to stone them to death, this would mean they would triumph over them in this worldly life, but they would win the Hereafter. If they were forced back to their false religion, they would have never prospered in this worldly life or the Hereafter. So, all aspects of human prosperity in this worldly life, the Hereafter or in both lie in the obedience to the divine commandments in the verse that reads: 'O, you who believe, be steadfast, and strive to excel in steadfastness. Be on your guard and fear Allah so that you may prosper.' (*Al- 'Imran*: 200)

The Chapter of

an-Nisa'

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

In the previous pages, we shed some light in our reflections on the names of the Quranic chapters. Reflecting over the third chapter of the Quran, *an-Nisa'* which is chosen to honour the women, we see that it addresses a considerable number of Islamic rulings and provisions concerning women. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* has touched upon women's rights in a number of Quranic chapters such as *al-Ma'ida* chapter (no.5), *al-Ahzab* (no.33), *al-Mujadala* (no.58), *al-Mumtahana* (no.60), *at-Talaq* (no.65) and *at-Tahrim* (no.66). All of these chapters of the Quran underline the religious rulings and rights of women who are the incubating bosoms of the human soul.

We know that the primary tasks of men in this worldly life mostly involve dealing with inferior species: with inanimate objects he uses in the laboratory, with animals he breeds and with plants he cultivates. Men mostly deal with these lower species as compared to women. We have four species: inanimate things, plants, animals, and humans. The working sphere of men is mostly restricted to inanimate things, plants, and animals. In contrast, women deal mostly with human beings. This is a means of honouring women. Reflecting over the childhood period of all animate beings, especially plants and animals, we realise that it is relatively short. There are animals that have relatively short period of childhood that does not extend beyond a month or even a few days. The childhood of some plants may extend to seven years, such as perennial trees. However, the childhood of humans continues from birth until the age of fourteen. It is a long period. The question is why Allah *Glorified is He* makes the childhood of humans that long.

The mission of human beings in life is refined. Therefore, the childhood of human beings requires extensive care. During childhood, the human being develops and acquires wisdom from those around him in order to

form his own code of conduct. During this period, the child is nurtured mostly by his mother and thrives under the female's care and attention, while his father works to earn a living and provide for the family in whose company he relishes tranquillity.

It has been narrated in Islamic history books that a Muslim woman once sued her husband who wanted to take her son away from her. She said to the judge, 'He carried him effortlessly in his backbone (or loins) and brought him into being by satisfying his sexual desire (during the intercourse). However, I endured great hardship to give birth to him! I am worthier of custody over him!'

One of the anecdotes of classical Arab literature tells of how a mother fought before a judge for her son who was claimed by the father (some sources indicate that it was Abu Al-Aswad Ad-Du'ali); the child probably had reached the age of seven. She said, 'This is my son. My womb was a vessel for him. My lap was a courtyard to play for him. My breasts were milk springs for him. When he awakes, I care for him with delight. I protect him when he sleeps at night. For several years I have done this. Now, when he is fully weaned, his limbs are well formed, and his character has proved to be fine, his father wants to take this son of mine.' The judge then said to the husband, 'You have heard the words of your wife. What do you have to say in return?' The man replied, 'She has spoken the truth, but I carried him in me before she gave birth to him, and I placed him in her before she put him in the world. I will teach him knowledge and great wisdom.' The judge turned to the woman and asked: 'What is your answer to this, woman?' She replied, 'He is right in what he has said. However, he carried him when he was weak and light, while I was burdened with his weight. He put him in me yearningly, while I put him to the world with agony.' Her words were pleasing to the judge, and he ordered the man, 'Give her her son. She has more right to him than you.'

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed a chapter of the Quran about the family of 'Imran since they were an ideal role model, worthy of receiving the divine messages and religious missions. Some of the Messengers of Allah were among their descendants, and many of them were honest adherents to the divinely revealed way of life like 'Imran's wife. Neither she nor

Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with them* was a Prophet or a Messenger of Allah; however, each of them obeyed the commandments of their Lord.

When Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the believers specifically in the verse, we should know that He is issuing religious assignments and commandments for believers. He says to His believing slaves, 'I have granted you freewill to make your own choices in this worldly life and have never obliged you to comply with any religious assignments, except what you have voluntarily accepted when you believed in Me. Since you believe in Me as the All-Capable and Wise God, you must obey My commands.'

Allah *Glorified is He* does not force anyone to believe in Him. The Muslim willingly and voluntarily chooses to believe in Him. Therefore, he has to obey the One Whom He chose to believe in. We have previously emphasised that when someone chooses to go to any given physician, it is always because he thinks that this physician is the one who can treat them. Once he consults the chosen physician, he complies with their orders, takes the prescription, and immediately hurries to the pharmacy to buy the medicine. If he does not find the prescribed medicine, he may travel to get it. The patient follows the instructions of the physician and does exactly as ordered.

In this context, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O, People.' He is not commanding man to perform any religious assignments. Rather, He is commanding all human beings to believe in Him. He clarifies this meaning by addressing all people in the verse. He is calling upon all people and inviting them to believe in Him. What does 'O, People' in the verse mean? It refers to Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* and his posterity. Allah⁽¹⁾ *Glorified is He* opens the chapter with the following verse:

(1) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God.' However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا
 كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ ۚ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾

O, 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 God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you [1] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 1)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses people and commands them to be mindful of Him. He says: 'O, People, be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). The meaning of being mindful of Allah is to protect yourself from His wrath and punishment. How can one be mindful of Allah *Glorified is He* and what should one do to avoid His punishment?

The first step towards attaining mindfulness of Allah *Glorified is He* is to believe in Him as the Lord of the universe and to embrace this belief intellectually. Allah *Glorified is He* explains this fact to people and says: 'O People! Be mindful of your Lord.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) He does not say be mindful of your God because the concept of divinity is intertwined with worship. God, by definition, is the One worthy of worship and in this vein, He issues His commands and prohibitions. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not address people as their God in this verse. They are still in the stage of grasping the concept of Lordship. The Arabic word *Rabb (God)*, meaning Lord, is the One Who nurtures. The same root is the verb *yurabbi* which means 'to raise' (as in raise a child). *Rabb* also means 'the Creator' Who originates something from nothing and nurtures it. Is the One Who creates and nurtures all beings not entitled to set His own set of rules for preserving His creation? It is His right to set the laws and rules of the preservation of created beings. We see the inventor or craftsman setting the rules of maintenance for the things he invents. Would it not be senseless if Allah *Glorified is He* creates human beings out of nothing and then abandons them in the worldly life, allowing them to do whatever they wish with no limits or rules? Should He rather command them to do certain acts and refrain from others in order to fulfil their mission in this worldly life as due? Allah *Glorified is He* thus lays down the fundamental ruling of the promotion of faith. He says: 'O People, be mindful of your Lord

Who created you from a single soul...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). This means that people are required to be mindful of their Lord. The meaning of being mindful of Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created them, is to protect themselves from His punishment by obeying His commands. Why would Allah *Glorified is He* emphasise the fact that He has created people for a reason to be mindful of Him unless it was an established truth accepted by all of them? Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Be mindful of your Lord Who has created you' (*an-Nisa'*: 1); this attests the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* has created us is an established truth recognised by all human beings. Were it to be a doubtful matter, we would have retorted, 'But You have not created us!' Indeed, to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the loftiest attributes.

You may hear someone saying, 'Be good to the one who did such and such favours for you.' You may, then, choose to acknowledge that this man did you such favours or not. If you admit that he did you such favours, you are assenting to this statement. The Divine Command 'Be mindful of your Lord Who has created you' implies that the creation of mankind is an established fact and not a disputable or controversial matter. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to remind us of the truth in which we all believe, namely that He has created us for the purpose that He has willed, i.e. receiving the divine guidance and the shares of His divine attributes that would protect us. Allah *Glorified is He* uses the Arabic word *Rabb*, e.g. Lord or Master instead of Allah or God. The concept *rabb* refers to the Supreme Being Who has created the whole universe out of nothing, has cared for His creatures and has nurtured them into a human perfection that they are intended to attain. He is the One Who has created the whole universe in the best and most perfect fashion and form. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if you ask them Who created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient, they will certainly say, "Allah" Whence are they then turned away?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61)

Since the issue of the creation is established beyond doubt and you believe in Allah, the Creator, then we inevitably acknowledge that He has power and control over us. We believe that He is our Lord Who has nurtured us, and accordingly we recognise His wisdom in all matter. Familiarising ourselves with the God and Lord Who has such limitless abilities and

infinite wisdom, we should be either afraid of His Power and Might or express our gratitude towards His Wisdom and acknowledge Him as the God and Creator of the universe.

The verse continues: 'O, People! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul' (*an-Nisa*: 1). If Allah does not say 'and from it created its mate', the verse would not have been complete. The reason is that He elucidates about the purpose of creation: 'And of everything We have created pairs that you may be mindful.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49)

Allah *Glorified is He* has created mankind from a single soul and has created from it its mate. In interpreting the meaning of the creation in this context, some commentators were quite confused as whether the verse means that Hawwa (Eve) was actually created and fashioned from the rib of Adam *peace be upon them*. Some commentators asserted this view, while others held that it is not true adding that the reference 'from it' in this context means from the very kind. In support of their interpretation, they adduced evidence from another verse that says: 'Certainly, a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves...' (*at-Tawba*: 128).

Does the verse mean that Allah has created Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from our souls? No. The verse means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a Messenger of Allah sent to all mankind from amongst themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* is underscoring a piece of evidence that would help us to understand the creation of Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* since her creation has not been detailed in the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* has given us an account of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* and how He has fashioned him out of clay along with the stages of his creation until he became a complete human being. It is plausible to assume that He intended the description of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* to be an example of the creation of the human beings, in general, and that the creation of Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* would be just the same. In this context, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'has created from it', which means He has created a being belonging to the same species of Adam *peace be upon him*. Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* was thus created of clay and then fashioned in the same manner Adam was fashioned.

Therefore, the verse did not repeat the creation process of Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* as done in the case of Adam *peace be upon him*. The verse could mean that Hawwa (Eve) was created from Adam's rib. Yet this was an event that was not witnessed except by the Creator, and in such a case, the proof should be taken only from the One Who witnessed it. Allah *Glorified is He* thus has conferred His Mercy upon us and relieved us of being entangled in doubts about the creation, how it happened, and how we came into being.

The human being has no say in the way in which he was created. The One Who has created Man teaches us about the creation. His account is the correct one because this matter goes beyond the scope of any empirical science. This is why when Darwin arrogantly tried to make conjectures about the evolution of mankind, he went astray, and later modern theories refuted his claims. Modern theories challenged his claims by posing the question as to why the factors that caused the first ape to evolve into a human being did not affect the rest of the apes as well and cause them to evolve into humans and accordingly led to the extinction of every species of apes. Darwin failed to respond to this question. For this reason, we emphasise that this matter was not witnessed by us, and therefore, we need to listen to the Creator in this regard. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth nor of the creation of their own souls. Nor could I take those who lead (others) astray as helpers.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) Since there were no witnesses to the creation of the heavens, the earth or Man, none of the created beings can claim any knowledge about it. No one should thereby raise claims about the creation of Man. Allah *Glorified is He* responds to those who try to claim that they have knowledge about this matter by saying: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth nor of the creation of their own souls. Nor could I take those who lead (others) astray as helpers.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) The meaning of 'those who lead (others) astray' is those who will lead people astray as far as the question of the creation is concerned. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is equipping us to address the false claims that could be arbitrarily put forth in this regard.

Thus, when He says: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth nor of the creation of their own souls, Nor could I

take those who lead (others) astray as helpers.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) He has clarified to us the nature of those who lead people astray concerning the subject of the creation. They were not there to assist Allah *Glorified is He* in the creation of the universe or to claim knowledge of the creation and how it took place. Accordingly, if human beings want to know about the creation of Man, they should remember that Allah *Glorified is He* is the Only One Who can tell them how Man was created. Those who make unfounded allegations about the creation of Man are the ones who mislead people and divert them away from the truth.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O, People! Be mindful of your Lord who created you from a single soul.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) Reflecting upon the verse, one wonders why Allah *Glorified is He* does not simply say that He has created human beings in pairs? The reason is that when He declares that Man is of two origins, a male and female, this means that each of them may have its own personal desires and inclinations. Thus, He is attributing all mankind to a single origin so as to imply that we should not have conflicting arguments since we all are from the same origin. In refutation of Darwin's theory of evolution, Allah *Glorified is He* has guided a group of non-Muslim scientists to defend Islam by finding evidence conforming to the narrative of the creation of man in the Quran. For instance, when the French scientist Monier wanted to refute such superstitious claims that the origin of Man was an ape, he said: 'I am astounded by those who think in such a way. Could chance cause human beings to exist in pairs of the same species, but differ in gender so that when they mate they would produce male or females?' How could such a process happen by chance?

Let us concede, for argument's sake, that Adam *peace be upon him* was created by chance. Was Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* created by chance as well? Could it happen by chance that Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with her* was created of the same species, yet differ in gender so that when they mate together, an emotional effusion flows between them, allowing the fertilisation process to take place, thus producing either a male or a female child? Does this also happen by chance? If this were true, it would be such a rational and remarkable chance! They may call it 'chance', and we call it the work of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Monier thought that he had found the evidence whereby he could refute Darwin's views. However, we would like to assert that the Quran has touched upon this very subject in the verse that reads: 'O, People! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) This is wherein its greatness resides.

Allah *Glorified is He* has created males and females. The females are of the same species of males but differ in gender so that when they mate together. Allah *Glorified is He* would cause them to produce through their union new generations of men and women. It is a purposeful process entailed by His wisdom. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). This verse has adduced the evidence to which the French scientist Monier was guided to later. The verse continues: 'And from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). Let us contemplate the greatness of the style used in the verse. How great is the word choice! Human beings need to spread throughout the earth in order to avail themselves of the divine blessings and bounties therein. 'Spreading', in this context, means to scatter something over a specific area. The verse means that Allah *Glorified is He* has spread (from the pair of them) countless men and women far and wide; the pair refers to Adam and Hawwa (Eve) *Allah be pleased with them* and the countless men and women are their offspring. Why did the verse not clearly state that He spread countless men and countless women? The number of males tends to be less than the females in all species. For instance, if you examined a field of palm trees, you will only find two male trees among a majority of female ones!

The relative increase in the number of males in all species is thereby intended because the male is the fertilising agent and can fertilise thousands of females. Many species are dominated by females, and the males have multiple female mates. Accordingly, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and from the pair of them spread countless men, and women far and wide.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1), this means that the human species is mostly dominated by females. In this context, the Quran draws your attention to the implications of the words because the speaker is Allah *Glorified is He*. Let us contemplate the verse: 'And from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) The pair in this verse refers to Adam and Hawwa (Eve) *peace be upon them*.

From this pair, He has spread countless men and women far and wide from a single pair.

We should properly understand this point to deduce from it the statistical evidence in support of the existence of the Creator, for He is the One Who '...and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) has spread more people from the posterity of the first pair of humans. Then, He produces a third generation from the second one, and so forth. The more we progress in time, the greater the number will be.

Thus, when you examine the population of any given country, we will find that it grows by the passage of time. For instance, the population of Egypt a century ago did not exceed five million, while two centuries before, it was even less, and ten centuries before it was even less, and twenty centuries even less, and so on. The further we go into the future, the greater the population becomes because Allah *Glorified is He* continues to spread from men and women countless generations who will in turn produce more humans, and so on. Accordingly, the further we go forward in time, the more the population increases. We notice this phenomenon on the level of the family. A family initially is made up of a pair, a father, and a mother. Afterwards, they produce sons and daughters who, in turn, will produce grandsons and granddaughters, and so on. Sometimes when the parents live long enough, they see the grandchildren of their own grandchildren. Thus, the more we advance forward in time, the more the population increases, whereas the more we retrogress into the past, the more it decreases.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has created Adam and Hawwa (Eve) *peace be upon them*. We can trace the entire human population to them. This makes us wonder about the origin of this first pair. Allah *Glorified is He* answers this inquiry by saying: 'O, People! Surely, We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Certainly, the most honourable of you with Allah is the one among you most careful (of his duty). Verily, Allah is All Knowing, Aware.' (*al-Hujurat*: 13) He relieves us of pursuing statistical counting. This verse is, thus, necessary to solve such a statistical riddle in order to understand that the further we proceed into time, the more the population of the world increases, whereas the

more we retrogress into the past, the more it decreases until it ultimately comes down to the first pair. We cannot say that mankind may be traced back to a single person because multiplication requires a pair. The question arises about the origin of this pair of humans. Someone who is capable of creation must have created them. Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us this and says: 'He has created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) Thus, we see the importance of the reference to 'spread far and wide' in the verse. If the verse did not state that, the contemporary minds would have gone astray and would have been confounded about the origin of the first pair from whom mankind descended. Therefore, we need to believe that someone must have created this pair. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) because spreading in the land is mostly the activity of males. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But when the prayer is ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah's grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful....' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10) He also says: 'He it is who made the earth smooth for you. Therefore, go about in the spacious sides thereof and eat of His sustenance. Unto Him is the return after death....' (*al-Mulk*: 15).

In many communities, females are mainly entrusted with the duty of taking care of the family, managing the household affairs, and making the home a proper dwelling, in which the husband and family can repose. The dwelling should be one in which a husband can savour peace of mind and serenity. If she does so, she has fulfilled her fundamental mission.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Be mindful of your Lord,' and then says: 'And remain mindful of Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1). He initially puts forth the evidence that He is a Powerful and All-Capable God Who has created man from nothing, nurtured mankind and rendered the entire world subservient to man. He, then, brings forth the evidence concerning the spreading of people in the earth in order to clarify that He is the One and Only God and that we have to accept His commands and worship Him. This worship involves obedience, and obedience requires compliance with a prescribed way of life that lays out what you should do and what you should not do. Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed the Quran as the final and concluding way of life He will reveal to mankind.

He, then, says: '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). We should consider the discrepancy of the ungrateful created beings. After Allah *Glorified is He* has reminded them of bonds connecting them and by means of which they show mutual compassion and mercy towards each other, He explains to them the following: even though no Messenger of Allah was sent to you for a while, your innate natural disposition recognises Allah *Glorified is He* as your Creator.

If you want to convince someone with doing something for your own sake, you may say to him, 'for the pleasure of Allah, do such-and-such.' Allah *Glorified is He* has extracted the evidence from them. The fact that you say, 'For the pleasure of Allah, do this' means that you are invoking and appealing to the power of a Higher Being to make the addressee do as you wish. Thus, the glorification of Allah *Glorified is He* is instilled within the human nature. The thing that is concealed is the method and way of life or, in other words, the set of commands and prohibitions by which you need to abide. When man is oblivious to this truth, he ungratefully denies it even though when he asks someone for something important, he may say to him, 'Do this for the pleasure of Allah.' As long as he said, 'For the pleasure of Allah', this means that the innate natural disposition inclines to recognise the truth that Allah *Glorified is He* is the True Lord of the universe, that He is the One to be sought and that if he invoked Him, He would not fail him. Thus, you should invoke Allah *Glorified is He* to fulfil your needs. Sometimes you also invoke blood and familial relations by saying, 'For the sake of the ties of kinship bonding us together, I am your relative, so please do such-and-such for me.'

Why were familial ties mentioned in this context? The reason is that when people invoke familial relations, they remind the individual of his duty and responsibility towards his relatives by bringing it to his attention. In other words, as I may invoke these familial ties, I may say to you, 'As long as you and I descend from the same origin, you should do such-and-such for me.' Accordingly, sometimes you invoke Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created you, and sometimes you invoke the ties of kinship since blood ties are the direct reason for material existence. The example of this is the verse that reads: 'Worship Allah (alone). Join nothing with Him (in worship). Be good

to your parents...' (*an-Nisa'*: 36). Allah *Glorified is He* thus mentions the parents who are the cause of our existence, and as such, He wants us to show kindness to them and treat them well. However, we should contemplate our existence until we realise that the ultimate cause of our existence is Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes this verse with the statement: 'Allah is always watching over you.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) The meaning of the Divine Command 'Be mindful of Allah *Glorified is He* as we have previously mentioned, is to avoid the punishment of Allah *Glorified is He* by means of obeying His commands and avoiding His prohibitions. The Divine Attribute *ar-raqib* means 'Watching' —or in this verse, as 'Ever Watching (over you)'—is derived from the Arabic verb *raqaba* which means to watch over, observe or monitor. Sometimes the word *marqab* is also used to denote the same meaning. We often find an observer or a watcher in the places that require security. In addition, there is often a booth or shack wherein the security guard sits and watches over the monitored area. This booth or shack is always higher than the guarded area. Moreover, the attribute 'Ever Watching' means intentionally observing and watching something or someone. When people say, 'This person is watching this other one', it means that he is intentionally observing this other person. It is true that people may see the person who is being watched unintentionally, but if this person is being watched, this means that someone is deliberately keeping track of their moves. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah is always watching over you.' (*an-Nisa'*: 1) Allah *Glorified is He* is thus not only the All-Seeing, but He is also Ever Watching—and Allah *Glorified is He* is the supreme example.

Anyone of us may see what we do not intentionally want to see. For example, one may pass by many things and see them by accident, but one does not watch someone or something unless he intentionally wants to observe and monitor him or it. However, Allah *Glorified is He* is watching over all of us as is stated in His saying: 'Most surely your Lord is watching.' (*al-Fajr*: 14)

After Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the subject of creation and how mankind was created from a single soul and from it He has created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide throughout the earth, He wants to demonstrate how He organises His universe

and protects those men and women whom He has spread all over the earth. Such men and women can be classified into two groups: a group who have been endowed with the strength and the capacity to realise their pragmatic interests independently and satisfy their needs, and a group who are weak and lack the capacity of fulfilling their needs independently. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* wants to establish a well-ordered society of mankind. He decrees that those who are capable and have sufficient power in the society should look after those who are weak. The question arises as to which segment of this weak group Allah *Glorified is He* is talking about in this context. The answer is that He is talking about orphans. Why does He speak of them in particular? The reason is that when Allah *Glorified is He* has created us from Adam and Hawwa (Eve) *peace be upon them* He decrees that human beings must go through a phase of childhood. During this phase, the father is usually the parent who strives and works to provide for the family and tend to their needs, while the mother nurtures and raises the children. Driven by the instinctive tenderness and affection that are instilled within their hearts as parents, both the mother and the father collaborate in the bringing up of their children. Such love, tenderness, and affection are always found in proportion to their children's needs. For instance, the father and the mother always devote more tenderness and affection to their younger child than their older ones. Justice entails this because if you consider how they treated their older children when they were younger, you will realise that the oldest children are the ones who were mostly given the majority of his parent's time and care. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to compensate the youngest child and motivate the father and the mother to give him an additional share of their affection. Moreover, the oldest child may dispense with his parents' care and assistance, as he grows older, while the youngest remains in need of their care and most of their attention. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says about the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: '...When they said, "Certainly, Yusuf and his brother (Benjamin) are dearer to our father than we, though we are a (stronger) company. Most certainly our father is in manifest error....' (*Yusuf*: 8) The verse means that Prophet Yusuf's brothers were stronger (older) and thought that their father must, by default, like them more. Such a thought proves the fact that their father knew that they were greater in

number and stronger, so he, therefore, assigned greater care and attention to the children who were young and weak. However, his attitude was the opposite of their expectations. Thus, they brought forth the evidence that was, in essence, against their argument.

Accordingly, given the fact that any young child needs the care, tenderness, and affection of the parents, we need regulations and provisions to protect the orphans who have lost the primary source of care and affection in their lives. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* divides the human society into segments and assigns to everyone the other segment for which he should care and be responsible. If each one of us takes care of the segment, for which he is responsible, the relation between the benefactors and beneficiaries will be properly defined so that each one will know his commitments towards his mother, father, and nephews, and so on, until a balance is reached in society. Thus, the entire society may live in mutual solidarity. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make the means of expressing tenderness self-driven in every one of us, for as long as the orphan child is a member of the society, it is incumbent on all of us to take care of him.

An orphan is a person who lost their breadwinner. This is why some people may describe a pearl as '*Durrah Yatimah*' (lone pearl). Likewise, an orphan is lonely and single. However, an orphan is defined in a different way for humans, animals, and birds. An orphan in the human species is defined as the person who has lost their father, whereas an orphan in the animal world is the animal that has lost its mother since animals have unrestricted sexual relationships with each other; the males fertilise the females and then leave them to suckle and take care of the baby animals. Furthermore, if another male animal approaches this female animal which has been fertilised, the latter keeps away. As for an orphaned bird, it is defined as the bird that has lost both its mother and father since the male and female pairs tend to develop affection and love towards each other. They build a nest together, alternatively take care of the eggs, and work together. Accordingly, birds lead a family life.

Allah *Glorified is He* wills to decree special regulations and rulings for an orphan as he represents the weakest in human societies:

وَأَتُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَبْدَلُوا الْخَيْرَ بِالْطَّيِّبِ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا
 أَمْوَالَهُم إِلَىٰ أَمْوَالِكُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ حُوبًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢﴾

Give orphans their property, do not replace [their] good things with bad, and do not consume their property with your own—a great sin[2] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 2)

How can we give an orphan child their wealth if he has not yet reached adulthood, not to mention that we are worried about giving them the money, fearing he should lose it? Allah *Glorified is He* uses precise wording in the following verse: 'Test orphans until they reach marriageable age; then, if you find they have sound judgment, hand over their property to them....' (*an-Nisa*: 6)

However, what should be done before an orphan reaches this age? Should we give them their wealth? Allah *Glorified is He* explains that an orphan's guardian should keep and preserve this wealth, and once he (an orphan) reaches adulthood, he should hasten to give them their wealth in full. Furthermore, he should beware of mixing an orphan's wealth with their own or replace anything thereof, especially by taking the beautiful or precious properties an orphan has and replacing them with cheaper and less useful properties. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Give orphans their property...' (*an-Nisa*: 2) which means that He has specified the money for an orphan, and their guardian should only preserve and keep it. Another important point to consider is Allah's saying, 'Test orphans...' (*an-Nisa*: 6) as some people want to prolong the period of guardianship so that they can take advantage of an orphan's wealth. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that guardians should not wait until an orphan reaches adulthood and then ask them to wait until they know how to manage their wealth. Rather, a guardian should test an orphan's attitude in some situations and then decide whether he will act properly or not.

Allah's saying, 'Test the orphans...' (*an-Nisa*: 6), means to test them whether they can take care of their properties on their own or not. If they can do that when they reach adulthood, certainly they will act properly. It is worth mentioning that Allah *Glorified is He* distinguishes between an orphan and a feeble-minded person. The latter does not suffer from a deficiency due to his young age; rather, he suffers from a mental deficiency. Allah *Glorified is He*

has addressed this subject by saying: 'Do not entrust your property to the feeble-minded...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). Is this money possessed by a guardian? No, it is not. A feeble-minded person will not be able to manage their wealth properly. Thus, the management of their wealth is transferred to person who can manage it properly and wisely. A guardian should manage the wealth of a feeble-minded person as if he was its owner since this person cannot manage their property properly. Conversely, when an orphan reaches adulthood and becomes rational enough, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...hand over their property to them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5)

One notices that when Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the subject matter of guardianship, He uses the expression 'your money', but when He addresses the subject matter of giving the money, He uses the expression 'their money.' Allah *Glorified is He* does not want the money to be squandered. He wants a guardian to take care of an orphan's or a feeble-minded person's fortune as if it were their own money since a feeble-minded person needs a guardian to take care of their money, but without them regarding the money that is their own. They may only take a sum of money in return for managing the wealth during the period of orphanage or feeble-mindedness.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches those who do not manage the wealth of orphans or feeble-minded people well by saying: '... Make provision for them from it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). Guardians may take provisions from the returns of this property, but they should not usurp it. Otherwise, what will be the value of your guardianship and taking care of the wealth of an orphan or a feeble-minded person? A guardian should increase the wealth of the orphan and should not plunder or misuse it in a manner that decreases it gradually. Concerning '...make provision for them from it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5), the phrase '*Warzuquhum fih*' in the Arabic text means that a guardian should make provisions for an orphan or a feeble-minded person under their guardianship from the yields of their wealth.

'Give orphans their property. Do not replace [their] good things with bad...' (*an-Nisa'*: 2). Allah's saying, 'Bad things' in this verse refers to unlawful matters, while 'good things' refers to lawful matters. It also means that if the wealth of an orphan includes good and precious items, a guardian

should not take them for themselves and replace them with bad and worthless items. For instance, if an orphan has a beautiful horse, while a guardian has a bad one, a guardian cannot replace the beautiful horse with the bad one. The same example applies to the replacement of a bad buffalo with a good one or a fruitless palm tree with a fruitful one. This meaning is clarified by Allah's saying: '... Do not replace [their] good things with bad...' (*an-Nisa'*: 2). The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* '...and do not consume their property with your own for the good...' (*an-Nisa'*: 2) means that a guardian should separate his money from that of an orphan's, and keep their money because failing to do so is a great sin.

Allah *Glorified is He* then moves to another subject concerning the weakness of an orphan that is coupled with the weakness of gender. The orphan whether male or female is weak, but if the orphan is a female, then the ordeal is by far graver. The reason is that in the case of the female orphan there exists the weakness of gender together with the weakness of being an orphan. Sometimes, in the case of a female orphan, a guardian may think of marrying her in order to take her wealth, a situation which happens frequently. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعٍ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعُولُوا ﴿٣﴾

If you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three, or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s): that is more likely to make you avoid bias [3] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 3)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* asserts the aforementioned point about keeping away from the orphans' wealth, especially when the weakness and vulnerability is doubled as pertains to the case of a female orphan. Wronging people in general is prohibited, but wronging a weak person, especially a female, is more drastic since she cannot defend herself. Only the full-grown woman can properly defend herself.

In the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '... If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 3), the Arabic verb *taqsitu* (be equitable) is derived from the word *aqсата*. However, the Arabic noun '*Al-Qist*' is among the words that is often confusing; in some instances, it is used to mean 'justice', if the letter '*qaf*' in the Arabic word has a *kasrah* (vowel point that sounds like 'I'). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but He, as do the angels and those who have knowledge. He upholds justice. There is no god but He *the Almighty* the All Wise...' (*Al-Imran*: 18).

Accordingly, we know that the word '*qist*' in the Arabic text of the verse means 'justice' in some instances and means 'injustice' and 'wronging' in other instances. The Arabic words '*qasata*', '*yaqsatu*', '*qastan*' and '*qusutan*' with a *fat-hah* (vowel point that sounds like 'a') on the Arabic letter "*qaf*", which is represented by the English letter 'q', means 'wronging.' However, the word '*qist*' with *kasrah* (vowel point that sounds like 'I') means 'justice', while '*qast*' with *Fat-hah* (vowel point that sounds like 'a') means 'injustice.' There is another root of the word which is '*Qusut*', but the verb is the same. Accordingly, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them]....' (*an-Nisa'*: 3)

The Arabic word '*taqsitu*' means 'wronging.' In Arabic language, there is a *Hamza* which can be attached to a verb and give it a contrary meaning. For example, when someone blames another or reproaches him for a particular thing he did, the Arabic word '*ataba*' refers to this meaning, but when the one who was blamed, responds to the one who blamed him; the Arabic verb '*a'taba*' refers to this case. Thus, the addition of *Hamzah* means that the blamed person conciliated the blaming person and removed the cause of the blaming. For example, 'Muhammad '*ataba* 'ala 'Ali' (Muhammad blamed 'Ali), and 'Ali '*a'taba* Muhammad ' ('Ali conciliated and appeased 'Ali). Another example is '*Jama Al-Kitab*' which does not mean that a person has turned a book into a dictionary, but means that a person has removed the ambiguity and vagueness of the book. Similarly, '*aqsat*' and '*Iqsat*' mean 'removing injustices', but '*Al-Qist*' means 'justice.' Accordingly, if justice comes after injustice has been removed, then the word '*aqсата*' refers to this case. '*Aqsata*' and '*taqsutu*' also mean that there was a state of injustice which was removed, and then was followed by justice.

There is a verse which states: 'But those who go wrong will be fuel for Hellfire.' (*al-Jinn*: 15) The word '*Al-Qasitun*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is derived from the Arabic words '*Al-Qast*' and '*Al-Qusut*', meaning 'injustice.' There is another verse which says: '... but if you do judge between them, judge justly. God loves the just.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) This means that Allah *Glorified is He* likes those who remove injustice and replace it with justice. Allah says in the chapter of *an-Nisa*': 'If you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls...' (*an-Nisa*': 3), this means that if a guardian fears that he will not be able to relieve an orphan from justice (fearing of not being able to remove justice implies that a guardian is righteous and pious and knows how to redeem himself from situations where he may slip into injustice), he should keep away from them. Each believer should block the means leading to sins so that he can prevent himself from wronging a female orphan. If a guardian wants to get married, he can choose a woman other than a female orphan under his custody. This means that there are many women, and it is possible for a guardian to marry any of them. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* does not intend that a guardian should abstain from marrying a female orphan and marry only one woman; rather, He clarifies that by saying a guardian can choose any of the numerous women available. Mentioning the issue of polygamy befits the context since Allah *Glorified is He* wants to deter a guardian from marrying orphan girls under his custody lest he should wrong them. Therefore, He commands him to give up marrying a weak orphan since there are many other females. 'If you fear that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three or four....' (*an-Nisa*': 3)

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He*, '... whichever [other] women seem good to you...' refers to marrying any woman whom a guardian is not forbidden to marry, as He has enumerated the women unlawful for him to marry in the following verse: 'Do not marry women that your fathers married with the exception of what is past. This is, indeed, a shameful thing to do, loathsome and leads to evil.' (*an-Nisa*': 22) He also says: 'You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of brothers and daughters of sisters, your milk-mothers and milk-sisters, your wives' mothers, the stepdaughters in your care— those born of women with whom you have consummated marriage. If you have not consummated the

marriage, then you will not be blamed— wives of your begotten sons, two sisters simultaneously— with the exception of what is past. Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful—Forbidden to you are women already married, other than your slaves? Allah has ordained all this for you....' (*an-Nisa'*: 23-24) Thus, any person can marry any woman, whom he is not forbidden to marry, as mentioned in the verse: "...you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three, or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one or your slave...." (*an-Nisa'*: 3) Therefore, we must understand why the text of this verse is worded as such, and why the numbers two, three and four are mentioned in this context.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to encourage people to abstain from marrying orphan girls so that no one wrongs another, as he may marry her due to greed. Allah *Glorified is He* orders a guardian to abstain from marrying a female orphan since there are many other women to marry, and he can marry two, three, or even four women. Allah orders him to keep away from a female orphan lest he covets her money or takes advantage of her weakness since she no longer has a guardian who accepts responsibility for her.

We should consider deeply the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '... you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three, or four....' (*an-Nisa'*: 3) The word '*mathna*' in the Arabic text of the verse mainly means two things. For instance, the sentence '*Ja' Al-Qawm Mathna*' means that some people walk in a line where each row consists of two people walking beside each other. The word thus implies unity. Another example is '*Ja' Al-Qawm Thalath*', which means that people walk in a line where each row consists of three people walking beside each other. Also, the sentence '*Ja' Al-Qawm Ruba'*'; means that people walk in a line where each row consists of four people. The opinion that the words '*mathna*', '*thulath*', and '*rubu*' mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse mean that every person is allowed to marry nine women can be refuted by saying that this is a wrong understanding of the verse. Following this logic, the word '*mathna*'; would mean four people, '*Thalath*' six people and '*rubu*' eight people. Therefore, the total sum would be eighteen. However, this is not the intended meaning since Allah *Glorified is He* is addressing a group and not a single individual. He thus says: 'If you fear

that you will not deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three or four....' (*an-Nisa'*: 3)

Accordingly, if a teacher asks students to open their books, does this order mean that only one student should open all the books? No, it is an order for every student to open his own book. Ordering a group of people in the plural form means that each person in this group is addressed by this order. When the teacher asks students to get out their pens, this means that each student should get out his own pen. In addition, when a group of people are ordered to get in their cars, this means that each one of them is being addressed by this order and should get in his car. Thus, ordering a group of people in the plural form means that each person in this group is being addressed by this order. The saying of Allah *Glorified is He*, '...you may marry whichever [other] women seem good to you, two, three or four. If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s). That is more likely to make you avoid bias,' (*an-Nisa'*: 3) refers to men in general, among whom one man may marry two women, another may marry three women and a third may marry four women.

When Allah *Glorified is He* enacts a ruling, He sometimes makes things obligatory, and on other times He makes other things permissible. In this context, Allah *Glorified is He* does not enjoin and decree polygamy on every man; rather, He makes it permissible. There is an evident difference between obligation and permissibility. Even marrying one woman is only a permissible and not an obligatory act. Accordingly, there is a difference between what Allah *Glorified is He* obligates and what He makes permissible. However, in the second case, the motive that directs a person's action is simply his desire.

Furthermore, if a person applies a particular ruling, he must make sure to follow all the conditions relevant to this ruling. For example, the person who follows the ruling on polygamy should deal with his wives fairly. If he does not, corruption will spread on the earth, and this will cause people to doubt Allah's rulings and wonder whether they are fair or not. If a person marries more than one woman and refrains from treating his wives fairly, then this means that he has followed only one part of the ruling and has left the other part which is relevant to justice. People always refrain from polygamy since

many have suffered greatly from marrying more than one wife by abandoning Allah's ruling that stipulates treating one's wives fairly.

The divine course has to be taken as an indivisible whole. So, why does any married woman hate polygamy? The reason is that she knows that when any husband marries a new wife, he directs his complete attention, wealth, care, and even smiles to this new wife. Therefore, most women hate the idea that their husbands may marry other women. Those who follow Allah's ruling regarding polygamy have to strictly abide by His ruling of dealing with their wives justly. If they do not do so, they will cause people to rebel against Allah's ruling, and many will try to find reasons and pretexts for such rebellion and disobedience. Many will criticise this person for marrying a second wife and neglecting the first one, or leaving his children without care and directing all his attention to his new wife. How can this person follow Allah's ruling concerning something and disobeying it concerning something else? Whoever does so makes people doubt Allah's rulings and further incites them to rebel against them. People with shallow understanding may say that those who partially follow Allah's rulings may be excused. However, this is an unacceptable logic.

The major problem that occurs in dealing with any of Allah's rulings is to partially follow them without considering the conditions of these rulings. Allah's rulings must be followed as a whole. We can rarely find a person who has managed to achieve justice in marital life regarding his expenditures, housing and not favouring any of his wives over another. If the first wife objects, by any means, no one will give her any consideration. However, when a husband fails to treat his wives fairly, she will have justifiable reasons for objecting to polygamy. The complaints arising nowadays amongst married couples are caused by the fact that some people have used Allah's concession in practising polygamy and have not followed His ruling regarding the fair treatment of wives. Justice is enjoined concerning the matters in which man has choice, but this command is not enjoined concerning the matters in which Allah *Glorified is He* has not given him choice.

Some shallow-minded people may say that Allah commands men to treat their wives justly, and then He decrees that no one can achieve such justice. However, can this be considered proper legislation and ruling? Would Allah

Glorified is He give people things, and then take them away? Allah decrees legislation for the case of man's inability to maintain justice by saying: "You will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so. But do not ignore one wife altogether, leaving her suspended [between marriage and divorce]. If you make amends and remain conscious of Allah...." (*an-Nisa'*: 129)

Since Allah has decreed a ruling concerning inability to maintain absolute justice, He has not abrogated it. A true believer should not follow Allah's rulings in part, depending on his interests; he should not just follow the rulings which he considers in his interest and reject that which does not appeal to him. Allah's Guidance must be followed as a whole by all people due to the fact that if any Muslim deviates from this Guidance, he will cause harm to other people. What may be considered as someone's right may be considered as another one's duty. Therefore, a person should take his rights and perform his duties. Those who follow Allah's ruling with in regards to practising polygamy have to follow His rulings regarding justice. Otherwise, they will give the opponents of the religion strong pretexts to refute and alter Allah's legislation, depending on the situations noticed by them, which result from Muslims abiding by one ruling and neglecting another.

The fairness required of one who practises polygamy is primarily concerned with distributing different objects among his wives fairly, i.e. he should provide them with equally good residences; the time he spends with each of them should be divided equally; the furnishing of each of his wives' houses should be of the same quality, and his personal belongings should be divided equally amongst his wives. A husband should not keep valuable things with one of his wives, while keeping cheap things with the other one. For instance, a husband may keep pyjamas made of high-quality wool in the house of one of his wives, while keeping another one made of lower quality material in the house of his other wife. Equality should not only be observed with wives' properties and belongings, but also with a husband's belongings which are kept in each wife's house. Early Muslims used to strictly observe this rule to the extent that they would make sure that the shoes they wore in each of their houses were the same in kind, colour and shape so that none of their wives

would show off among the others and boast that her husband wears better things when he is at her house than he does when he is in the other wives' houses. The form of justice that a person is required to maintain is pertaining to the matters which fall under the realm of a husband's choice. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does oblige a person to observe justice in matters in which He has not given him choice. Allah *Glorified is He* orders a husband to be just with his wives regarding their houses, the time he spends with each one of them, the properties he buys for one and his personal belongings which he keeps in each one's house. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not enjoin on a husband to be fair in his love and inclination towards his wives since this matter is not under his control.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asserts this rule. 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* says, 'Messenger Muhammad used to divide things fairly and say, "O, Allah, witness that this is how I divide things which I have control over and possess, so do not blame me for that which I do not have control over or possess (i.e. the heart)."'⁽¹⁾

This is the meaning of the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'You will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so....' (*an-Nisa'*: 129) The reason is that there are things that a person cannot control, such as feeling comfortable at one of his wives' houses more than the other ones or feeling more sexually comfortable towards one than the other. Nonetheless, regarding the points which are apparent to people, equal division should be observed so that none of them boasts it and provokes another wife. If this is the case with multiple wives who are considered temporary (in the sense that the man can leave any of them at any time either by separation or divorce), then it is more likely that a husband treats his children from each wife justly.

Some people abstain from following Allah's rulings when they find a man who has more than one wife taking advantage of polygamy which Allah has made lawful, yet he has failed to establish justice among his multiple spouses. Furthermore, they may find out that his children from one of his wives are

(1) *Related by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Al-Darimy*

neglected and displaced; therefore, they take this as a ground for censuring Islam. Those who changed the matrimonial laws in Egypt considered the egregious discrimination that some foolish parents cause when they prefer the offspring of a particular wife to the offspring of another in regards to food, clothing and education. Therefore, problems arise when a Muslim abandons his religion and exposes it to criticism and attacks by its adversaries. Every Muslim should pay attention to his behaviour and should not deviate from the righteous path in order that he protects his religion from criticism. He should not give a chance to the enemies of Islam to attack and censure Islam.

When a Muslim behaves in an inappropriate way that is unacceptable to Islam, he gives the adversaries of Allah *Glorified is He* the opportunity to attack His religion. Therefore, a Muslim should observe good behaviour in order to protect his religion. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* maintained justice amongst his wives to such an extent that was not restricted by his ability. When he was ill, his illness could exonerate him of any blame for staying in any of his wives' houses. However, he ordered some of his companions to carry him to the houses of the rest of his wives on the days specified for them. Therefore, he used the power and ability of others in order for him to maintain optimal justice. Furthermore, whenever he travelled, he used to draw lots to choose a wife who would travel with him; this is utmost justice.

When such a form of justice exists, people will believe that Allah's legislation involves only goodness, and this will dissuade all the opponents of the religion of Allah from attacking it since they will not find a gap through which they can make lawful what the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* prohibits. Accordingly, if a Muslim is incapable of maintaining justice properly, he should be content with one wife. However, this does not mean that if a Muslim restricts himself to only one wife the need for observing justice is obviated. It is completely unacceptable for a man to neglect his wife. This is why when a woman⁽¹⁾ complained to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* that her husband did not approach her though he did not have other wives, he told one of the

(1) The story of the woman who complained about her husband to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him*

companions who was present to give her a *Fatwa* (the religious ruling applicable to such a situation). This Companion said that her husband should spend a night with her every three nights. The companion based his judgment upon the assumption that the man had three other wives. Therefore, she deserved the fourth night. Accordingly, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was pleased with this companion because he knew how to give proper judgement even in the case of having a single wife.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'You will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129) does not mean that a person is obligated to maintain justice among wives pertaining to the inclination of his heart and whereas love is concerned. Justice should be maintained only in matters over which a person has control. As for the matters which are not within a person's capacity, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...but do not ignore one wife altogether...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129) The shallow-minded who want to justify their deviation from the Guidance of Allah would claim that observing justice is required, whereas Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed that we are incapable of doing so. This opinion can be refuted by the questions, 'Will our Lord give us a concession then take at the same time? Does Allah ask husbands to be just even though He knows that they will not be able to be so?' This is impossible to imagine. When Allah *Glorified is He* says: "You will never be able to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire to do so..." (*an-Nisa'*: 129) He means that achieving justice does not involve matters a person cannot control such as his feelings and love. Therefore, He says: '...but do not ignore one wife altogether...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129)

We clarify this point to those who make judgments without understanding Allah's intention first and to those who understand this intention, but want to deliberately misconstrue it and falsely misquote religion. However, this is a serious matter to which any family may be subjected. For instance, if a man does not have any inclination towards his wife, what is the right course of action in this case? Would it be better to divorce and release her, or should he keep her and marry another wife with whom he feels comfortable? Or should he follow his sexual desires without any control? Allah *Glorified is He* has

enacted an integrated religion which should be followed as a whole, and not observing certain rules of the religion and abandoning others.

The problems and crises that ailed countless non-Muslim societies have impelled them to apply many Islamic solutions. I do not like to elaborate on this subject matter, but it is worthwhile to mention that a number of countries have considered allowing polygamy not because Islam has decreed it, but due to the fact that their social conditions have demonstrated that it is the only solution for their problems, especially in order for them to eradicate the problem of mistresses. Mistresses are the women with whom men have illegitimate affairs and then have illegitimate children from them as a result.

It is preferable that a man's relationship with a second woman to be within the framework of marriage which should be known to the public. Furthermore, a man should undertake the responsibility of his family. Whoever wants to know more about these countries and their decision in this particular regard can refer to Dr. Muhammad Khafaja's interpretation of the relevant verse, as he has stated a complete list of the countries that have decided to allow polygamy.

We also have to heed an important fact: Allah *Glorified is He* has not enjoined polygamy; rather, He has allowed it only. The man, who does not feel comfortable with having more than one wife, should abstain from doing it. Permissible matters are those concerning which a Muslim can choose whether to do them or not. If we consider the matter from a different perspective, we will find that if multiplicity is allowed for one party, and the two parties are equal in number, then the option for multiplicity cannot be attained. The following example illustrates this point. If ten people enter a room that has ten chairs, everyone can sit on a chair. No one can use a chair for sitting and another for stretching his legs. But if there are eleven chairs in the room, then one of the ten people can use a chair for sitting and another one for stretching his legs. Accordingly, multiplicity is allowed when there is surplus. If there is no surplus, then no multiplicity should be allowed because every man will marry only one woman, as then, he will not find any other woman to marry.

Therefore, the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed polygamy means that He knows that there is a surplus, as it is well known that the number of

males in each species is less than the number of females. We have given the example of palm trees and the eggs that are produced when a roaster fertilises a hen, hens always outnumber roosters. Thus, the number of females in the realm of plants, animals and every other species exceeds the number of males. If this is the case, and every male will marry only one female, what will be the destiny of the remaining females? They will either try to be permanently chaste and suppress their desires or release them in their attitude towards men surrounding her, or they may unleash their desires with married men, spoiling social relations.

When Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed polygamy, He willed that it accommodates the excess number of women, but upon the condition of observing justice. Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one...' (*an-Nisa'*: 3), this means that if the person fears that he cannot observe justice (in matters that are under his control), then he should restrict to and be content with marrying only one woman.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...or your slave(s)....' (*an-Nisa'*: 3) Some people argue about the following verse, "...or your slave(s)...." (*an-Nisa'*: 3) However, we are reassured regarding this by clarifying that there is no source of slaves now due to the fact that Muslims are passive and subservient, a fact which has emboldened infidels to attack them and seize parts of their land and countries. However, Muslims have not tried to defend their lands. Likewise, there is no longer a war between Muslims and disbelievers, so there are no captives or slaves. It must be noted that we support and defend this legislation when it was applicable in the past. The rationale underlying the permission for a Muslim to take pleasure in his female slave is that the abolition of slavery was among the main goals which Islam has intended to achieve, as it does not promote slavery.

Before Islam, the liberation of slaves depended solely on the will of their masters. Then, Islam came and introduced different ways for liberating the slaves. For example, a sinner may be asked to free a slave in order to atone for a sin or false oath. In addition, the man who has committed *Zhihar* (a man likening his wife to an unmarriageable relative) should expiate for this sin by freeing a slave, whereas a person who has broken his fast in *Ramadan* should free a slave.

Moreover, the expiation for murder is to free a slave. Thus, Islam offers several possibilities of freeing slaves, allowing for the eradication of slavery.

As for the believer who has not committed a sin that entails manumission of a slave and has women slaves, Islam has set rules for how he should treat his female slaves: he must feed her the same food from which he and his family eat along with providing her clothing like that which he and his family use. Furthermore, he should not ask her to do anything beyond her capacity. Accordingly, if he assigns her any work, he should assist her. The only thing that she misses is the satisfaction of her desire, especially when she resides in a house dwelled by a man and his wife, and she sees this wife beautifying herself for her husband and living a full marital life with her husband. Women are sensitive to these matters which may rouse their desires and feelings.

Since Allah *Glorified is He* allows a master and female slave to enjoy each other, He soothes her feelings, and this suggests that she is equal to her lady, the wife of her master, and is thus entitled to the same enjoyment. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to eradicate slavery gradually since He only allows the slave woman to marry a slave man, she will never escape slavery, and any child she may bear will be doomed to being a slave. However if she could copulate with her master and beget a baby, she would free herself and her child. Therefore, this act helps in annihilating slavery, that in addition to respecting a slave's desire and natural instinct. However, foolish people always want to censure and criticise Islam for this.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If you fear that you cannot be equitable [to them], then marry only one, or your slave(s). That is more likely to make you avoid bias.' (*an-Nisa*: 3) This means if a person fears that he may not be fair, he should be content with only one wife or a slave in order to avoid bias. Some people say that it means to avoid the increase of children. Allah *Glorified is He* allowed a person to copulate with the slaves; therefore, there will be a greater chance for increasing the number of children. His saying '...that is more likely to make you avoid bias.' (*an-Nisa*: 3) means that this attitude should be adopted in order to avoid wronging anyone since the word '*Al-'Awl*', which is the root of '*ta'ulu*' and is mentioned in the verse, means inclination, and in the context of inheritance, it means the case in which the

shares increase over the original assets. If the number of people sharing a particular property increases, each one's share will decrease.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً فَإِنْ طِبَّ لَكُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ فَقُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا مَرِيئًا ﴿٤﴾

Give women their bridal gift upon marriage, though if they are happy to give up some of it for you, you may enjoy it with a clear conscience[4] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 4)

It means to give women their dowries. The word '*sadaqatuhun*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the dowry, and the word '*nihla*' means gift. So, is the dowry considered a gift? No, it is a wife's right and a compensation for having sexual relations with her. However, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that giving dowries to women should be like giving a gift. Thus, it is based on religious motive, rather than a court judgement.

We should consider Allah's use of words and meanings in this context since what happens in reality is the following: a man marries a woman for satisfying each other's desire and for begetting children. If this is the case, this may not have entitled her to a dowry since she will enjoy relations as much as he does, and will have children. In addition, she will undertake the household affairs, while her husband will exert efforts to earn his livelihood. However, this gift was decreed by Allah *Glorified is He* in order to dignify women: 'Give women their bridal gift upon marriage....' (*an-Nisa'*: 4) Who is commanded to give the gift? It is either the husband or the guardian as per His saying: 'Give women their bridal gift upon marriage....' (*an-Nisa'*: 4) This implies that a woman has become his wife, and he has become obligated to pay her a dowry. This dowry may be considered as a debt if a husband has married without giving her the dowry due to financial problems, but he should pay it whenever he becomes financially capable. Allah *Glorified is He* may also be addressing the guardian of the bride since he may take the bride's dowry. Therefore, the command in this verse is, thus either addressing husbands or guardians. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* decrees legislation to protect rights, he always gives room for the one whom He has entitled to this right to voluntarily and gracefully give up part or all of it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

'...Though if they are happy to give up some of it for you, you may enjoy it with a clear conscience.' (*an-Nisa*: 4)

Allah has first defined the rights by asserting to the husband or the guardian of the bride that her dowry is exclusively hers since it is compensation for having marital relations with her. However, He *Glorified is He* has permitted voluntary concession. Thus, if a wife renounces her right, there is nothing wrong with her husband not paying her the dowry. Such a graceful act on her part is bound to strengthen the foundations of their marital life. What matters in this context is the voluntary accord and acceptance of a wife to renounce her right, but her guardian should not take advantage of her bashfulness and appropriate part of her dowry. The important matter is that she should voluntarily accept to renounce it: '... Though, if they are happy to give up some of it for you, you may enjoy it with a clear conscience.' (*an-Nisa*: 4)

The Arabic word '*hani*' means the food that a person enjoys eating. However, one may eat something that he finds delicious, but it may cause many health problems. It may thus be enjoyable to eat but may not be healthy and generally good food. What is intended by the words '*Han'an Mari'a*' which are mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, is the generally good food that does not have bad health effects. It is different from the tasty food that may cause health problems that require treatment after eating. Accordingly, tasty and enjoyable food is not necessarily good and healthy. Therefore, we should make sure that we eat healthy and tasty food.

One day a man came to Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* complaining of pain. It is well known that 'Ali had profound and extensive knowledge and a great ability to issue legal opinions. Although he was not a physician, the man sought a remedy based on 'Ali's insights and great knowledge. He told the man to take two dirhams from the dowry of his wife and buy some honey, and then he advised him to dissolve it in some fresh rainwater and drink it. 'Ali advised him as such based on Allah's saying about rainwater: 'and how We send blessed water down from the sky....' (*Qaf*: 9) 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* also said that he heard Allah's verse about honey: 'From their bellies comes a drink of different colours in which there are healing for people.' (*an-Nahl*: 69) 'Ali added that he heard Allah's verse concerning a wife's dowry: '... Though,

if they are happy to give up some of it for you, you may enjoy it with a clear conscience.' (*an-Nisa'*: 4) Therefore, 'Ali believed that if the medicine combines blessing, healing factor, good taste, and healthiness, Allah *Glorified is He* can cure the patient if He wills. 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* combined four elements into a medicine in the same way a physician cures patients by mixing different elements. In this case, 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* made a treatment from Quranic verses.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the subject of orphans, feeble-minded people, money, guardianship, and sponsorship. Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَمًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ
فِيهَا وَاکْسُوهُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٥﴾

Do not entrust your property to the feeble-minded. God has made it a means of support for you: make provision for them from it, clothe them, and address them kindly [5] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 5)

Who is the feeble-minded person? He is the one who does not have a sound mind and cannot manage his wealth wisely. Who would ever give his money to a feeble-minded person? Allah *Glorified is He* says this to teach us how to manage money and use it. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says: "... do not speak ill of one another..." (*al-Hujurat*: 11). Certainly, no one speaks ill of himself, but he may speak ill of his opponent or enemy, an act which may lead his opponent or enemy to speak ill of him, i.e., both of them speak ill of one another. Therefore, Allah's saying, 'Do not entrust your property to the feeble-minded...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5) means that a feeble-minded person may have a fortune, but his feeble-mindedness precludes him from managing it properly, as unwise handling of wealth may lead to losing and wasting it. Thus, if a feeble-minded person has wealth, he should not manage it; rather, a proper guardian should handle and manage it for him.

Allah *Glorified is He* addresses a problem that existed in society: some men, whose children who were slightly grown up, gave the responsibility of their wealth to them in order to spare themselves the trouble of managing wealth,

even if their children were incapable of doing so wisely. Allah *Glorified is He* warns these parents in this verse against giving their wealth to the feeble-minded based on the excuse that they are their children. Allah *Glorified is He* also warns parents against letting their feeble-minded children manage their sources of livelihood since He has made this wealth as a means of support for them. Therefore, they should not give this wealth to anyone else.

'Do not entrust your property to the feeble-minded. God has made it a means of support for you. Give provisions to them from it....' (*an-Nisa'*: 5) Allah clarifies that the feeble-minded person should enjoy all aspects of living, such as food, clothes, etc. Allah *Glorified is He* commands Muslims: '... Give provisions to them from it, clothe them and address them kindly.' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). This is a command to treat feeble-minded people well, not to mock them for their foolishness, as no one should increase the suffering of the feeble-minded.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* returns to the subject of orphans:

وَابْتَلُوا الَّذِينَ يَتِمُّونَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ ءَاسْتَمْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوهَا إِسْرَافًا وَبِدَارًا أَن يَكْبُرُوا وَمَن كَانَ غَنِيًّا فَلْيَسْتَعْفِفْ وَمَن كَانَ فَقِيرًا فَلْيَأْكُلْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِذَا دَفَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فَأَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا ﴿٦﴾

Test orphans until they reach marriageable age; then, if you find they have sound judgment, hand over their property to them. Do not consume it hastily before they come of age: if the guardian is well off, he should abstain from the orphan's property, and if he is poor he should use only what is fair. When you give them their property, call witnesses in; but God takes full account of everything you do [6] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 6)

Allah *Glorified is He* orders guardians in the case of dealing with an orphan to test and train them on how to manage their wealth before they reach full age. This means that a guardian should not wait until an orphan reaches full age, and then try to test him. A guardian should rather test him before he reaches full age in minor matters. If an orphan shows proper action and wisdom, a guardian will readily give him his wealth as soon as he reaches full age and will not be forced to delay giving him his money until he tests him after having reached full age. When an orphan is tested before reaching full

age, he will receive his wealth and manage it by himself once he reaches full age. Allah *Glorified is He* commands a guardian to do as such in order for the wealth not to be kept with the guardian for even a moment after an orphan reaches full age. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Test orphans until they reach marriageable age. Then, if you find they have sound judgment, hand over their property to them. Do not consume it hastily....' (*an-Nisa'*: 6)

When an orphan reaches full age after being trained by his guardian on how to manage his wealth properly, and when the guardian is certain that he is perfectly capable of doing that, he should hand over his wealth to him and should not consume it hastily and excessively. Excessiveness means exceeding the proper limits allowed in spending money. A guardian may consume this wealth hastily since this wealth is not his own, as it is owned by the orphan. When a greedy man was asked, 'O, greedy, what do you want greedy man?' He said, 'I want a bowl of porridge that I can keep on eating in the same way that a bad guardian does with the wealth of an orphan.' May Allah *Glorified is He* save us from such a situation! Allah *Glorified is He* also says, '... Do not consume it hastily before they come of age.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) Allah *Glorified is He* warns us against squandering the fortune of an orphan before he reaches full age. This is in order that an orphan's wealth is not to be squandered by a guardian before he reaches full age. However, Allah's legislation is perfect and does not prevent a fair, poor person from being a guardian. Allah *Glorified is He* could have enjoined that guardianship should be assigned only to wealthy persons since they will not be in need of an orphan's wealth. Therefore, Allah does not preclude the honest, poor person who has both faith and expertise from being assigned as a guardian. Allah *Glorified is He* says about a guardian: '...If a guardian is well off, he should abstain from an orphan's property, and if he is poor, he should use only what is fair....' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) So, nobody should say that if a poor person becomes in charge of an orphan's wealth, he will misappropriate it, as this judgement is based on human criterion. No one should prevent a poor believer from being assigned guardianship of an orphan since it is true that a person who has faith can rise above greed and avarice. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says about a guardian who undertakes an evident responsibility towards an orphan's wealth: '... If a guardian is well

off, he should abstain from an orphan's property, and if he is poor, he should use only what is fair....' (*an-Nisa'*: 6)

Scholars have determined the fair amount that a guardian is entitled to take to be equivalent to fees which his counterpart may receive for the same job. The word '*Al-Ma'ruf*' which is mentioned in the verse, means what is common and accepted among people. A guardian may receive an amount that is common for people to receive in such cases, or he may take as much as he needs. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...When you give them their property, call witnesses in; but it is God Who takes full account of everything you do.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) Allah *Glorified is He* protects a guardian, as He knows well His creatures since their nature and feelings change. A guardian of an orphan has to manage his wealth wisely and carefully so that the orphan will not hate him. Sometimes a guardian gives an orphan everything he asks for, but this action is not recommended since an orphan should receive only what he needs, and not to be spoiled. A guardian may not give an orphan all the things he asks for since he may regard them as unsuitable for the orphan, an action which may lead the orphan to hate the guardian and lead him to accuse the guardian of misappropriating his wealth when he reaches full age. However, Allah *Glorified is He* protects a guardian when an orphan reaches full age in so much as the guardian has protected the orphan's wealth and managed him properly.

Therefore, a guardian should bring witnesses to oversee the transaction when he hands over an orphan's wealth since fluctuations of the human soul cannot be controlled. An orphan may hate his guardian for being strict regarding spending the wealth or for punishing him whenever he deviated from the right path. In this case, an orphan may hate his guardian and falsely accuse him. Therefore, a guardian must bring just and impartial witnesses when he delivers an orphan's wealth, in order for a guardian to be discharged from the wealth. However, anything else is left to Allah *Glorified is He*: '... it is Allah Who takes full account of everything you do.' (*an-Nisa'*: 6)

Thus, you may notice that the chapter of *an-Nisa'* addresses the weaknesses of women and orphans due to the fact that in the pre-Islamic society, people used to refuse to bequeath women and children until they became adults. This was a strange rule. This was an extremely horrible form of subjugating the

weak at the hands of those endowed with power. Indeed, a main underlying objective of the Islamic mission is to eliminate widespread injustices. An example of this is how Islam ruled that women and children must be given their rights. Allah says:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ
الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا ﴿٧﴾

Men shall have a share in what their parents and closest relatives leave, and women shall have a share in what their parents and closest relatives leave, whether the legacy be small or large: this is ordained by God [by God] [7] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 7)

But who enacts this share? It is Allah Who is the only True Owner and Lawgiver. In this context, the martyr Allah *rest his soul in peace* Sayyid Qutb, the author of *fi Zhilal al-Quran* [In the Shades of the Quran] critically observes the injustices of depriving the deceased's children or women, for whom he was responsible, a share of their inheritance, yet they were denied it. Indeed, the young deserve to take more since the elder have grown up and become stronger. The young are worthy of more care and nurturing. Furthermore, if the heredity laws of Mendel demonstrate that children inherit features from their parents and grandparents, both the good and the bad, and even diseases, chastity and countenance, why should they not inherit their fortune?

When we listen to the Lord's statement: '... a share ordained' (*an-Nisa'*: 7), we conclude that there must be a lawgiver who ordains this law and a recipient who must obey it. The Lawgiver is Allah, the Possessor. In Arabic, there is a subtle difference between *farada* (ordained) and *awjaba* (obligated). The 'ordainment' is issued by a higher authority, while the 'obligation' may originate from the person himself; anyone may place an obligation upon themselves to undertake a particular duty. The True Lord *the Most High* addresses the matter of the 'prescribed share' making it clear that it is a precisely known portion. The True Lord explained it only after mentioning those usually present, yet undeserving of inheritance, those around the deceased but are not legally specified heirs. Allah *the Most High* explicitly invites us to allot a portion of

the legacy to those who have no prescribed share, forewarning against settlements that distribute ordained shares to those who have none. For this reason, Allah *says*:

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الْقِسْمَةَ أُولُو الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينُ
فَارْزُقُوهُمْ مِنْهُ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٨﴾

If other relatives, orphans, or needy people are present at the distribution, give them something too, and speak kindly to them [8] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 8)

When kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons attend the distribution of inheritance and each legal heir receives their share, people who are not legal heirs may say that the heirs are effortlessly appropriating a fortune that fortuitously came to them. Such a situation may ignite bad feelings in the hearts of kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons. It is true that kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons are not legal heirs and, as such, are not entitled to take any share of inheritance. Nonetheless, they attended the distribution of shares. Therefore, Allah commands: '... give them something thereof for their sustenance and speak unto them in a kind way.' (*an-Nisa*: 8). Thus, had they not attended the division, the situation would have been different. Accordingly, Allah *the Most High* commands us to give to kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons to eliminate any trace of envy or rancour towards the heirs or the deceased.

As a result, love, compassion and the joy of doing good deeds will be common amongst people since they all share the benefits. Furthermore, the True Lord *the Most High* not only commands us to bestow upon kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons a portion of the heritage, but He also commands us to speak kindly unto them, e.g. invoking Allah to increase their sustenance, children and wealth, all of which could be inherited by their children. Such is the duty of the mature heirs endowed with wisdom and common sense. However, if the heir is an orphan, those present should tell kinsfolk, orphans, and needy persons that the heritage is for an orphan, thus, they do not have custody over it. Had they the custody over it, they would have surely given them more so as to soften their hearts and comfort them, Allah says, 'And when [other] near of kin and orphans and needy persons are present at the distribution [of inheritance], give them something thereof for their sustenance

and speak unto them in a kind way.' (*an-Nisa'*: 8) In other words, you ought to bear in mind that if you were weak, or an orphan or one not entitled to inheritance, you would definitely be happy if you were allotted a share of inheritance. You should remember that Allah asks you to give a share to those who have no share to inheritance, for you may one day be in their position; Allah *the Most High* may recommend a share for you and your children. Consideration of Divine Laws should not be reduced to be a mere commitment and obligation on believers; rather, these laws should also commit others to fulfil some rights and obligations towards them.

The religious legal ruling simultaneously gives and takes away from you. For this reason, we advise those who pay *zakat* (obligatory charity to the poor) from entertaining the thought that it takes from the fruit of their work and effort to give others. Indeed, *zakat* (Alms) takes from you when you are capable of building security in your life, and when you are incapable; it takes your right from capable people. It is a wise, divine insurance. Subsequently, Allah says:

وَلْيَخْشَ الَّذِينَ لَوْ تَرَكَوْا مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّةً ضِعَافًا خَافُوا

عَلَيْهِمْ فَلْيَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْيَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا ﴿٩﴾

**Let those who would fear for the future of their own
helpless children, if they were to die, show the same
concern [for orphans]; let them be mindful of God and
speak out for justice [9] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 9)**

One who has weak children that he could leave behind is always worried about their future. Thus, if you, believers, have weak children and you are worried about them, be kind and show sympathy to all weak orphan children; in return for your care, others would be kind to your weak offspring if you were to leave them after death. O, believers know that our Lord is the Watcher and the All-Sustaining. He will repay the good that you have done to your offspring. We once mentioned that Mu'awiyah and 'Amr ibn Al-'As *Allah be pleased with them* met towards the end of their lives. 'Amr ibn Al-'As asked Mu'awiyah, 'O, Commander of the Believers, what worldly pleasure do you continue to enjoy?' At that time, Mu'awiyah was the Commander of the Believers or Caliph, that is the head of a strong and rich state. In response,

Mu'awiyah said, 'As for food, I have become bored of the luxurious kinds. As for clothes and apparel, I have become bored of the softest and finest of them. My pleasure in this world is a sip of cold water under the shade of a tree on a summer day.' Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him* then kept silent for a while before asking 'Amr *Allah be pleased with him* 'What about you 'Amr? What worldly pleasure do you still desire?' 'Amr ibn Al-'As, a great commercial genius, replied, 'My fortune and pleasure is an endlessly flowing water spring in a fertile land that abounds with mooing cows and accrues a sufficient livelihood for me and my posterity.' He asks for a continuously flowing spring of water in a land where animals and plants abound with benefits and fruits. They had a servant serving them something to drink. Mu'awiyah looked at him and wanted to joke around and get him involved in the discussion. He said to a servant, 'What about you, 'Wardan'? What pleasure still appeals to you?' In response, he said, 'O, Commander of the Believers, it ardently appeals to me to do a favour for some noble people who would not repay it to me during my lifetime but bear it in mind for my children.' The servant has clearly understood Allah's saying: 'And let them stand in awe [of Allah], those [legal heirs] who, if they [themselves] had to leave behind weak offspring, would feel fear on their account, and let them remain conscious of Allah, and let them speak [to the poor] in a just manner.' (*an-Nisa*: 9) Those who are conscious of Allah and take care of the weak posterity left behind by others guarantee that Allah will bestow upon them someone who is conscious of Him to look after their own weak offspring.

We have talked about the good servant and worshipper to whom Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* went to visit, Al-Khidr *Allah be pleased with him* Musa (Moses) said to him, 'May I follow you so that you can teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?' The man (Al-Khidr) said, 'You will not be able to bear with me patiently. How could you be patient in matters beyond your knowledge?' Musa (Moses) said, 'God willing, you will find me patient. I will not disobey you in any way.' The man said, 'If you follow me then, do not query anything I do before I mention it to you myself.' They travelled on. Later, when they got into a boat, and the man made a hole in it. Musa (Moses) said, 'How could you make a hole in it? Do you want to drown its passengers? What a strange thing to do!'" (*al-Kahf*: 66-71) 'He replied,

'Did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?' Moses said, 'Forgive me for forgetting. Do not make it too hard for me to follow you.' And so they travelled on. Then, when they met a young boy and the man killed him, Moses said, 'How could you kill an innocent person? He has not killed anyone! What a terrible thing to do!' (*al-Kahf*: 72-74) After that, they arrived in a village where they asked its people for food. When a traveller who is passing through asks you for food, it is always for a pressing need. Simply, if he begs for money, you may think he is doing so just to amass wealth. However, if he asks for some food to eat, then it is incumbent upon you to meet his need. How was the response of the villagers when the righteous servant and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* asked them for food? Allah says: 'And so they travelled on. Then, when they came to a town and asked the inhabitants for food but were refused hospitality, they saw a wall there that was on the point of falling down, and the man repaired it. Musa (Moses) said, "But if you had wished you could have taken payment for doing that." (*al-Kahf*: 77) It was a mean village. The good servant then found a wall on the verge of collapsing and he rebuilt it. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* objected him doing this since he had a reservation about the people of the village who denied them simple hospitality. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in essence, said: 'If you wished, you could have asked for a payment for rebuilding the wall. The people of the village are mean, and you should not have rebuilt the wall for them unless you had received a payment for your effort.'

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was oblivious to facts that Allah did not let his good servant (Al-Khidr) miss. By Allah, if the wall had collapsed, and those wicked people, who did not feed them when they had asked for food, had found the treasure left for the poor orphans, they would have definitely taken this fortune for themselves. Therefore, when the righteous servant saw that the wall was about to collapse, he erected it so that he would hide the treasure away from the wicked, mean people. Thus, he says: 'The wall belonged to two young orphans in the town and there was buried treasure beneath it belonging to them. Their father had been a righteous man, so your Lord intended them to reach maturity and then dig up their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not do [these things] of my own accord: these are the explanations for those things you could not bear with patience.' (*al-Kahf*: 82)

This process aims to protect the two orphans. We have to be careful and meticulously examine the text. The good servant repaired the wall in a manner that gave it new life so much so that it would be on the brink of collapsing by the time the two orphans would reach the age of wisdom and rationality. This way both of them would find the treasure. The wall was well timely rebuilt so that when the two orphans reach the age of wisdom and rationality, they could take their treasure. It is the timing willed by Allah since the father of the two orphans was a good man. He was ever conscious of Allah and carried out his responsibilities well. In return, Allah sent them soldiers and made arrangements to protect and preserve the treasure of the man's two orphan boys. Therefore, we need to understand well the wisdom in these words of Allah that we may know how to deal with our children and protect them: 'And let them stand in awe [of Allah], those [legal heirs] who, if they [themselves] had to leave behind weak offspring, would feel fear on their account, and let them remain conscious of Allah, and let them speak [to the poor] in a just manner' (*an-Nisa'*: 9). Why? Simply, when one is young, his egotism is strongly present. The older he becomes, the more he cares for the interest of his children in so much that he would deprive himself of pleasures he enjoys just to meet the needs of his children. Furthermore, when he sees that his offspring are still weak and feel his death is nearing, he grieves at the thought of leaving his offspring in a weak position. The Lord *the Most High* clarifies the best way for all His servants to deal with this situation: while you are still alive, give strength and support to your children when they are in a weak state; and how to emanate this strength is by adhering to the way of Allah, especially by caring for the orphans under your custody. In this way you secure the livelihood of your children after your death and should find rest after death.

The proper advice to guardians is the following: 'Never harm orphans! You should address them in the same kind and welcoming manner in which you address your own children. Call them 'dear child' and 'dear kid.' ' When a believer is conscious of Allah and seeks to avoid His punishment, Allah *the Most High* graces their children with a pious person to care for them. The Divine Law concerning orphans continues:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ الْيَتَامَىٰ ظُلْمًا إِنَّمَا يَأْكُلُونَ فِي
بُطُونِهِمْ نَارًا وَسَيَصْلَوْنَ سَعِيرًا ﴿١٠﴾

**Those who consume the property of orphans
unjustly are actually swallowing fire into their own
bellies: they will burn in the blazing Flame [10]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 10)**

Why does the Quran focus on this matter? It does due to the fact that Allah *the Most High* wants His creation to accept His decreed plans contently regarding their beloved ones, as well as those whom they need for support. A young child may lose his father who strived to care for him and provide him with everything beautiful in life. However, the child subsequently finds the entire society of believers hastening to take care of them and alleviate the loss of their father with multiple fathers in faith. If the case is as such, the father of the child would die and accept the Divine Plan and trial without feeling any fear. What makes people react towards times of difficulty in fear, despair and horror is that they often see that the loss of fathers turns children hopelessly helpless. Children may tell themselves, 'When our father dies, we will be lost.' However, when society protects the rights of orphans and every believer finds it incumbent upon himself to become an alternative father/mother, the situation will radically change. In this case, when the Divine Decree wills to take away the soul of a father, the child will receive it in patience and contentment. 'Behold, those who sinfully devour the possessions of orphans do fill their bellies with fire, for [in the life to come] they will have to endure a blazing flame!' (*an-Nisa'*: 10) Devouring is repeatedly happening as a result of stealing and appropriating what is not one's own. Eating is different from wearing clothes. In every season, one needs clothes that suit them, but eating is an everyday practice. For this reason, any stealing is intended for devouring. This is why we say in our popular proverb about avaricious people. Such and such has 'a big stomach' because it is but an act of devouring. The True Lord *the Most High* has explained the matter of eating the fortune of an orphan by saying: 'O, eaters, of the money of the orphan, you fill your stomach with fire!' In other words, you are eating what will lead you to hellfire in the Afterlife. Nevertheless, punishment may take place immediately in this world;

the devourer of the fortune of orphans may be plagued with lethal painful diseases. On the Day of Judgment, believers will see the traces of the crime of devouring the fortune of orphans on faces with smokes coming out of perpetrators' mouths. Do not think that the stomach will only be filled with fire, while eyes are relieved. No, fire in stomachs occurs while they are exposed to burning flame. The True Lord *the Most High* says:

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلَّذِ كَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيَيْنِ فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ وَلِأَبَوَيْهِ لِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ مِمَّا تَرَكَ إِنْ كَانَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَوَرِثَهُ آبَاؤُهُ فَلِلْأُمِّهِ الثُّلُثُ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُ إِخْوَةٌ فَلِلْأُمِّهِ السُّدُسُ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِي بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ ؕ لِأَبَائِكُمْ وَلِأُمَّاتِكُمْ لَا تَدْرُونَ أَيُّهُمْ أَقْرَبُ لَكُمْ نَفْعًا فَرِيضَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ إِنْ اللَّهُ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١﴾

Concerning your children, God commands you that a son should have the equivalent share of two daughters. If there are only daughters, two or more should share two-thirds of the inheritance, if one, she should have half. Parents inherit a sixth each if the deceased leaves children; if he leaves no children and his parents are his sole heirs, his mother has a third, unless he has brothers, in which case she has a sixth. [In all cases, the distribution comes] after payment of any bequests or debts. You cannot know which of your parents or your children is more beneficial to you: this is a law from God, and He is all knowing, all wise[11] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 11)

Exalted is our Lord, the Creator, the Most High. The Lord of the Great Throne tells us how to handle inheritance with our kids, as if we were more loved by Allah than we are by our parents. His noble saying, 'concerning [the inheritance of] your children, Allah enjoins [this] upon you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) shows His Mercy and Love for us. If we explore the way Allah expresses advice in the Quran, we conclude that the content of the advice is often accompanied by *the ba'* (lit. *with*) letter. Thus, Allah *the Most High* says: 'All this has He enjoined upon you so that you might remain conscious of Him.' (*al-An'am*: 153)

Allah *the Most High* says, 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah)....' (*ash-Shura*: 13) He *the Most High*

also said: 'We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents. His mother bore him by bearing strain upon strain....' (*Luqman*: 14) All these Quranic verses are associated with *the ba'* letter; it indicates company and association. However, when He advises parents to be good to their children, Allah *the Most High* says: 'concerning [the inheritance of] your children, Allah enjoins [this] upon you....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) The Arabic preposition '*fi*' (which literally means 'in' but contextually means 'concerning') is indicative of being firmly imprinted and connected to the nature of children. Whenever you see the matter of advice which in this case is the child, you remember it. What is the advice then? It is 'the male shall have the equal of two females' share....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) We said before that the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'Men shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind....' (*an-Nisa'*: 7).

In this verse, Allah *the Most High* did not specify the share of the male immediately after this verse; He only did so after mentioning the matter of orphans and forewarning people against devouring their money. Why? The answer is simple: the course of discussion creates curiosity and craving in readers for the correct judgment. When a reader yearns for a ruling, it comes forth when the reader's soul is ready to apply it. Conversely, when a ruling is enjoined without prior request, the human psyche may either accept or reject it. Allah does not reveal rulings abruptly to His servants, but He prepares them first so they may be eager to receive them, and this is noticeable in the way He reveals to us the rulings of inheritance. At first, Allah *the Most High* said: 'Men shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind...' (*an-Nisa'*: 7)

Subsequently, He *the Most High* prescribed the rules of distributing the inheritance and the laws requiring kind treatment of orphans, needy people, and family members. Therefore, Allah enjoins due care for the properties of orphans and warns against appropriating them. He *the Most High* says: 'concerning [the inheritance of] your children, Allah enjoins [this] upon you....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) The first part of this Divine instruction reads as follows: 'The male shall have the equal of two females' share....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) But why did He not say, 'Two females shall have a share equal to that of a male' or 'The female shall

have the equal of half the share of the male'? All these phrases express the same apparent meaning. However, Allah *the Most High* wants the criterion, or the yardstick, for measurement to be the share of females, so the share of males is determined in the light of his female counterparts. If He *the Most High* says that the female shall have the equal of half the share of the male, the criterion for measuring would be 'the male', but Allah *the Most High* wants the criterion to be defined in terms of 'the female.' Therefore, He says: 'The male shall have the equal of two females' share....' (*an-Nisa*': 11)

Some may claim that this ruling is the first injustice against women. In reply, look at the justice in this context. A male needs a wife to support, and a female needs a husband who must support her. Therefore, half the share of the male is enough for her if she lives without a husband. If she gets married, her share will continue to be hers and, in addition, her husband will support her. Which one has a better share in this distribution of inheritance? Actually, it is the female who has a better share. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* made her the basis and the criterion for distribution by saying: 'The male shall have the equal of two females' share....' (*an-Nisa*': 11) What does this mean? Is it a form of injustice against women or a favour for women? Indeed, it implies a favour for them. Simply, her share is made the criterion for the distribution process. Furthermore, a male must support his female, while a wife shall receive support from her husband. Accordingly, half the share of a man is entirely for her. Therefore, people should have said, 'Why did Allah *the Most High* favour women? He favoured her because she is divinely honourable, and Allah wants to protect her. In the case when she is not married, she has enough means to support her; yet, if she has a husband, her share will be a grace from Allah.

The True Lord *the Most High* then says: 'But if there are more than two females, they shall have two-thirds of what [their parents] leave behind; and if there is only one, she shall have one-half thereof....' (*an-Nisa*': 11) Here, I want the dear readers to focus on understanding the meaning intended by the True Lord *the Most High* and the methods the Quran uses in grasping the attention of minds to receive the words of Allah. Allah *the Most High* has honoured mankind with reason, but reason needs to be exercised. The exercise signifies the intellectual training of the mind to gain the ability to solving problems. Having said this, when a problem emerges, the mind is prepared to

solve it and has the capacity of deduction and evaluation; these are among the tasks of minds. The True Lord *the Most High* thus assigns a creative task to the mind in two serious areas of great significance to man: religion and Quran, as guide and preserver of the religion.

Allah *the Most High* does not give laws in articles like the ones of criminal laws concerning misdemeanours and felonies. Rather, Allah gives a part of the ruling in a particular place, while the remaining part appears in another place within another matter to evince the Divine Course as one integrated unit; it takes you from a context to another and prescribes the details of a single ruling in various places of the Quran. As such, you may recognise the Divine way as a whole. Furthermore, if you explore a specific Divine Ruling, you should not think that it solely stands for the Divine Course. Indeed, many things interfere with the matter from which you seek a relevant ruling. A good example is the matter of orphans, which interferes with the laws of inheritance. The verse in question illustrates this matter. However, why are Divine rulings expounded in this way? It is simple: Allah *the Most High* wants you to exercise and train your mind to understand the general framework that encompasses life as a whole. Anyway, what should matter in the first place is your religion, so exert your mind in it. If you employ your mind to understand the religion, you give it the energy it needs for other fields.

Conversely, if your mind gets carried away by any partial matter, it is deviated from the general framework of life and becomes engrossed in details that have no relevance to the universal objective of life. Our children could teach us from their experiences with games. A child may play hide-and-seek game with other kids in which many conceal themselves in places, while one searches for them. We also play a game with our children wherein we hide something in one hand and fold both hands for our children to guess by intuition in which hand the thing is hidden. It is a kind of training and deductive exercise. If a child has some kinds of mental agility, is quite observant, and is full of intelligence, he would look at the hands of his father and see which one shakes a bit or which one does not look normal when folded in order to choose correctly. This way, a child's wit excels his father's. This is a process of training a child on deduction and understanding through which he learns

not to take things for granted without enough reflection or experience. The True Lord *the Most High* wants His rulings to be interspersed amongst different places. In this respect, we should understand His saying: 'Concerning [the inheritance of] your children, Allah enjoins [this] upon you: the male shall have the equal of two females' share; but if there are more than two females, they shall have two-thirds of what [their parents] leave behind; and if there is only one, she shall have one-half thereof....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) It means that if the deceased leaves no boy but has more than two girls, they are entitled to two thirds of the inheritance. However, if they have a brother, each of them is entitled to half of his share. To reiterate, if an inheritor is a single girl, the verse entitles her to half of the inheritance, 'and if there is only one, she shall have one-half....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) Yet, there is a case for which Allah *the Most High* did not decree a ruling, namely, when the deceased has two girls. In this case, we find that the Lawgiver has guaranteed for the two girls a share equal to three or more girls; they share two thirds of the inheritance. This is what scholars said, but why did He not state this explicitly? He left this out this situation for a reason. When a girl shares the inheritance with a brother, she takes one third of the wealth, and when there is another sister without a brother, she takes one third as well.

If she has a brother who would be, in such a case, responsible for earning the livelihood required to sustain them, she would be entitled to the third. For this reason, it is logical that each female would be entitled to one third of the inheritance if the deceased has two daughters. To illustrate further Quranic coherence, there is another verse (*an-Nisa'*: 176) that discusses another part of the same subject matter for the mind to work and investigate. Allah *the Most High* says: 'They will ask you to enlighten them. Say: 'Allah enlightens you [thus] about the laws concerning [inheritance from] those who leave no heir in the direct line: If a man dies childless and has a sister, she shall inherit one-half of what he has left, just as he shall inherit from her if she dies childless. But if there are two sisters, both [together] shall have two-thirds of what he has left; and if there are brothers and sisters, then the male shall have the equal of two females' share.' Allah makes [all of this] clear unto you, lest you go astray; and Allah knows everything.' (*an-Nisa'*: 176) In this context, Allah *the Most High* mentions the two sisters of the deceased and shows that they are entitled

to two thirds of the wealth if the deceased has no child, a son, or a daughter. However, if the two sisters are entitled to two thirds of the deceased's wealth, we should wonder who is closer to the person: daughters or sisters? If the deceased has two daughters, they are definitely closer to him than the two sisters. For this reason, the two daughters are entitled to two thirds. Furthermore, if the daughter has a brother, she is entitled to one third, and if she is the only child, she is entitled to half of the wealth. On the other hand, if there were more than two inheriting daughters, they share two thirds of the wealth together.

If there were two daughters, each takes one third. Why? In response to this, Allah *the Most High* has entitled the two sisters of the deceased to take two thirds of the wealth if the deceased has no children. It is also quite intriguing that Allah uses the plural form in the first verse concerning the inheritance of daughters and the dual form in the verse concerning the inheritance of sisters. Allah guides us to apply the ruling in the verse concerning the inheritance of two sisters to two daughters and the ruling on the inheritance of daughters to sisters.

The True Lord *the Most High* challenges our minds to a task of searching, investigating and deducing so we can accept the rulings wholeheartedly, using our understanding. When Allah *the Most High* says: 'They will ask you' (*an-Nisa'*: 176), He means that they are asking you to give them your legal opinion. This is evidence that a believer who asks for a legal opinion loves Allah's assignment; he likes to know the ruling of Allah in the cases when He does not specifically state a ruling. In this respect, the early believers asked and requested legal opinions about different matters since they loved Divine Laws: 'They will ask you to enlighten them. Say: "Allah enlightens you [thus] about the laws concerning [inheritance from] those who leave no heir in the direct line..."' (*an-Nisa'*: 176) The Arabic word *kalalah* (a childless person who has no heir in the direct line) is etymologically derived from *ikleel* which is a crown or diadem, an object that surrounds the head. In this context, the word *kalalah* also means family members who are related to a person but are not direct descendants from the same blood lineage. 'If a man dies childless and has a sister, she shall inherit one-half of what he has left, just as he shall inherit from her if she dies childless. But if there are two sisters, both [together] shall have two-thirds of what he has left; and if there are brothers and sisters, then the male shall have the equal of two females' share. Allah

makes [all this] clear unto you, lest you go astray; and Allah knows everything.' (*an-Nisa'*: 176) This verse conveys the same meaning as the earlier one. In reference to the details of the first verse currently in question: 'And as for the parents [of the deceased], each of them shall have one-sixth of what he leaves behind, in the event of their having [left] a child; but if he has left no child and their parents are their [only] heirs, then their mother shall have one-third...' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) the meaning of this part of the verse is that if the deceased is childless, the mother is entitled to one third and the father to two thirds. However, if the deceased has full brothers or maternal/ paternal brothers, the mother is entitled to only one sixth, according to the literal text of the Quran: 'If he has brothers and sisters, then their mother shall have one-sixth after [the deduction of] any bequest he may have made or any debt [he may have incurred]....' (*an-Nisa'*: 11)

The distribution of inheritance under the prescribed system should be carried out after deducting any bequests the testator makes along with settling all of their debts. Bequests come first in the text even though repayment of debts takes priority over bequests since creditors may ask for the repayment of the money owed to them. On the other hand, no one will come forth and ask for the bequest. Allah *the Most High* has thus given bequests priority by mentioning them first so as to pay more attention to it. Allah *the Most High* then concludes the verse by saying: 'As for your parents and your children – you know not which of them is more deserving of benefit from you: [therefore this] ordinance from Allah. Verily, Allah is All Knowing, Wise' (*an-Nisa'*: 11).

Do not determine shares of inheritance following your own estimation and pragmatic value of parents or children. The value of parents becomes clear when one says that my father has raised me, and he is the one who made all my future opportunities possible. The value of children becomes clear when one says that my father will die, but my children will cling to my memory and bear my name. The future is still ahead of them. In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* forbids biased personal prejudgments since you do not have a say in this matter: 'You know not which of them is more deserving of benefit from you: [therefore this]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 11). Since you do not know the better source of value and benefit to you, adhere to the Divine Law of Allah Who knows the best interest of all and knows how to best achieve it through the proper division of shares.

In these verses, 'Verily, Allah is (literally 'was') All Knowing, Wise' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) or 'Verily, Allah is (literally 'was') All-Forgiving and Most-Merciful' (*an-Nisa'*: 106) *kana* (was) which is the Arabic past tense of the verb to be, was used, making us bear in mind that Allah is unchangeable. He has eternally been All Knowing and All-Wise and He will continue to be so for eternity. Vicissitudes cannot be attributed to Allah. His Omniscience, Wisdom, Awareness, Forgiveness and Mercy are all eternal. He does not change, and His Attributes are unchangeable. Therefore, when a Muslim hears, 'Allah is (literally 'was') All Knowing, Wise' (*an-Nisa'*: 11) or 'Allah is (literally 'was') All-Forgiving and All-Merciful' (*an-Nisa'*: 106) expressed in the past tense, he should say, 'And Allah is still so.'

Then, Allah *the Most High* says:

وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَإِن كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمْ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَنَّ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوَصِّينَ بِهِآ أَوْ دَيْنٍ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبْعُ مِمَّا تَرَكَتُمْ إِن لَّمْ يَكُن لَّكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَإِن كَانَ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ الثُّمُنُ مِمَّا تَرَكَتُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ تُوصُونَ بِهِآ أَوْ دَيْنٍ وَإِن كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةً وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ أُخْتُ فَلِكُلِّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ فَإِن كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِن ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَآءُ فِي الثُّلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصَىٰ بِهَا أَوْ دَيْنٍ غَيْرِ مُضَارٍّ وَصِيَّةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٢﴾

You inherit half of what your wives leave, if they have no children; if they have children, you inherit a quarter. [In all cases, the distribution comes] after payment of any bequests or debts. If you have no children, your wives' share is a quarter; if you have children, your wives get an eighth. [In all cases, the distribution comes] after payment of any bequests or debts. If a man or a woman dies leaving no children or parents, but a single brother or sister, he or she should take one-sixth of the inheritance; if there are more siblings, they share one-third between them. [In all cases, the distribution comes] after payment of any bequests or debts, with no harm done to anyone: this is a commandment from God: God is all knowing and benign to all [12] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 12)

The Quranic verses continue in the same stream, clarifying that the share of a male is equal to the share of two females. Justice indeed is this distribution.

When a woman dies, her husband may get married and rebuild his life. Similarly, when a woman's husband dies, she takes her share of the wealth he left behind and at the same time she may get married and receive support from her new husband. This Divine Plan for the distribution of inheritance achieves perfect justice in the case of *kalalah*. The *kalalah* refers to the deceased who is childless deceased, thus having no agnate heirs, e.g. father or child who could inherit from them. In such a case, when the deceased has a brother or a sister, each is entitled to one sixth of the inheritance, but if they are more, their total share is the third after carrying out the bequests left and settling debts. We see that much emphasis is placed on this subject matter. Why? Simply refer to the other verse on *kalalah*: 'If there are two sisters, both [together] shall have two-thirds of what he has left; and if there are brothers and sisters, then the male shall have the equal of two females' share. Allah makes [all of this] clear unto you, lest you go astray; and Allah knows everything' (*an-Nisa*': 176).

The first verse being discussed prescribes that each brother/sister shall be entitled to one sixth of the inheritance, but if there are two or more brothers/sisters, their share is one third of the inheritance when they are maternal brothers/sisters. As for the verse wherein the True Lord *the Most High* assigns two thirds of the inheritance to the two sisters when they have no brother, it refers to the paternal sisters left without full/paternal brothers. In this manner, the Quran sets out the details precisely. What does the following verse mean '...neither of which having been intended to harm [the heirs]. [This is] an injunction from God: and Allah is All Knowing, Forbearing' (*an-Nisa*': 12). Allah *the Most High* wants to establish justice. No one is ever harmed if the law of Allah is implemented; harm always arises from the pursuits of self-interests that corrupt the Divine distribution.

In this context, someone may not desire to debar the uncle from the inheritance of his full/paternal brother's daughters or to exclude the children of the male brothers, full or paternal, from the legal heirs of an aunt, or daughters of a full/paternal uncle. Replying to those who follow their personal desires, we say that the profits expected is proportional to the loss risked. If you die leaving daughters behind, would it not be the duty of the uncle to bring up the daughters? Why does the True Lord *the Most High* compel the

uncle to look after the daughters of his brother if the brother died without leaving any wealth? To understand this, you have to pay attention to the rationale behind assigning the uncle a share in the inheritance. We have to understand that there is always a profit corresponding to an expected loss.

When it comes to the legal regulations, we say that the Noble Quran must be considered in its entirety. For example, the issue of *kalalah* is explored in two verses. Allah *the Most High* says: 'They will ask you to enlighten them. Say: 'Allah enlightens you [thus] about the laws concerning [inheritance from] those who leave no heir in the direct line. If a man dies childless and has a sister, she shall inherit one-half of what he has left, just as he shall inherit from her if she dies childless. But if there are two sisters, both [together] shall have two-thirds of what he has left; and if there are brothers and sisters, then the male shall have the equal of two females' share.' Allah makes [all this] clear unto you, lest you go astray; and Allah knows everything' (*an-Nisa'*: 176).

What is the difference between this verse in which a sister receives one-half and two sisters receive two-thirds and the other verse in which a sister receives one-sixth and two or more brothers/sisters receive one-third collectively without differentiation between males and females? We have to distinguish between the two cases of *kalalah*. They have in common is that the deceased is childless, but they differ in the relationship of brothers and sisters. In the first verse, the brother/sister concerned is a full or paternal brother/sister. If the brother is either a full or just a paternal brother, he is an agnate heir as discussed in the Quran (*an-Nisa'*: 176). Concerning the other verse (*an-Nisa'*: 12) in which the shares of one-sixth goes to a sister or a brother, and one-third to two or more brothers or sisters, it only pertains to maternal brothers/sisters. Accordingly, the case of *kalalah* takes place when a childless person dies leaving full, paternal or maternal brother(s) and/or sister(s). Therefore, the two rulings are different since the case to which each applies is also different. If an orientalist reads these two verses related to the inheritance of *kalalah* with malicious intent, hoping to find an excuse to attack the religion and the Quran, they might say, (Allah forbid), 'The Quran contains contradictions. In one verse, it states a ruling that the heirs of *kalalah* case should receive one-sixth, while in another verse, it gives them one-third, and in a third one, it assigns one-half and two-thirds, while the male is entitled to twice the share of the

female. To silence their argument, it is obvious that they do not realise the meaning and purpose of the context of each case of *kalalah*. Consequently, they grasp certain things while missing others.

Allah *the Most High* then says: '... after [the deduction of] any bequest that may have been made or any debt [that may have been incurred]' (*an-Nisa'*: 12). Obviously, this ruling is applicable to all cases of inheritance. Accordingly, the distribution of the inheritance should be undertaken after carrying out the bequests made by the deceased and paying his debts. So, which step takes priority: the bequest or the repayment of debts? Indubitably, the payment of his debts takes priority. The reason is simple: the debt is a binding obligation, while the bequest is voluntarily made. How can the bequest which is voluntary and is, although, mentioned before the debt, come before the debt which is an obligation? When Allah *the Most High* says: '...neither of which having been intended to harm [the heirs]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 12), we understand that the Divine Law never intends to harm anyone.

This verse addresses the testator who may hate that some of their legal heirs with prescribed shares in the inheritance he is leaving behind may write a bequest to preclude them from inheritance or to diminish their shares. The testator may also bequeath their wealth to some foreign person whom he wants to give a share of the inheritance to preclude the undesired family members and kinsfolk from their inheritance as legally prescribed. In such a case, the testator may claim that he owes a debt to a person to whom he makes a bequest. If he claims that the debt is equivalent to the entire wealth, then this creditor will take the debt before giving the prescribed shares to the legal heirs and, accordingly, the heirs are without any share in the inheritance.

This case happens and is witnessed in reality. In certain cases, some people, who only have daughters, may say to themselves that their daughters' uncles and cousins will take a portion of the wealth, so they may think that it is wise on our part to distribute their wealth amongst their daughters. People who do this may claim that they are indebted to their daughters. We forewarn them by saying, 'Do not be unfair.' They could fall prey to a shortsighted plan. Instead they should consider the opposite scenario of them dying and leaving nothing to their daughters. This would raise the question, 'Who would be responsible for them?' It is

definitely the duty of paternal uncles. Thus, the loss incurred is commensurate with the gain accrued. To further explain this point, the girls may sue their uncles in the court to force them to pay the familial aids if their father dies without leaving enough means for their sustenance. So what is the benefit of precluding their brothers from their divinely prescribed shares of inheritance?

Moreover, someone may want to divest uncles or brothers of their shares in his wealth for any reason. What does he do in such a case? He writes a bequest to persons not entitled to the inheritance. Therefore, Islam limits the scope of bequest to be within one-third of the wealth to avoid injustices or harmful plans. However, some people may try to falsely claim that their debt is equivalent to their entire fortune, so their legal heirs would not take anything. In such a situation, they should bear in mind that Allah carefully watches over them every moment of their lives until their deaths; they are accountable for all personal actions. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* said: 'As for your parents and your children – you know not which of them is more deserving of benefit from you: [therefore this] ordinance from Allah. Verily, Allah is All Knowing, Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 11)

Allah *the Most High* warns us against harmful behaviours. It is Divine Advice concerning the complete rulings of inheritance, the bequests of the testator and the repayment of debts. It is Divine, and not human, Advice. Therefore, it is mandatory and binding. Allah *the Most High* says: 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah)...' (*ash-Shura*: 13). This advice signifies religious duties. He *the Most High* also says: 'Do not take any human being's life – [the life] which Allah has declared to be sacred, except through [due process of] law. That is what He enjoins you that you may comprehend' (*al-An'am*: 151).

Since this is a Divine Ordainment from Allah *the Most High* the Lord of all dominion, it is compulsory. Allah concludes the verse being further explored by saying: 'Verily, Allah is All Knowing, Wise' (*an-Nisa'*: 12). It is a warning! Do not take any action against the Divine Law; even though judicial authorities may authorise what you want, you will still be guilty before Allah. For example, a debtor may die, so the debts must be repaid. However, if this man forges a false document of debts in order to deprive some legal heirs of their

inheritance, he has to realise that Allah knows the intentions behind all actions. If one escapes earthly justice, he will not be able to escape the judgment of the Heavens. This matter requires profound knowledge and insight to perceive the truth of intentions.

Actually, the subject of litigation is a matter of dispute amongst human beings, but religion and religious duties form a different issue between the Lord and His servants. In his Honourable statement, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Verily, I am only a human! You refer your disputes to me for judgment. Some of you may be more eloquent in their plea than others are, so I declare a judgment on their behalf according to what I hear from them. As such, if I slice off anything for a person from the right of his brother/sister, he should not accept that, for I sliced off for him a portion from Hell.'⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* teaches us that he is a human being; he neither knows the unseen, nor does he know the secrets of disputes. When Muslims resort to him for judgments concerning disputes, some may be so eloquent that they turn falsehood into truth, while others stand helpless. The Messenger of Allah passes the judgment, relying upon the judicial evidence, even if the unknown realities go against that evidence. Thus, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* forewarns us that he is a human being; when we seek his judgment on disputes and controversies, none of us should use the power of speech to take what is not his right. If one does take what is not his right, even after the judgment of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* he just takes a piece of fire.

In other words, we must be careful not to deceive or mislead anyone or take something by abusing the power of judicial authority and neglecting religious warnings. A believer should not try to tamper with religious matters. Do not think that the judgment of any judge can render something forbidden to becoming something permissible or making something permissible to becoming forbidden. This never happens! The permissible is evidently clear, and so is the forbidden. The judge only passes the judgment based on explicit evidence. For example, assume that you borrowed a thousand pounds from

(1) *Related by Malik, Ahmad, Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Abu Dawud on the authority of Umm Salamah Allah be pleased with her*

someone who took from you a promissory note. The borrower then repaid the loan he owed and told the lender, 'Kindly send me the note as soon as you go back to your house.' However, the lender soon died and his family said, 'We have the promissory note!' They then referred it to the judicial authorities to take back their debt. The judicial authorities may rule that the debt must be repaid anew. However, the ruling of religion in this case is different. The man, the borrower, has already repaid the debt, making it improper for heirs to take it again if they know that the deceased had already taken it.

That is why Allah *the Most High* says: 'Verily, Allah is All Knowing, Forbearing' (*an-Nisa'*: 12). We can understand the difference between the stance of religion and the one of judicial authorities. The True Lord *the Most High* says 'He is Forbearing,' so do not be lured if one does an injustice, and Allah does not avenge it immediately in life. His refraining from revenge in this world does not imply that the action is right or permissible. The Divine Wisdom and Patience is decreeing to postpone the punishment till the Afterlife. Allah then says:

تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
 مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١٣﴾

These are the bounds set by God: God will admit those who obey Him and His Messenger to Gardens graced with flowing streams, and there they will stay – that is the supreme triumph! [13] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 13)

All the past rulings and laws are simply laws set by Allah. When Allah *the Most High* sets a law, it is a limit to keep a right from being confused with another or preclude the confusion of rights with falsities. Surely, He is the One Who sets the laws and separates rights from one another. When we separate certain rights from others, whether they are related to homes or lands, we set certain demarcation lines. A limit or a bound is the demarcation line that separates two rights from each other so that none of them would encroach upon or overlap with the other. The bounds that we set in our daily life are of two kinds, even though some people may not notice this distinction. The first kind cannot be trespassed since it is concretely constructed and delineated.

For instance, someone may want to construct a building. He can only do so on a certain piece of land he owns with distinguishing bounds from his neighbours' land. When he erects the building, the wall will be adjacent to the building of his neighbours. Similarly, a farmer may cultivate a piece of land beside another farmer; each of them plants their own piece of land, and there is usually a boundary between the two pieces of land.

In this manner, each person achieves his own interests. Now, suppose that a farmer wants to grow rice, and their neighbour will plant it. The land of the one who will not plant rice may be flooded with much water; water is good for rice, but it may harm other crops. Under these conditions, the ruling should be that the farmer should construct a boundary called the 'neighbourhood boundary' to prevent any harm from their neighbours. This border is different from the 'ownership border' since the one who grows rice should cut down the cultivated land by two metres and make this space the 'neighbourhood boundary' so that the water used for irrigating would not overflow on the land of their neighbours. It is thus a boundary preventing harm and is different from the one preventing ownership. When it comes to protecting others from harm, injury, or damage, one must pay heed to the clear statement: 'Do not let the scope of your right extend to the periphery of your boundary with others; rather keep it away from such a boundary.'

This is in the case of ownership. Your utilisation of your ownership should not harm or cause any damage to your neighbour. Allah *the Most High* treats us in the same way as well. In respect of Commands, He says: 'These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, transgress them' (*al-Baqara*: 229). Likewise, He says about following proscriptions: 'These are the bounds set by God; do not, then, offend against them' (*al-Baqara*: 187). Accordingly, if you receive a command, you should not violate it. Likewise, if you receive a proscription, do not approach it. In the case of the proscription of intoxicants, Allah *the Most High* does not say: 'Do not drink wine.' Rather, He says: 'Intoxicants, games of chance, idolatrous practices and the divining of the future are but loathsome evils from Satan's doing. Shun them, then so that you might attain to a happy state' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90). In other words, do not approach the places of these vices and separate yourself physically from them.

And as we have asked before—when talking about the story of Adam's eating from the tree—does Allah⁽¹⁾ *Glorified is He* say, 'Do not eat from this tree' or does He say, 'Do not approach this tree'? Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...but do not approach this tree...' (*al-A'raf*: 19). This represents a limit which is called 'the limit of avoiding harm.' It is a command to not even approach that specific tree so that one may not desire to eat some of its fruits. The same holds true for drinking gatherings: we are commanded not to attend them because we may be lured into drinking. In the course of decreeing His Commands, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...These are the Limits set by Allah; do not, then, overstep them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229). This denotes that Allah *Glorified is He* owns or possesses these Limits.

In decreeing His Prohibitions, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...These are the Limits set by Allah do not, then, approach them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). In this regard, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says the following Hadith: 'What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So, he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honour blameless. But he who falls into doubtful things, falls into that which is unlawful, is just like a shepherd who grazes his cattle in the vicinity of a pasture declared prohibited (by the king); he is likely to stray into the pasture. Mind you, every king has a protected pasture and Allah's limits are those which He has declared unlawful. Verily, there is a faculty in the form of a piece of flesh in the body: if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart.' ⁽²⁾

Thus, we must keep away from transgressing the Limits of Allah *Glorified is He*. We can see an example of this when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...Do

(1) 'The Islamic conception of "Allah" is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of "God". However, the word "Allah" does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use "Allah" rather than "God" as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.'

(2) [*Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah based on the narrative of Companion An-Nu'man ibn Bashir*]

not lie with them (your wives) during the nights of your devotional retreat in the mosques: these are the Limits set by Allah, so do not approach them. In this way Allah makes His Verses clear to people, that they may guard themselves against doing wrong.' (*al-Baqara*: 187)

The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* commands *Al-Mu'takif* (meaning 'the one who devotes himself to worship for a specific number of days in the mosque') not to sleep with his wife in the mosque in case she comes to discuss any matters with him. Further, he should not do anything related to intimate contact during these days because this represents encroachment upon the Limits of Allah as He *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...these are the Limits set by Allah, so do not approach them.' (*al-Baqara*: 187)

Similarly, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* states following the verses of inheritance: 'These are the Limits set by Allah, and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] will be admitted by Him to Gardens [in Paradise] from under which rivers flow, and there they abide eternally— that is the supreme triumph!' (*an-Nisa*': 13)

It would have sufficed had Allah *Glorified is He* —after demonstrating the Limits—said, '...and whoever obeys Allah...', but He says: '...and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger Muhammad..' This is to clarify that Messenger Muhammad himself *peace and blessings be upon him* may set limits of what is permissible and other limits of what is prohibited. This is an authorization from Allah *Glorified is He* to his Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to legislate; so, do not say in every matter, 'I want the (religious) ruling in question from the Quran.'

We sometimes encounter some people who say, 'The Book of Allah *Glorified is He* (i.e. the Quran) is the judge between you and us; whatever it permits, we will take as permissible and whatever it prohibits, we will consider prohibited.' These people do not notice that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is authorized to legislate as Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is the One Who says: '...so accept what the Messenger [Muhammad] gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you...' (*al-Hashr*: 7). He *peace and blessings be upon him* is empowered by Allah *Glorified is He*; and those who call for referring only to the Quran as the sole source of legislation in Islam want to

cast suspicions on the *Sunnah* of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They resort to the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* and forget or do not even acknowledge that the Glorious Quran includes an authorization from Allah *Glorified is He* to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lay down legislation.

They say, 'The Book of Allah [i.e. the Quran] is the judge between you and us; whatever it permits we will take as permissible and whatever it prohibits we will consider prohibited.' Such words on their part are evidence of the truthfulness of what Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says. If they had not uttered such words, we (Muslims) would have wondered why the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said the following words in a Hadith narrated by Al-Miqdam ibn M'ad Yakrib, *Allah be pleased with him*: Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prohibited things on the Day of Khaybar [the day when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions fought against the Jewish at the fortress of Khaybar] including eating of domestic asses. At that time, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'soon a Hadith from me will be conveyed to a man while he is reclining on his couch, and he will say: 'The Book of Allah is [sufficient] between us and you. Whatever it states is permissible, we will take as permissible, and whatever it states is forbidden, we will take as forbidden.' Verily, whatever the Messenger of Allah Muhammad has forbidden is like that Allah has forbidden.'⁽¹⁾

What would have happened if nobody had repeated such words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? As we can see their foolish words are evidence that supports the veracity of what Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says. The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* uses those people to voice such a statement so that we can be fully certain of the veracity of the Ahadith (plural of Hadith) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through the phrases of his adversaries.

The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger Muhammad will be admitted by Him to Gardens [in

(1) [Related by At-Tabarani in (*Al-Awsat*) based on the narrative of Jabir]

Paradise]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 13) The one who obeys Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this world is the one who accepts the assignment of Allah *Glorified is He* and fulfils it. This person will be rewarded with the enjoyments of the Gardens of Paradise in the Hereafter. But does one's admission to the Gardens represent the core purpose of the religion or is it a reward for adhering to the religion? It is a reward for adhering to the religion. And the test of the religion is placed in this life. Whoever follows the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* is admitted to the Gardens of Paradise in the Hereafter. The Hereafter is not, then, the place where the test of the religion is placed; the test of the religion is placed in this life. Thus, when you tend to isolate this life from the religion, we immediately tell you that you missed the point. Do not say that the test of the religion is placed in the Hereafter because the Hereafter is the place of rewarding and punishing.

Throughout the year since they are the subject of exams? In fact, syllabi learned by students contain the material they will be tested on in exams and not vice versa. Similarly, the worldly life is where the test of the religion is placed and the Hereafter is where the reward is given to the one who succeeds and the punishment is given to the one who fails. So, do not put this life against the religion; there is no barrier between this worldly life and the religion because this life is the subject of the religion. This worldly life is put against the Hereafter, and the religion is for the good of both. This life is the place of sowing and the Hereafter is the place of harvesting. This is how we respond to the one who says that the worldly life is separated from the religion. Will each person obeying Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* be admitted to a Garden, to two or more? Another question related to this verse: Does '*man*'—an Arabic relative pronoun translated as 'whosoever' or 'whom'—imply one person? No. it may refer, in Arabic, to the singular, the dual form, or the plural. For example, we say, 'The one whom I met yesterday came.' We can also say, 'The two people whom I met yesterday came.' Further we can say, 'The people whom I met yesterday came.' In these three cases, we use the Arabic pronoun '*man*' translated here as 'whom.' The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* does not talk here about a singular or a plural, as we have said when explaining the chapter of *al-Fatiha*, when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'It is You we worship; it is You we

ask for help.' (*al-Fatiha*: 5) Though it might be argued that it is logical to say, 'It is You *I* worship; it is You *I* ask for help', Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'It is You *we* worship; it is You *we* ask for help.' (*al-Fatiha*: 5) to clarify that all the believers are a single unity in relation to worshipping.

Some say that we should examine the form when the Arabic relative pronoun '*man*' refers to the singular, whereas we should examine the meaning when it refers to two persons or more. But this statement is not academically valid because no scholar has ever said that '*man*' refers to the singular only; it is rather related to singular, dual and plural references.

One of the kind audience members asked me the following question in one of the sessions: 'Why does Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* say in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'For those who fear [the time when they will] stand before their Lord there are two Gardens [in Paradise]' (*ar-Rahman*: 46)? I answered that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* starts the chapter of *ar-Rahman* as follows: 'It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Quran. He created man' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-3) Afterwards, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'He created mankind out of dried clay, like pottery, [and] the *jinn* out of smokeless fire.' (*ar-Rahman*: 14-15) Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '[One day] We shall take you to task, O you sin-laden two [of *jinn* and mankind].'
(*ar-Rahman*: 31) Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* also says: 'O *jinn* and mankind, if you (think that you) can pass beyond the regions of heaven and earth, then do so: you will not pass without Our Authority' (*ar-Rahman*: 33).

The one who fears the presence of his Lord belongs to either *jinn* or human beings. If he belongs to *jinn*, he will have a Garden in Paradise; and if belongs to mankind, he will also have a Garden. So, the two beings of *jinn* and mankind (expressed by the Arabic relative pronoun '*man*') who fear the presence of their Lord will have two Gardens.

Some Scholars say that this verse means that there will be two Gardens to every human and every *jinn*, for Allah *Glorified is He* does not lack adequate spaces. When He *Glorified is He* willed to create mankind, He *Glorified is He* counted them all from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the Day of Judgment. He *Glorified is He* considered as if all His servants would be obedient believers, and accordingly prepared for each of them his/her place in

Paradise. In the meantime, He *Glorified is He* considered as if all His servants would be disobedient sinners, and accordingly prepared for each of them his place in the fire. Allah *Glorified is He* did such a thing to prove that Allah *Glorified is He* is Fair and that man has free will to choose the path of good or evil so that no one should think that He *Glorified is He* may find difficulty in accommodating all the human beings in either Paradise or the Fire. Thus, when a believer is admitted into his Garden in Paradise, the Garden that is prepared for a disbeliever, who is supposed to be a believer, remains uninhibited. So, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: These are the Gardens (in Paradise) you are given as your own because of what you used to do.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72) Hence, the believers will inherit what had been originally prepared for the infidels had they chosen to believe.

Accordingly, the meanings imparted by the Quran are always consistent, regardless of the style used to convey them. Here Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...will be admitted by Him to Gardens [in Paradise] from under which rivers flow...' (*an-Nisa'*: 13) We should understand that a river is a stream into which water flows and is not the water itself. The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...Gardens [in Paradise] from under which rivers flow...' (*an-Nisa'*: 13), so where do the rivers run? Do the rivers run under the plants or under the buildings of these Gardens? We know that plants need water, whereas buildings need to be kept away from water. How come these two things meet together? We have to bear in mind that there is nothing impossible before the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* because everything is ultimately governed by Divine Design.

When people dig to change the flow of a river, we may find the surrounding buildings affected by water leakages. But the Designs of Allah *Glorified is He* are the result of His Infinite Power which Makes Rivers run under the Gardens in Paradise with no damage, whether beneath the buildings or the plants of these Gardens. Whoever cherishes the Words of his Lord Allah *Glorified is He* and asks Him to be able to understand them in the best way, will be bountifully taught by Him. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says in many verses says: '...Gardens [in Paradise] from under which rivers flow...'—using the Arabic preposition '*(min)*' meaning 'from'—whereas He *Glorified is He* says in one single verse: '...Gardens [in Paradise] under which

rivers flow...' (*at-Tawba*: 100) without using the preposition '*min*.' Both structures are linguistically possible in Arabic. The verse wherein Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, '...Gardens [in Paradise] under which rivers flow...' (*at-Tawba*: 100) —without using the preposition '*min*'—may indicate that these rivers come from another place and only run under the Gardens. But in fact, these rivers spring from the Gardens themselves. When Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...Gardens [in Paradise] from under which rivers flow...' (*an-Nisa'*: 13) —using the preposition '*min*'—He *Glorified is He* does this so that no one would think that there may be a power that can keep the water from reaching you from a higher place. They are indeed self-acting rivers.

When we learn that the rivers run under the Gardens together with their inhabitants and contents, including palaces, a person may ask, 'Can I, as an engineer concerned with creating designs of buildings in this life, draw on this concept and produce designs of buildings under which rivers run, as stated by Allah *Glorified is He*?' Actually, humans have adopted this outstanding approach. We construct dams which are buildings under which rivers run. And when we are committed to sound building specifications, including those related to cement and bricks, we usually find no leakages or cracks. Building flaws often result from cheating and embezzlement. Then, rivers could run under the palaces of the Gardens of Paradise that contain what has never been seen by an eye, or heard by an ear, or imagined by a human being. Could the Muslim engineer be inspired and urged by such Divine Knowledge to erect buildings under which rivers may run? If this engineer has faith enough to learn from his Lord Allah *Glorified is He* how to invent, he will succeed with the Support of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Let us speak about Egypt which suffers from a housing crisis. We find that the area covered by the Nile River, its branches, small canals or waterways occupy a large space. If there were faith-motivated engineers, so to speak, the people would benefit from unused spaces and surfaces to construct buildings that would accommodate all state offices. Such buildings could be erected over roads, watercourses, or channels. This does not mean that we should use all the areas in building until they get blocked with construction. Rather, we should use only one third of the area for building and leave the other two thirds in order not to spoil the landscape and encroach upon the agricultural

land. Anyway, the Muslim engineer should pay attention to those faith-based hints in the Glorious Quran.

A city like Cairo needs a wide variety of utilities, a fact which urges us to build on vacant areas whether they are around the Nile or in other places provided that we leave enough spaces for open air and maintain sufficient greenery to preserve the beauty of the environment and prevent pollution. Or shall we build under the ground? We can further benefit from desert-land reclamation in this regard. Perhaps if we tried all these methods, there would be no housing crisis.

The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '...Gardens (in Paradise) from under which rivers flow and there they abide eternally...' (*an-Nisa*': 13) It is true that paradise will be bliss which you cannot imagine as it is created by the Perfect and Sublime Omnipotence of Allah *Glorified is He*. Man has always experienced pleasure according to his capacity to imagine the elements of such pleasure. We narrated earlier that a village mayor once said: 'I want to build a guesthouse, a phone room, and an outdoor stone bench and furnish them.'⁽¹⁾ This is the concept of pleasure as seen by the mayor. In this life, we are always afraid of losing pleasure because of death or any other reason. But what is pleasure in the view of the Creator of all concepts? Hence, the Gardens of Bliss are everlasting, as there you neither die, and nor do they vanish.

'Eternal abidance' here has clear significance: it indicates persistence and continuation that is never followed or disrupted by cessation of being. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, '...that is the supreme triumph!' (*an-Nisa*': 13) But what does *fawz*—translated in this verse as 'triumph'—mean? In general, the word *fawz* means victory, triumph, success, or attainment of one's goal. When we win something in this life, our joy and pleasure with such winning could last for one's lifetime in this world. If this is the case in the worldly life, what about winning in the Hereafter, i.e. the eternal winning in the Gardens of Paradise created by our Lord Allah *Glorified is He*? Is this not supreme triumph?

In our worldly life, we rejoice over moderate wins and gains, so what about those wins and gains granted by Allah *Glorified is He* which are

(1) [*The story of 'Na'im Al-'Omda' (Mayor's Pleasure)*]

commensurate with His Might? If we compare the wins and gains of this worldly life to those of the Hereafter, we will immediately realize that those of the Hereafter are of absolute greatness. Thus, however much the believer sacrifices for the sake of the Hereafter, there will be gains that greatly over compensate all those sacrifices.

Someone might say: would not it have been better if Allah had said, 'that is the most supreme triumph'? This is a narrow-minded understanding of things. If Allah *Glorified is He* had put it this way, this would have indicated that the triumphs and gains of the worldly life are great or supreme. As we may know, the greatest or most supreme thing is always compared to a great or supreme thing, and a great or supreme thing is always compared to a small or petty thing. Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* describes the triumph of the Hereafter as great, this means that the triumph or gain of the worldly life is small and petty. The description of the triumph in the Hereafter is thus a Divine one as it is given by Allah *Glorified is He*. Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* talks about the opposite case:

وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَهُ يُدْخِلْهُ نَارًا
خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَلَهُ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ ﴿١٤﴾

**But those who disobey God and His Messenger and
overstep His limits will be consigned by God to the
Fire, and there they will stay – a humiliating torment
awaits them! [14] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 14)**

Earlier we spoke about Limits when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says, 'These are the Limits set by Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 13) These Limits show either the Commands of Allah or His Prohibitions. These Commands and Prohibitions may be obeyed by some people and disobeyed by others. If you obey them, you will be rewarded for your obedience and granted eternal abidance in the Gardens of Paradise, which is the supreme triumph. But what will be of the disobedient? They will get the exact opposite. They will be punished by being consigned to torment: 'But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger [Muhammad] and overstep His Limits will be consigned by Him to the Fire, and there they will abide eternally– a humiliating torment awaits them!'

(*an-Nisa'*: 14) Note here that the word 'Fire' is in the singular, whereas the word 'Gardens' is in the plural. When we pay more attention to the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* —bearing in mind all the time that the Speaker is Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* —we notice another point represented in the eternal abidance of the believers in the Gardens of Paradise. As for the disbelievers, they will be thrown into the fire. Here Allah *Glorified is He* does not say 'Fires', nor does He *Glorified is He* say that they will eternally abide in it. Why? This is because in the Gardens of Paradise, the believers will sit on couches face-to-face and they will exchange visits, enjoying one another's Gardens. Another point may be mentioned here: When a person does a lot of good deeds, while his children—who share their father (or mother) in Faith—are not as righteous as he, Allah *Glorified is He* reunites him with his offspring as a sign of honour, and lets them rejoice together in the bliss of the Gardens and enjoy each other's company.

As for the disbeliever, the situation is quite different. Allah *Glorified is He* will not reunite him with any of his family. Every disbelieving person will have his own share of the fire; none will enjoy the company of other partners or human beings in torment, just as is the case in solitary confinement, so to speak. Again, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about a lot of Gardens versus a single fire; He *Glorified is He* uses the plural form when talking about eternity in paradise, while He *Glorified is He* uses the singular form when mentioning eternity in the fire. Every use of certain words here has its own purpose. So, the obedient person will be rewarded with Gardens in which he will enjoy the company of his offspring and believing brothers and sisters for eternity. Meanwhile, the disobedient sinner will be eternalized in the fire in isolation of others, and '...a humiliating torment awaits them!' (*an-Nisa'*: 14)

Though torment may be extremely painful, one sometimes endures it when it comes from an enemy, for instance. In this case, the tormented person does not want to see the one who tortures him rejoice in his suffering. In this context, Abu Zu'ayb Al-Huzalli, an old poet, says to that effect:

I have the patience of a saint before those who rejoice in my misfortune
So that they may learn that I never surrender to the calamities of life

Such a person may thus hide his pain and torment in this worldly life so that his enemy may not notice it. But in the Afterlife, torment and suffering involve debasement of the human self as the punishment of Allah *Glorified is He* and combines pain with debasement. So, do not think that someone will be capable of enduring this torment and pain, as may be the case in the worldly life. Torment and suffering in the Hereafter are extremely severe and humiliating for the self.

Thus, we find that the chapter of *an-Nisa'* deals with mankind as fathers and as mothers. It shows how Allah *Glorified is He* has spread from the pair of them countless men and women, far and wide. Furthermore, this chapter talks about the changes that happen when Allah *Glorified is He* ordains that some people die and leave helpless children. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to ensure a noble life for the human soul. So, He *Glorified is He* orders us to be benevolent and affectionate towards orphans and guides us to the proper way of dealing with them according to the Islamic Faith. If we were to serve as guardians of orphans, we must undertake this responsibility honestly and administer their wealth in a sound and modest manner until they become of age and take charge of it.

The chapter of *an-Nisa'* also addresses another issue: securing a decent life for women and children as an integral part of social fabric. It is well known that the Arabs used to prevent women from getting their share of inheritance. The same thing applied to children who did not engage in war or drive away attacks, using spears, daggers, or swords. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted these debased, persecuted segments of society to restore their rights so that they could lead an honourable and dignified life. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* allots specific shares—big or small— of inherited fortune to women, which differ from those dedicated for men. Allah *Glorified is He* shows us in this chapter the shares of inheritance determined by Him to different heirs. So, whoever desires to be admitted to the paradise of Allah *Glorified is He* must obey Him and His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through observing the Limits they have set. And whoever does not desire paradise may disobey Allah *Glorified is He* and may commit sins that lead him to eternal torment in the Fire.

Human life is a gift from Allah to His servants. Allah *Glorified is He* is Most Generous and prepared the components of a decent life for mankind before He created him. Thus, man came into being after the environment appropriate for his life had been established and not the other way around. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* did not create man first and then the sun, the moon, the earth and other elements. No, Allah *Glorified is He* had already created first all the elements that serve man and prepared them to receive this newcomer—the human being—that Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen to be His vicegerent on the earth. Again, the components of human survival preceded the creation of man. This is verily Divine Providence from the Giver of Mercy to his creation.

In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* created for man a means of reproduction accompanied with a feeling of pleasure and gratification. This way of reproduction is different from other ways in plants and some animals, which are only aimed to preserve species. Allah *Glorified is He* wills that the process of human reproduction is associated with delight and pleasure to cope with the numerous hardships and troubles entailed in giving birth to and raising offspring. Allah *Glorified is He* provides the process of reproduction with a feeling of pleasure and gratification to urge man to reproduce and bear whatever difficulties are related to such a process.

The Wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He* ordains that weak people (e.g. orphans) come into being and lead a normal life. Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to be compassionate towards orphans. Someone may say: Since Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to benevolently help orphans to be good people, why then does Allah decree the death of an orphan's father? We respond as follows: Allah *Glorified is He* decrees such fate so that we may learn that Allah *Glorified is He* is the only One Who controls man's life. He *Glorified is He* sets a certain age for every man. This age is only known to Allah *Glorified is He* while man has nothing to do with it. A man may die when he is an embryo, a child, a teenage boy, a grown up or an old man. We sometimes see very old men who are still alive but have lost their great-grandchildren already. Why so? Allah *Glorified is He* wants to conceal the timing of death from people so that no one may know how long he will live or when and where he dies. Hence, man tries to

always be ready for death at any moment. As a man learns that he may die at any moment during his lifetime, he often feels ashamed of meeting Allah *Glorified is He* while committing sins. Another point needs to be explained in this regard. The Islamic Faith aims to make all the believers as if they were a well-compacted wall the bricks of which support one another. Thus, when a man dies and leaves an orphan child behind, that child will find new fathers from among the community of believers to take care of him. At that time, this child's heart will be filled with faith and peace. Furthermore, the fact that no one can learn the time of his death makes children trust and depend on Allah *Glorified is He* and not feel too dependent on their parents—or their power and fortune, which are also granted by Allah *Glorified is He*.

While Allah *Glorified is He* has granted us the means of preserving our life and shown us how to act on this earth in ways that guarantee the continuity of life, He *Glorified is He* has guided us to a decent way to protect the species and has made some people exert efforts for the benefit of their relatives. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* not only entices man to work and seek his own livelihood, but He *Glorified is He* also encourages him to work and toil to meet the needs of those he supports. The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* sends a Message to man: 'Your efforts in this life will benefit your children as well.'

So, Allah *Glorified is He* has implanted the instinct of love and tenderness in the soul of every father (and mother, of course). Being one of Allah's signs, this instinct is deeply ingrained in the souls of parents. Driven by this instinct, every father strives in life to earn his livelihood so that both he and his children are satisfied. When a man works hard and exerts every effort in life, he may reach a stage at which his wealth granted by Allah *Glorified is He* may suffice to support him for the rest of his life. Another man may work for twenty years or more and amass for himself and his children a huge fortune. A third man may toil and strive in life and generate wealth sufficient for him, his children, and his grandchildren.

Thus, we find that those who work hard in life and are destined by Allah *Glorified is He* to earn much money not only benefit themselves; but they benefit the entire society as well. The Most Exalted Wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He* decrees that wealth be distributed according to Divine laws so that all

people—children in particular— may have their own shares. Hence, the Muslim community gets used to this smooth distribution. For example, imagine a man owns one hundred *feddans* (a measurement of land in Egypt which equals 4,200.81 square metres) of agricultural land and has got a number of sons and daughters. When this man dies, his sons and daughters will inherit all his fortune. Thus, the fortune is distributed among the children in a normal and smooth way, away from coercion that leads to enmity and envy. Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to respect the efforts exerted by the breadwinner to earn a living and ensure that the fruit of his endeavours will go to him and his dependent relatives. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...the life of this world is only a game, a pastime, but if you believe [in Allah] and are mindful of Him, He will recompense you. He does not ask you to give up [in His Cause all] your possessions.’ (*Muhammad*: 36) Allah *Glorified is He* does not tell anyone, ‘Give me back the money that I have bestowed upon you.’ Rather, as I have said before, Allah *Glorified is He* evokes the compassion of His Slaves towards one another. He *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘Who is it that will offer up to Allah a good loan, which He will amply repay? Such a person will further be generously rewarded [by Him].’ (*al-Hadid*: 11)

Allah *Glorified is He* appreciates the toil and strife of His servants who earn their living via exerting efforts. The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* commands His rich servant to share his wealth. He says, in effect: ‘Your poor brother is in need; lend Me — Allah— by giving *zakat* and *sadaqa* (alms and charity) to your poor brother.’ Allah *Glorified is He* does not say to this rich servant, ‘Lend your brother’; but, He says, ‘Lend Me.’ Why? The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who has brought all creatures into being and He is the All-Providing for all of them—the believers and the disbelievers. So, He *Glorified is He* guarantees the livelihood of all and makes it easy even for the disbelieving person to earn a living because He *Glorified is He* is the One Who has created him.

Allah *Glorified is He* legislates this inheritance system to ensure the smooth distribution of inheritance. Such a system is aimed at precluding any arbitrary divisions that might suddenly render some of the children—who have led a good life—impoverished, needy and deprived. By contrast, the fair and

smooth division of wealth makes everyone contented and satisfied with his fixed share. In this context, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...the life of this world is only a game, a pastime, but if you believe [in Allah] and are mindful of Him, He will recompense you. He does not ask you to give up [in His Cause all] your possessions.’ (*Muhammad*: 36)

Allah *Glorified is He* does not say, ‘I have granted you this fortune to be yours’, nor does He say, ‘I have provided you with livelihood’—even though Allah *Glorified is He* is indeed the One Who has given you this fortune to be yours. Rather, He *Glorified is He* highly evaluates your efforts in life. Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* in the same chapter of (*Muhammad*) says: ‘...you would withhold if He were to ask you and press you for them [all your possessions], and so He would bring your ill-will to light.’ (*Muhammad*: 37) Even if Allah *Glorified is He* pressed you to donate all your money, you would withhold as you feel that you earned it through exerting huge efforts. Now let us see the difference between someone who has not been a squanderer, has led a moderate life and so left a fair fortune to his children, and another one who has spent all his money on things prohibited by Allah *Glorified is He* such as drugs. What makes one person different from another? The difference lies in the status given by Allah *Glorified is He* to the efforts and endeavours made by a man in life. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* indicates: ‘I do not ask you to give up your money because if I ask you to do this, you will not give it up since it is the fruit of your toil.’

The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...and so He would bring your ill-will to light.’ (*Muhammad*: 37) If ill will appears and is brought to light in one community, the entire community will greatly suffer. So, we find that coercive actions always lead to the emergence of animosity and hatred in the whole community. Once such animosity and hatred prevails, all positive aspects come to an end. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* sets the foundations and instruments of maintaining a decent life.

Allah *Glorified is He* sets foundations for the protection of the weak as well as the women who were deprived of their inheritance before the advent of Islam. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* sets Limits and Rules for the inheritance of young children and women. ‘These are the Limits set by Allah...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 13)

So beware of overstepping or transgressing these Limits since if man does so, he will condemn himself to the fire— Allah forbid. To sum things up: Allah *Glorified is He* decrees these Limits for safeguarding your life and the lives of those you support.

There is another form of preservation which is the preservation of the species. Since man has a finite age and his life comes to an end, he must preserve his existence through others. How so? We get married to be endowed with offspring (children and grandchildren) by Allah *Glorified is He*. Hence, the line of mankind continues. The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* wants the preservation of mankind to be noble. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to preserve the species by choosing for our seeds (semen) a sacred vessel—the uterus of our wives. So, beware of preserving the human race through an evil vessel wherein the semen of different people is mixed so that no one may know to whom a child is ascribed. Being of unknown parents, such a child will be rejected by the society. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* explains to man that he must select for himself a sacred vessel to keep mankind dignified.

Obtaining sacred vessels is made through marriage alone. A man has to choose a modest female who has religious faith and accepts him as a husband in a public ceremony. It thus becomes well known for everyone that this is the wife of this man and that he is her husband. He may comfortably enter and leave his wife's home whenever he wants. Their coming offspring will be surely attributed to him. A good man is always ashamed of his children being in need of clothes, humiliated, hungry or unrecognized; for this reason, the good father endeavours to ensure that his children get all their rights so that they can lead a decent life, with no one daring to affront and offend any of them by asking, 'Where have you come from?' Or 'Who is your father?' Thus, the child will not live as a humiliated, broken-hearted person throughout his life. Accordingly, Allah has willed to preserve the human race through a legitimate bond that everybody recognizes.

It is quite surprising that we find this issue has evident effects in our life. The woman who tries to remove the traces of the crime of adultery is often impelled by instinctive love ingrained in her as a mother not to throw her baby into the sea; but rather to put it in front of a mosque gate. A child is

always attached to his mother's tenderness, but here such tenderness is illegitimate. This is why the adulteress would throw her baby in front of a mosque gate so that a good person might pick him up. The adulteress knows well that only good people go to the mosque and one of them may pity her baby and carry him home.

In contrast, she would not leave her infant at an inn or a movie theatre; rather, she would leave it in front of a mosque. Love drives her to put her illegitimate child at such a place to be secure from any dangers. She would thus wrap him in the nicest clothes, and if she was rich, she would put with him some money as her instinctive love pushes her to do so, whereas shame of guilt pushes her to get rid of the child.

The adulteress—as we have said—is keen to put her baby at a place that is frequented by good people so that a good man might find this baby and care for him. Thus, even a disobedient sinner who deviates from the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* seeks refuge in this religion; and this is quite strange.

Allah *Glorified is He* intends the preservation of the human race to be based on modesty, purity, and chastity, and does not want evil and corruption to prevail in the homes of Muslims. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* decrees marriage to be the only legitimate sexual relationship between man and woman since a man must marry a woman through the *Shari'a* (Law) of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Let me give an example: A man lives in a house that overlooks a street, and he has a beautiful daughter attracted by a lot of young men. What would the father's reaction be if he learned that a young man comes to the house and deliberately looks at his daughter? He might hire someone to beat this young man or report this incident to the authorities out of his rage.

By contrast, what would this father's behaviour be when a good man's family came to his house and expressed their son's desire to propose to his daughter? He would surely be pleased and immediately ask his daughter about her feelings, congratulate the mother, fetch drinks and send out invitations for the wedding party. Can you see the difference between the two reactions? Why should the father be upset and enraged by the one who sneaks to gaze at his daughter? The reason is that such a young man does not want to have a sound relationship with the father's daughter according to the *Shari'a* (Law) of

Allah. On the other hand, the other young man who comes to seek the daughter as a lawful wife as decreed by the *Shari'a* would delight the heart of the father and bring him peace and happiness. Afterwards, matters would proceed smoothly and the wedding party would get concluded. Then the father would visit his happy daughter the next morning to congratulate her.

The difference between the two cases is shown in the Hadith of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Take care of your prayers and the slaves you rightfully possess; do not burden them with what they cannot endure. Be conscious of Allah when dealing with the women (wives) who are at your disposal as if they are held captive by you; you have taken them under the custody authorized to you by Allah and their private parts have become permissible to you by the authority of the Word of Allah.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* has created both man and woman and decreed their joint life through marriage. He *Glorified is He* ordains that when a young man proposes to a girl and says to her father, 'I want to marry your daughter', such words should fill the father's heart with peace and happiness. All people would joyfully celebrate a wedding party since it is a matter of chastity and purity. Allah *Glorified is He* intends the preservation of the human race to be a moral, pure process that neither brings shame upon the one who gives birth to children, and nor does it disgrace the society. If we preserve the human species in this manner, this will be a supreme form of preservation. The preservation of mankind is the goal for which sexual intercourse has been created. Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed that this process be a legitimate and permissible one recognized by all people.

Someone once asked me the following question when I was in Algeria: 'How come that the relationship between any two spouses is originally based on words or promises? A woman's guardian may marry her to a man by saying, 'I have agreed to let you marry the woman I am responsible for.' Alternatively, a woman may marry herself to a man by saying, 'I marry myself to you.' Consequently, the man accepts the marriage. Also, the relationship between any pair of spouses is terminated with a single sentence: 'I divorce you.' I

(1) *Related by An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah*

answered that man as follows: Why does man agree to seek pleasure with the wife and her private parts with a couple of words and then find it hard to accept that she might be released from his custody with a couple of words as well? So, words determine both marriage and divorce.

As Allah *Glorified is He* has preserved life via old elements, He *Glorified is He* intends to preserve the human race through new elements. He explains to us that every organism that reproduces needs to do so by means of fertilization. Fertilization means that the sperm goes from the male to the ovum of the female so that the reproduction process may occur. As for the procreation of non-human organisms, it is made through a compulsory process. A female animal such as a cow, for instance always cries out when an ovum drops down in her womb. Whenever this happens, people realize that the cow desires to be fertilized. When her owner takes her to a bull to fertilize her, she calms down and never allows another bull to approach her while she is pregnant. In this manner, the species is preserved in animals.

As for plants, the female is fertilized even if the male is miles away. While we may distinguish the male from the female in certain plants, like palm and sycamore trees, we might not be able to discern the difference in other plants; only specialists can make such a distinction. Some plants may have the male and female parts in the same stem, like corn, for instance: the petals of the corn cob represent the female part, while the male parts are located in the spike that is moved by the air so that it may bend down and fertilize the female part. The same holds for wheat. There are also plants whose male parts are not known to us. Could you tell me about a male mango tree or a male orange tree?

So, there are a lot of things that we do not know about organisms. They, either way, have to pollinate and fertilize one another so that reproduction would occur. Our Lord Allah *Glorified is He* thus explains: 'Be comforted. I have made the wind carry the means of pollination (pollen) to plants.' Allah *Glorified is He* has also made certain insects in the service of the plants that cannot be reached by the wind. These insects find nourishment in special places in these plants. In addition, they are attracted to particular colours and fragrances in such plants. Thus, an insect may be attracted to a red colour, while another may be attracted

to a white colour. When an insect moves to the male part of a plant, this part sticks to it; then, it goes to the female part which is beautified with colours and fragrances. This process occurs while we are not aware.

Who causes pollination to happen? Who teaches these helpless organisms? It is Allah, the Lord of all existence Who neither slumbers, nor does sleep overtake Him. He *Glorified is He* has preserved the different species through a compulsory and instinctive process about which we do not fully understand. Even rain would not fall unless the pollination process happened. Here Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'We send the winds to fertilize (plants), and we bring down water from the sky for you to drink—you do not control its sources.' (*al-Hijr*: 22)

The True Lord Allah *Glorified is He* has thus secured the essentials of your life, O human being, while you are absent-minded. He has made the processes needed for this purpose involuntary so that each organism would play its role and accomplish its mission. Having granted man the freedom of choice, Allah has linked the protection of the species with pleasure and gratification in view of the numerous troubles involved in the reproduction process and the preservation of the human race. Accordingly, do not separate the preservation of mankind from pleasure. If you had sexual intercourse solely for the purpose of gratifying yourself, you would be then concentrating on a less important goal. A more important goal of having sexual intercourse through marriage is to preserve the race to which you belong.

Hence, make sure that you throw your sperm in a sacred vessel (womb) that is only yours so that you can evade fatal diseases that may destroy you and others. This way we can avoid the emergence of impure, humiliated generations with no clear origin. Here we speak about the persons engaged in abnormal cases of sexual intercourse, such as lesbians (women having sex with one another), gays (men having sex with each other) and adulterers and adulteresses who seek pleasure away from legitimate marriage decreed by Allah *Glorified is He*. We may say to that woman who has an affair with another woman or that man who sleeps with another man for pleasure: O woman, you have received pleasure and relinquished the straight path of having sex; and O man, you have committed the same crime. You both must learn that the true Lord Allah

Glorified is He intends that you seek both the pleasure and the preservation of the race. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that sexual pleasure has to be obtained in the light of the religion of Allah *Glorified is He*. Listen to what Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says:

وَالَّذِي يَأْتِيكَ الْفَحِشَةُ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهِدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى يَتَوَقَّعُنَّ الْمَوْتَ أَوْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لَهُنَّ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥﴾

If any of your women commit a lewd act, call four witnesses from among you, then, if they testify to their guilt, keep the women at home until death comes to them or until God shows them another way [15] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 15)

Here (*allati*) is an Arabic relative pronoun of feminine-plural, translated as 'those.' I believe that this verse refers to lesbian women. But what does Allah *Glorified is He* intend by saying: '...bring against them four [witnesses]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 15)? Allah *Glorified is He* intends to protect the honour of people so that no one would injure or offend the honour of others. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* sets necessary precautions to safeguard people's honour and chastity. Again, why does He *Glorified is He* stipulate the testimony of 'four' people? This is because there are two women having sex with each other, and so two persons are needed to testify against each one; thus the total number would be four. Anyhow, what would we do if we saw the incident with our own eyes and made certain that it had occurred? Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says '...confine them (the guilty women) to their houses...' (*an-Nisa'*: 15), i.e. lock them up and restrain their movement in order that they cannot meet each other until they die '...or Allah opens for them a way [through repentance].' (*an-Nisa'*: 15) Allah *Glorified is He* indeed opens a way for such people.

We may say to those who contend that this verse refers exclusively to the sexual intercourse between man and woman: the pronoun (*allati*) is a relative pronoun of the feminine-plural. If the intercourse occurred between a man and another man, Allah *Glorified is He* would use '*alladhan*'—the relative pronoun for the masculine-dual in Arabic, rendered in the following *verse* as 'both.' 'If two men commit an immoral act [i.e. sexual intercourse], punish them both; if they repent and mend their ways, leave them alone— Allah

always accepts repentance, He is the Giver of Mercy' (*an-Nisa'*: 16) The verse here concerns an affair between a man and another man. Meanwhile, the preceding verse is surely related to an affair between two women. Why would the punishment in the case of the affair between two women for the sake of pleasure be the confinement in the houses up to the moment of death? The reason is that this act is an evil and plague that must be eradicated from society. It verily represents total corruption since women tend to meet each other freely as far as clothes are concerned. Thus, the seizure of lesbians in their houses till they die is much better than having them accustomed to this awful, immoral act. We do not know how big the harm brought about by such an obscene practice might be. We have only been given a little knowledge. For the One Who has created us is verily the One Who has decreed that a male and a female must have sex with one another within the framework of marriage, with all its legitimate requirements, including two witnesses and the dowry. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* has created the woman as a receiving party, while the man has been prepared as a sending party; this is quite obvious. If the two parties were not compatible, dissonance would inevitably occur.

If the relation between both sexes is not based on the legitimate path that has been decreed by our Creator, Allah *Glorified is He*, something wrong and harmful must happen. Similarly, when we connect an electric wire with another of the same kind—i.e. a positive wire with another positive one, or a negative wire with another negative one—a fire will break out. Were this to happen, we would say there is an electric short circuit, i.e. there is a fault in the connection of wires. Seeing the big damage resulting from a small fault in the connection of few wires, what do you think of the harm caused by those faults arising from misconnection in sexual relations among humans? Note well what I am going to say: science will sooner or later discover that there is a secret kept by Allah *Glorified is He* in this context. When a man wants to have a relationship with a woman in the way decreed by Allah *Glorified is He* he proposes to her, asking, 'Will you marry me?' She answers, 'I agree to marry you.' Through this process, Allah *Glorified is He* makes the relationship between them normal and smooth. But if there was a defect in this relationship between the receiving and sending parties (sexes), there would be a shocking fatal 'short circuit', plaguing the entire society.

I assert what I have just said so that it may be transferred as a testimony to the coming generations. The truthful faith of our ancestors guided them to enjoy the Gifts of Allah and recognize His Signs. The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'We shall show them Our signs in the horizons (of the universe) and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this [revelation] is the Truth....' (*Fussilat*: 53)

Since we have been guided to the fact that if wires are connected in a correct way, the light will be good, and if wires are misconnected, there may be a short circuit and a fire, we should note that it is the same case in humans. The relation between a male and a female is similar to that relation between positive and negative charges in electricity. The True Lord Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'And We created pairs of all things...' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49) If we learn that light is the result of a correct connection of positive and negative parts in inanimate objects, whereas fires break out if the connection is wrong, then what about misconnection among humans?

During some of our trips abroad, we were asked the following question: Why do you allow man to have more than a wife, while you do not allow the woman to have more than one male spouse? In raising this question, those want to provoke women and arouse anger against the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* so that a naïve woman—who tends to be rebellious against her religion—may say, 'There is no justice in this religion.' So, I asked those who had just asked me, 'Do you have special resorts for the sexually liberal youth?' They answered, 'Yes, there are places in some states.' I said, 'What precautions have you taken to protect the health of these humans?' They said, 'We have periodical, unexpected medical check-ups.' I asked, 'Why?' They said, 'So that we may isolate those who are infected with any disease.' I asked, 'Do you use this method for married men and women?' They said no, they did not. I asked why not, but they kept silent and did not answer. So I said, 'The fact is that married women are exclusively devoted to their husbands; they are vessels dedicated to their spouses, and thus no diseases emerge. Meanwhile, diseases would result from having the semen of several men in the same womb.'

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* intends to preserve the human species in a clean way. He *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'And as for those of your women who become

guilty of an immoral act [i.e. unlawful sexual intercourse], bring against them four [witnesses] from among you; and if these bear witness thereto, confine them (the guilty women) to their houses until death takes them away or Allah opens for them a way [through repentance].’ (*an-Nisa*: 15) ‘...Your women...’ refers to the Muslim women because we do not decree laws for others since they do not believe in Allah *Glorified is He*. As to the testimony, it must be requested from four Muslims because true Muslims appreciate the value of justice and honour. Thus, if they testify, the Punishment of Allah *Glorified is He* must be enforced and the guilty women must be confined in their houses.

In our modern age, this is known as quarantine where some people or animals are kept for a period of time apart from others in case they are carrying an infectious disease. There is, of course, a difference between those who have infectious illnesses and those who feel a deep sense of shame for bringing dishonour on themselves. Since we isolate those who suffer from infectious diseases, do not we do the same thing with those who bring shame and scandals? Thus, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...confine them (the guilty women) to their houses until death takes them away or Allah opens for them a way [through repentance].’ (*an-Nisa*: 15) This means that each woman must stay in isolation until she dies. Books on Islamic legislation tell us that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* interpreted this verse to be concerned with the adultery that might happen between a man and a woman, not between two women.

‘Ubadah ibn As-Samit related that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Adhere to what I say...Adhere to what I say. If a virgin commits adultery with another virgin, each must be punished with a hundred lashes and banishment for a year. If a married person commits adultery with another married person, each must be punished with a hundred lashes and then stoning.’⁽¹⁾

Afterwards, upon the Revelation of the chapter of (*an-Nur*:24), the punishment set for adultery became as follows: whipping for those virgins having sex with each other, and stoning for those married persons having sex with each other. Some people argue that stoning is not mentioned in the Quran. We may answer:

(1) [*Related by Muslim as narrated by ‘Ubada ibn As-Samit*]

who dares to say that legislation in Islam is confined to the Quran? The Quran is a miraculous Book concerned with the fundamentals of the religion. As we have said before, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...so accept whatever the Messenger [Muhammad] gives you...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7). Let us examine this issue: if there is a text that decrees a particular ruling, we may or may not understand this ruling from the text. If we understand it, then it must have an application in the life of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* issues a ruling regarding a specific violation in Islam and applies it, the priority here is for the action because actions are stronger than words. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* may make a statement, but such a statement may not be applied because it is superseded by another one, for instance. By contrast, actions are practical examples. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stoned Ma’iz and Al-Ghamidiyya for committing adultery. He also stoned a Jewish man and a Jewish woman when they asked him to modify the ruling related to stoning in the Torah. Thus, the actions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are stronger and more binding than the texts, particularly that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is a legislator.

Once, someone said: stoning, as a penalty, is only meted out to adulterous married people. But what will we do to a married man who has committed adultery with a virgin girl? In this case, the proper ruling is to stone the man and whip the girl. Thus, if both the man and the woman have the same status, then the same ruling applies to them. If not, each must get the ruling that matches him or her.

When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the limit (punishment) of slave women—those who are rightfully owned by others—He says: ‘...their punishment will be half that of free women.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 25) What is implied here is whipping only because stoning cannot be divided into two halves. A slave woman receives half the punishment of a free virgin woman who is whipped a hundred times for committing adultery; so, a slave woman is whipped fifty times.

Since the punishment meted out to a slave woman is half that inflicted on a virgin, such punishment must be divisible and stoning is indivisible. Evidence has in this regard become final via the actions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is a legislator, and does not merely deduce

rulings, as any Muslim scholar may do. The fact that he actually stoned several people, demonstrates that Islam has decreed stoning. But why must a slave woman receive half the penalty of a free woman? The reason is that slave women do not have dignity while free women do⁽¹⁾. So, Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan once said: How come a free woman commits adultery? She said so even at the apex of her disbelief and opposition to Islam. This means that adultery is not something that a free woman with dignity would do. But a slave woman does not have dignity because she may be the possession of anyone.

For this reason, a slave woman receives only half the penalty prescribed for free women. Some would ask, 'What punishment should a married slave woman get for committing adultery?' Stoning means killing, and such a punishment cannot be halved. The answer is: the prescribed punishment of stoning ends in death of the punished sinner, so such a punishment can never be reduced to a half. Rather, the words of Allah⁽²⁾, '...they shall suffer half the *'adhab* (punishment) which is inflicted upon free women...' (*an-Nisa'*: 25) refer to the physical torture, not the stoning to death. The Arabic word '*'adhab*' does not refer to death, or punishment that leads to death, but to physical torment only, as Almighty Allah says in the Quran, quoting Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) when he was checking the birds and did not find the hoopoe: '[If so,] I will (punish him most severely) or will kill him....' (*an-Naml*: 21)

The word '*'u'adhebannahu*', derived from the noun '*'adhab*' (meaning 'torture') does not denote killing, or the latter would not be mentioned along with that word in the same sentence. Likewise, '*'adhab*' in the verse we are dealing with refers to torture or infliction of pain and not to stoning that leads to death. This refutes the argument of those who claim there is not such a

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- (1) Slavery was common before the coming of Islam which Islam has put an end to it gradually. The reason behind the fact that a slave woman was receiving half the penalty of a free woman is that slave women do not have freedom, and so they are not fully responsible for their actions since responsibility necessarily requires freedom.
 - (2) "The Islamic conception of "Allah" is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of "God". However, the word "Allah" does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use "Allah" rather than "God" as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe."

punishment in Islam for adultery as stoning to death, for slave women get half the punishment prescribed for free women, and stoning to death cannot be halved. To those people who say this, we respond as follows: what you use as evidence to substantiate your argument is false because the word used in the verse is ‘*adhab*’ and Allah has distinguished between that word—which means torture—and death or execution. As we have said, Allah quotes Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) as saying: ‘[If so,] I will (punish him most severely) or will kill him...’ (*an-Naml*: 21) this verse differentiates between ‘*adhab* (torture) and ‘killing.’ Similarly, in the verse we are dealing with, ‘*adhab* refers to physical torture and not to killing through stoning. Let us not interpret Quranic text to mean something different from what it actually intends to convey. Now, let us discuss the matter rationally.

If a man commits fornication with a virgin girl, what is the scope of offense done to her honour? It is relatively narrower than that done to a non-virgin because the latter is often married. In the case of a virgin, the assault is against her honour, but not a husband’s. As for the non-virgin, the offense includes the honour of her husband as well. Thus, the scope of offense is wider since the non-virgin has two families instead of one: that of her parents and siblings and that of her husband and offspring. In the case of the virgin fornicator, the disgrace may be forgotten by the death of her parents and those of their generation who knew about it. Disgrace of a married fornicator, however, is likely to outlive her, so long as her children are alive. Shame in the case of a married woman can be thus perpetuated. It would be unfair to make the punishment for such perpetuated shame equal to an offense which is not that wide in its effect. If the two offenses were equal in punishment—whipping for both—it would mean the wide range of the injury done to honour in the case of a married fornicator has not been discerned. The injury done to honour in the case of a virgin fornicator is relatively limited and may not take long to end, being often confined to the generations of her parents and siblings. Think, on the other hand, of a married fornicator whose shame will continue to the generation of her children and grandchildren. The scope of offense is wider and its effect deeper and more lasting. So, would Allah, the Just, decree the same punishment of whipping for virgin and non-virgin fornicators? This could never be.

The matter must be dealt with in the way Prophet Muhammad did. He was the Messenger of Allah who did not only understand the Quranic text perfectly, but also had the authority and responsibility to clarify the rulings not explicitly expounded in the Quran. Allah has commanded us to abide by what Prophet Muhammad did, and he actually executed the punishment of stoning to death and declared it as a final ruling: a non-virgin adulterer should be stoned and a virgin fornicator should be whipped, provided that the conditions for applying the ruling are fully satisfied. These rulings are meant to preserve the life and purity of humankind in general and, therefore, protect the entire existence of human beings. Preservation of life encompasses both protection of individuals—through disciplining them, providing for them by lawful means, etc—as well as protection of family lineages through forbidding sexual relationships outside marriage.

When people stray from the ordinance of Allah, He sends them signs that attract them back to it, and such signs may be sent by means of those who disbelieve to prove its truth. We have repeatedly dealt with this divine norm, and will repeat it still so it may be ingrained in the minds of people. Allah says: 'It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, to show that it is above all [other] religions, however much the idolaters may hate this.' (*at-Tawba*: 33)

Some would say the Quran makes a claim that has nothing to do with reality, for Islam has not been proved to be above all other religions. To anyone who may thus contend, we respond: This is the result of a faulty understanding of the words of Allah. He says in one verse, '... to show that it is above all [other] religions, however much the idolaters may hate this' (*at-Tawba*: 33) and in another verse, '... however much the disbelievers may hate this.' (*Ghafir*: 14) So the fact that Islam will prevail over other religions does not mean abolition of all those who hate it: the idolaters and the disbelievers. Allah does not say that Islam will preclude the existence of anyone who is against it.

Since they do not believe in Islam, the disbelievers hate to see Islam prevail over all other religions, but does Islam prevail over other religions by abolishing them all and having every one of their adherents convert to it? No. Allah has explained in the Quran and proved by reality that this is not the way Islam gains victory. Rather, the manifestation of this victory is that life events

will force those who hate Islam to resort to it for relief of disasters; they will not find a way out of their crises except by applying one or another of the rulings of Islam which they hate, perhaps without even knowing it.

When life forces someone to follow the opinion of his rival, this is evidence of the truth of the latter. This is how Islam prevails over all other religions, however much the disbelievers may hate it. We have seen this happen in our modern age. Since 1981, the USA—that major world power—has been suffering under the crisis summed up in these four letters: AIDS. Islam has established a law that organizes sexual relationships to protect and preserve humankind. Through its system of legal and publicly recognized marriage, Islam has guided us to the best and purest form of sexual relationships. Through defiance of this divine law, America has been suffering terror of the aforesaid disease, which proves the truth of Islam as the timeless religion of God. AIDS, or ‘Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome’, is transmitted mainly through genital fluids in sexual relationships outside marriage. Scientists are still studying the formation of the virus causing AIDS. That virus secretes poisons and cause severe pains, and until today, the western world withal its advancement is still unable to defeat this disease. It is worthy of mention that the HIV virus that causes AIDS is transmitted through sexual man-woman relationships outside of marriage as well as homosexual relationships. They are a punishment from Allah to all those who practice sex outside the lawful limits set by Him.

Allah has made marriage the valid channel through which a man and a woman can have a clean relationship. It is the process of offer and acceptance through which both parties- the man and the woman through her guardian- give their consent, the groom pays the mandatory marriage dowry, and the union is announced at the presence of witnesses. This is the system of marriage decreed by Allah; it goes perfectly in line with the chemical constitution of the human soul and is the best manner in which human bodies can enter into an intimate union.

Ponder this example: when positive and negative electric wires are properly connected, they produce light. However, when they are connected in the wrong way, a short circuit and perhaps a fire will ensue. In the same manner, when masculinity and femininity are brought together by the lawful bond of matrimony, the result is perfect harmony between the natural chemical constitution of the

human soul that transmits, i.e. the male, and that of the soul that receives, i.e. the female. Naturally, the outcome of this pure union is a light, not a fire.

It is enough to enrage a man to see a stranger sneaking glances at a woman under his guardianship. If that stranger follows the legitimate path of proposal decreed by Allah, the guardian of the woman, who would have otherwise been enraged, would be elated and a wedding ceremony would be held to announce the blessed union.

Adherence to the law of Allah positively affects the chemical constitution of the human soul, whereas rage and resentment are the inevitable result of disobeying this law; abidance by it brings happiness and creates solid relationships among people. Following the guidance of Allah is what works this wonderful effect in the human soul and lets happiness and peace replace rage and enmity through a clean and honest relationship.

Every relationship between a man and woman that exists beyond the limits of purity and chastity ordained by Allah must result in an unbalance in the constitution of human life that ultimately leads to psychological and physical diseases difficult to be treated. This happens nowadays already. Let us reflect on the following verse: ‘And those of your women, who commit illegal sexual intercourse, take the evidence of four witnesses from amongst you against them; and if they testify, confine them (i.e. women) to houses until death comes to them or Allah ordains for them some (other) way.’ (*an-Nisa*’: 15) This was intended as a preliminary stage until Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad the prescribed punishment for fornication. Allah also says:

وَالَّذَانِ يَأْتِيَنِهَا مِنْكُمْ فَأَذُوهُمَا فَإِن تَابَا وَأَصْلَحَا
فَاعْرِضُوا عَنْهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿١٦﴾

**If two men commit a lewd act, punish them both;
if they repent and mend their ways, leave them
alone – God is always ready to accept repentance,
He is full of mercy [16] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*’: 16)**

As the aforesaid verse tells, Allah always accepts repentance and is full of Mercy. When an adjective form is used to describe Allah, it does not have the

same quality or degree as when it is used to describe human beings. We should not think that the Attributes of Allah are sometimes manifested in a higher degree than others are; rather, all the Attributes of Allah have the same Absolute Perfection. When we describe a person as an 'excessive eater', it is an exaggerated depiction of this man's appetite or eating habits. However, it does not tell whether he eats a lot in every single meal or he eats more meals than others normally do. Perhaps, instead of eating three times daily, he eats five times, for example. Thus, he is an 'excessive eater' in the sense that he eats more meals than usual, even though the size of each meal is not really larger than usual. It may also mean that he eats in every single meal much more than what a normal person would eat. Instead of one piece of bread, he would perhaps eat four pieces. Therefore, when an exaggerated expression or adjective form is used to describe a human being, it may indicate either that the stated quality manifests itself intensely every single time, or the rate of recurrence of that quality is higher than usual.

This is different when an adjective is used to describe an Attribute of Allah. When we say that Allah is the Acceptor of Repentance, this refers to both, the repetition of the manifestations of this Attribute as well as the uniquely high degree and quality of the Attribute each time it is manifested. Allah accepts repentance of millions of human beings, and moreover, He forgives even grave acts of disobedience. It means both the rate of recurrence and the degree of the Attribute are characterized by the same unique and absolute perfection. He is the Acceptor of Repentance, the All-Merciful, and the All-Wise Lord and Creator of all things. He has created humankind and decreed laws to regulate their lives. The establishment of laws necessarily entails condemnation of whoever violates these laws and prescribing punishments to deter violators.

Ordaining laws rules out excuses. Since Allah has revealed to us His laws, no one may be excused to say, 'I did not know such-and-such was forbidden.' The fact that Allah forbids something and prescribes a punishment for it is itself a proof that Allah knows that the human soul may be so weak as to contradict divine ordinance; our Creator knows we are not angels. Prescription of prohibitions and punishments leaves no excuse for violators. As we have pointed out, prohibition of a specific deed implies that it is likely to be committed; otherwise, Allah would not mention it, let alone set punishment for whoever

commits it. Some acts are worthy of condemnation, yet the Ultimate Legislator and Law-Giver does not set punishments for them, not due to any deficiency on His Part—the Exalted above every failure or deficiency!—but Allah has not mentioned the punishment for some condemned acts in His Ordinance for a reason. Let us illustrate this. Allah knows that human beings may be prone to commit theft, for example, or fornication. Therefore, He prescribes a punishment to be applied in case someone is too weak to resist the temptation of such acts. However, there are other acts, also worthy of condemnation, that Allah does not set punishments for. By such deliberate overlooking, Allah wants to implicitly tell us that no rational human being should even conceive of the possibility of doing such evil acts. An example of this is homosexuality.

Allah has not decreed a particular punishment for it because a sound natural disposition would never even think of committing it. Let it suffice as evidence that homosexuality does not exist in the worlds of animals, for they have natural dispositions that have not been contaminated, unlike human beings.⁽¹⁾

It is very important to understand, though, that the fact that Allah has not prescribed a particular punishment for an evil act does not mean that one will not be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for committing it. Rather, one may receive severer reckoning on account of this evil act. When Allah condemns an act and rules a punishment for committing it, this indicates that such an act is likely to be committed, given to human weakness. However, if an act has no prescribed punishment, this is only meant to suggest that it is neither natural nor normal for a sound human disposition to be inclined to do such an act. For this reason, no punishment has been decreed for it. The matter in such cases was left to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was authorized to legislate proper punishments for such abnormally evil acts.

Thus, the absence of an explicit text in the Quran that prescribes punishment for a certain crime does mean that one will not be recompensed for committing it. It is quite the reverse: punishment for such crimes may be severer than the ones explicitly established in the Quran. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered that both parties engaging in a homosexual relationship should be thrown

(1) This information is according to the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul* and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily conform to the scientific facts and information proven true.

off a mountaintop, which is severer than the stoning punishment prescribed for fornicators. From this we understand that not decreeing a specific punishment for a certain bad deed is only meant to indicate that it is very inconsistent with reason and a sound natural disposition, not that such a deed is by any means admissible. When Allah overlooks certain matters, it is meant as an indirect intimation that these matters should not be practiced among human beings; they are not even practiced by animals even though they belong to a lower class.

Some would describe such an atrocious act as 'animalistic lust.' However, animals are certainly vindicated from such a groundless accusation! In actual fact, animals would never do such an abnormal thing. No female of any animal species would mate with another female, nor would two male animals ever copulate with one another. Furthermore, if a female animal conceives, it would never allow any male animal other than her mate to approach her. Therefore, practicing sexual relationships beyond the legitimate process set by Allah should better be called a 'humanistic' desire, not an animalistic one! Animals would not commit such anomalous acts. Whoever describes such lewd practices as animalistic actually does grave injustice to animals. Despite the fact that human beings commit such ugly sins, Allah asserts that He is the Acceptor of Repentance, the All-Merciful. Why? Consider the wisdom underlying repentance and Allah's acceptance of it. If the believers did not commit any sins, the notion of obligation to fulfil the commands and duties we are assigned by Allah would lose its essence and meaning. Abidance by the Divine Ordinance involves a continuous process of fighting against one's self, on the one hand to prevent it from sliding into error, and on the other hand, to compel it to endure the difficulty of undertaking the enjoined acts of worship.

A believer should resist the temptation of committing sins in the course of his attempts to submit to the assignments of faith, and this is the essence and meaning of obligation; otherwise, Allah would have created us like angels and there would be no need for obligations. Allah has decreed repentance since He knows that human beings are weak. Even a believer may be too weak to resist one sin or another, one day or another, but this does not mean that Allah will banish him from His Mercy. Rather, the fact that Allah has decreed certain punishments for sinners is itself evidence that those who choose Islam but then commit sins out of ignorance or weakness are not altogether

excluded from the realm of faith. Were it not for the Mercy of Allah Who has prescribed repentance for us—a sinner would be doomed to damnation, and would therefore give himself free rein to rebellion and disobedience ever after. Knowing that Allah already deprived him eternally from His Mercy, desperation would drive him to go on offending the honours of people, spreading corruption, and committing all evils with no deterrent.

By prescribing repentance, Allah has foreclosed the door to desperation that would make a sinner persist in error since he knows there is no hope for him to be forgiven. Just as Allah has prescribed repentance for sinners, He has also made Mercy for those who guard themselves against sinning. He says: ‘...Allah is Ever All-Forgiving (the One Who forgives and accepts repentance), (and He is) Most-Merciful.’ (*an-Nisa*: 16) If Allah described Himself as ‘the Acceptor of Repentance’ only, each one of us would have to sin in order to attain pardon from Him through this Attribute. However, Allah says: ‘... Ever All-Forgiving (the One Who forgives and accepts repentance), (and He is) Most Merciful.’ (*an-Nisa*: 16)

So, He has made repentance for those who sin and has made Mercy for those who guard themselves against sinning. Therefore, one does not need to necessarily be a sinner to attain the Forgiveness of Allah: one of the manifestations of His Mercy is that He will bless some of His servants so they will not sin to need repentance. Then, in the following verse, Allah explains the issue of repentance:

إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللَّهِ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السُّوءَ بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوبُونَ مِنْ
قَرِيبٍ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧﴾

**But God only undertakes to accept repentance
from those who do evil out of ignorance and soon
after- wards repent: these are the ones God will
forgive, He is all knowing, all-wise [17]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 17)**

The precision of the Quran has left no room for misunderstanding. Since Allah accepts the repentance of sinners, someone may think that he can commit as many sins as he wishes and then repent to Allah. Such conduct is the result of heedlessness of the wisdom underlying Allah’s concealment of the time of

each one's death. Can anyone be sure that he will live until he decides to repent? Anyone of us may die while sinning, so ponder again the words of Almighty Allah: 'But Allah only undertakes to accept repentance from those who do evil out of ignorance and soon afterwards repent: these are the ones Allah will forgive, He is All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) 'Doing evil out of ignorance' means to commit a sin without bearing in mind, at the moment of committing it, the punishment assigned for it. If one recalls the punishment Allah has made for the sin he is about to commit, he will refrain from yielding to its temptation. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained this when he said: 'A fornicator is not [truly] a believer at the moment when he is committing fornication. A thief is not [truly] a believer at the moment when he is committing theft, and he who drinks an intoxicant is not [truly] a believer at the moment when he is drinking.'⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

If he bore in mind, at the moment of committing fornication, for example, that he is a believer and faith prescribes the punishment of whipping or stoning for fornicators, he would not commit that sin.

Allah clearly states that repentance is accepted only from those '... who do evil out of ignorance and soon afterwards repent...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) Some may plan to commit a particular sin, rejoice in doing it at the transient pleasure they gain, and even talk proudly about having committed that sin and the time when they did. On the other hand, some may fall prey to a sin, out of weakness, and immediately sink under remorse and self-reproach for committing it; they wish they had not done that act of disobedience and wonder how they dared commit it.

Let me give an example to distinguish between the two cases: Assume that two people were preparing to travel to Paris. One of them inquired from those who lived there before about the places of extravagant entertainment and debauchery. Once he arrived in Paris, he indulged himself in such a wasted, obscene life and, and when he returned home, he took pride in talking

(1) In the version cited by Imam Muslim and Imam Ahmed, there is the addition: "...He who dishonestly takes something of the battle gains is not [truly] a believer at the moment when he is doing this sin, so beware of these deeds! Beware of these deeds!" In the version cited by Abd Al-Razzaq, there is another addition: "...And he who usurps a right that is not his is not [truly] a believer at the moment when he is doing so".

(2) Cited by Imam Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurayrah

about his delicious adventures! By contrast, the other person travelled to Paris to pursue his studies. During his stay there, he could not combat the temptations and fell a weak prey to a sin; he did not plan it, but it happened. Once the ecstasy of desire was extinguished, he became severely overcome by regret and self-reproach. When he returned home, he was far from proud of what he committed, and was just anxious to conceal news of it from all others. The difference between one who plans for a sin and one who weakly falls prey to sinning without intending it is remarkable.

By decreeing repentance for his servants, Allah has bestowed His Mercy on all humankind. Otherwise, the entire world would be immersed in endless evils, with people who, by deviating once from the right path, are doomed to desperation of His Mercy and, therefore, take deviation as their lifetime vocation. So Allah accepts the repentance of him who has done a sin, ignorant or heedless of punishment, then repents before his time runs out. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified the exact meaning of 'running out of time' when he said: 'Allah accepts the repentance of His servant as long as the death-rattle has not reached his throat.'⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾

As the Quran relates, this dialogue took place between Allah *the Exalted* and Satan: '[Iblis (Satan)] said: "O my Lord! Because you misled me, I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth, and I shall mislead them all, except Your chosen, (guided) slaves among them."' (*al-Hijr*: 39-40) Satan thought he would destroy all humankind and lure them into committing sins, except the few servants of Allah whom He *the Glorified and Exalted* selected, elevated above all others, and made them devoted to Him. However, Allah disappointed Satan and decreed repentance for His servants so they can always return to Him so long as the death rattle has not reached their throat. At the moment when the soul is leaving the body, what benefit would society reap if the dying person repents then? Society will not benefit anything from such a repentance that comes at a time when the person is already stripped of any power to either do harm or do good. For this reason,

(1) *Shu'ab Al-Iman (The Branches of Faith)*, by Ibn Hayyan in his *Sahih*, and Al-Hakim in his *Al-Mustadrak*

(2) *Cited by Imam Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Al-Bayhaqi*

Allah gives a sinner respite to repent and spare society the evils of his sins so long as his soul has not reached his throat. 'But Allah only undertakes to accept repentance from those who do evil out of ignorance....' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) Now, does one repent first and then Allah accepts his repentance and forgives him? Allah says: '... He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return [to Him]. Allah is the Ever-Relenting, the Most-Merciful....' (*at-Tawba*: 118)

Here scholars posed a good question: Does a servant repent first and then Allah accepts his repentance, or does Allah turn to His servant in mercy first and then the servant repents as a result? The aforesaid verse explicitly states: '...He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return [to Him]....' (*at-Tawba*: 118) No one has invented repentance. Rather, Allah first prescribed repentance and made it possible for his servants; accordingly, His servants repent to Him whenever they sin, and He accepts their repentance.

Repentance then revolves around three aspects: First, Allah has decreed repentance for His servants; no one invented repentance and then imposed it on Allah. Rather, the One Who has created us knows that we may be too weak to resist our desires, so He has decreed repentance for those who sin in ignorance then regret their misdoing. This is what Allah means by saying, '... He turned to them in mercy....' (*at-Tawba*: 118) It means that Allah, out of His Mercy, has prescribed repentance so that His servants may turn to Him again if they slide into error: '... in order for them to return [to Him]....' (*at-Tawba*: 118) When they do turn to Him, Allah accepts their repentance, as He says about Himself in the Quran: 'Forgiver of sins and Acceptor of repentance....' (*Ghafir*: 3)

Ponder these words of Allah: '... Allah... undertakes to accept repentance....' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) The expression denotes endless bounty. If a wealthy person tells a poor one in debt, 'I undertake to repay your debt to your creditor', the debtor would be elated for the favour bestowed on him. What elation and reassurance, then, we should feel when Allah—to Whom all Perfection and Majesty belong— says He 'undertakes to accept repentance'! Allah ascribes acceptance of repentance to Himself and not to any of His creatures. He commits himself to accept sinners who turn to Him in regret, and no one can change what He has decreed. Allah then says: '...and soon afterwards

repent...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17). No one knows when he will die, so one should not delay his repentance. So those who do wrong in ignorance and soon after turn to Him, regretting their sins, Allah promise them: '... these are the ones Allah will forgive...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17). Indeed, He is the One Who accepts repentance and forgives sins.

Allah concludes the verse with His words: '... He is All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) We know that establishing laws requires vast knowledge of what was, is, and can possibly be in the future, and this is the reason for the confusion constantly arising regarding man-made laws. What makes people enforce a law on one day and amend it on the following day? Things arise which they had not expected due to their limited knowledge. A law is issued, and when an unexpected thing happens, the legislator has to amend that law. When the legislator is ignorant of all the past, present, and future implications and circumstances associated with those subject to his legislations, the result is a defective legal code. Knowledge of a human legislator does not encompass the past, except just the limited scope of events that has taken place in his own environment or other places whose news has reached him.

Needless to say, human knowledge is also limited by the boundaries of the present and cannot trespass them to know the future. Even with regard to the present, no one can have a full account of it since the present associated with a particular environment and context can be quite different from that associated with another. We know that realms of the unseen are three: First, the past: people of a certain time do not witness events of the times that went before them. The past is hidden from people due to the fact that its events happened at a time preceding their existence. In the Quran, Allah draws our attention to this fact as evidence for the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'You [Muhammad] were not present on the western side of the mountain when We gave Our command to Musa (Moses)...' (*al-Qasas*: 44). Prophet Muhammad was not present when Allah revealed His law to Prophet Musa (Moses). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was also illiterate and was therefore incapable of reading history and learning it. Allah also 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 Maryam (Mary); you were not present with them when they argued [about her].’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 44) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not witness these events. Furthermore, as everyone knows, he was illiterate and never learnt history from any teacher. This is sufficient evidence that it was Allah Who unveiled the past to the Prophet and made known to him those events. Second, the present: events of the present time can also be part of the unknown, not due to a difference in time of course, but a difference in place. At any present moment, I may know what happens in my place, but I cannot know what happens in other places. Besides difference in place, we cannot know what others hide in themselves. Allah says: ‘... and they say to themselves, ‘Why does not Allah chastise us for what we are saying?’...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8) In this verse, Allah tells Prophet Muhammad about a thing that belonged to his time, yet it was concealed in the hearts of his enemies. If they had not harboured that feeling in themselves, would they have believed the Messenger of Allah when he told them about what lurked in their minds as was revealed to him by Allah? Allah has thus removed the veils of place and the inner self of his enemies and exposed their secrets to His Messenger. Third, the future: Allah says in the Quran: ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)

This verse was revealed in Mecca at a time when Muslims were a small, persecuted, powerless group. When Companion ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* heard this verse, he asked Prophet Muhammad with eager interest: ‘What forces will be defeated?’ Muslims then confronted the ‘forces’ in the Battle of Badr and they were indeed defeated. News of that defeat was foretold in Mecca; then, it took place after the Immigration to Medina. Can it be plausible that Allah would say, ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) unless he knew this would actually happen? Had events contradicted the foretold news, those who have believed would have forsaken faith.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confidently delivered the revelation of Allah who thus foretold the future to be evidence against the adversaries of His Messenger. When the truth of what has been foretold is

proven, those adversaries should immediately realize that they were truly revelations of the One Who has created all things and Whose Knowledge encompasses all events.

Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah was a huge man among the nobility of Quraysh, a man who was surrounded by an aura of awe and fame. With all his grandeur, Allah said about him: 'We shall brand him on the snout!' (*al-Qalam*: 16) Allah foretold that he would receive a blow that would leave an indelible mark on the highest point of his nose. In the Battle of Badr, Al-Walid got struck on his nose. Allah foretold Prophet Muhammad of it and events came to confirm it. When reality corroborated the news foretold in the Quran, the believers were established more firmly in faith; they grew assured of the truth of whatever the Messenger of Allah told them. Such an incident, even though minor in itself, constituted solid grounds for believing whatever Prophet Muhammad told them regarding the Afterlife. If he could foretell events that would happen in this life, then he is truly the Messenger of Allah and whatever he told about the Afterlife must certainly be true.

Back to the verse we are dealing with, we say Allah concludes it by saying: '...He is All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa*': 17) His knowledge encompasses all things, and this is why He has decreed repentance for His servants. Allah knew that without repentance, the world would be rife with evils committed by desperate sinners who have lost all hope of deliverance once they committed their first sins. It is out of His Mercy that He has prescribed repentance for His servants. He is the All-Wise Who has not only saved sinners, but saved the entire world from woes and trials that desperation would push hopeless sinners to cause. In the Arabic text of the verse, the verb used is in the past-tense form—which literally translates as 'He was All Knowing, All-Wise.' However, this should not be understood to denote what the past tense linguistically denotes typically; indeed, when it comes to Allah, nothing should be understood or interpreted based on the norms and limits that govern mortals. Rather, 'There is nothing like Him.' Time is but one of His creations; He controls time and it does not control Him.

A sceptic may contend that using a past-tense verb form proves that the Knowledge of Allah is confined to the past. However, the fact that Allah does

not change is sufficient to refute this unfounded claim. Allah has always existed with no beginning and no end, so all His Attributes, including Knowledge and Wisdom, have always been His, with no beginning and no end. Wisdom is putting everything in place. Allah has created and decreed everything based on His Omnipotent Knowledge, so everything goes exactly in accordance with the predestined course, and this is the peak of Wisdom. Let us recite again the words of Allah: 'But Allah only undertakes to accept repentance from those who do evil out of ignorance and soon afterwards repent: these are the ones Allah will forgive, He is All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) Allah has decreed repentance so His servants may repent to Him, and He accepts their repentance. This is based on His Omnipotent Knowledge and Absolute Wisdom. In the aforesaid verse, Allah obviously declares that He 'undertakes' to accept repentance of His servants who sin in ignorance and repent soon after. In the following verse, He tells us about the other category of sinners whose repentance will not be accepted:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا حَضَرَ
أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ إِنِّي تُبْتُ إِلَيْنَ وَلَا الَّذِينَ يَمُوتُونَ وَهُمْ
كَمَا قَارَأُ أُوتِيكَ أَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٨﴾

**It is not true repentance when people continue to do
evil until death confronts them and then say, 'Now I
repent,' nor when they die defiant: We have
prepared a painful torment for these [18]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 18)**

This verse tells us about those who persist in wrongdoing and do not think of repentance. Allah accepts repentance of those who live in accordance with His ordinances, yet human souls may at times be too weak to resist the lure of sins. As for those whose repentance is not accepted, they are those whose hearts and souls have deviated from the path of Allah and who give free rein to themselves to enjoy unlawful pleasures. They did not just fall prey to a particular sin out of weakness, but they persisted in sinning and indulged themselves however they wished, irrespective of what Allah has commanded.

One may be too weak before a certain sin, yet he tries so heartily to improve and meanwhile struggles in other aspects of worship in an attempt to compensate for his weakness.

Some, for example, give themselves over to charity projects. Seeing weakness in themselves in a certain aspect, they try to compensate for this weakness by pursuing good deeds through as many channels as possible. They do more good in the hope that Allah may eliminate the sins they have repented from.

No one can be cunning in dealing with Allah. Trespass the limits of Allah in a certain aspect and see how He will employ your efforts in other aspects and make you devoted to His service through righteous deeds. Allah puts fear in the heart of a sinner concerning the destiny they will meet if they do not repent from their sins, which makes them hasten to do good deeds. It is like a message He sends to the one who committed evil deeds: you pursued pleasure and violated the limits set by Allah in a certain aspect, so He has employed you in the service of His path in several other aspects, like building mosques and schools and giving generously to the poor. This is one way how sins are expiated.

No one can deceive Allah. The Quran describes the one who has weakly fallen prey to a sin as one who does 'evil' whereas the one who is engrossed in deviating from the path of Allah is described as one who does 'evil deeds.' The latter does not just have a certain weak point he cannot control or deal with, but he commits several evil deeds and persists in straying from the Way of Allah. He does not stop there, but he continues to delay repentance until just the moment before his soul is about to be severed from his body. Even the good deeds he may have done were not purely for winning the Good Pleasure of Allah, but he thinks religion is confined to rituals and has nothing to do with real life, as do atheists and those ignorant of the meaning and essence of the religion of Allah.

An example of this is the tradition of the Masons. It is said that this sect was founded by the Jews. Apparently, the behaviour of the Masons gives the impression that they only mean to collaborate to do good to serve the interests of society. However, the undeclared aim of the Masonic faction is to serve the Zionist aspirations. Unaware of the real objectives, some Muslims may join them only to participate in community work. I say to every one of them: your

religion is sufficient for you! It already urges you to do these good things, so why do you then turn to the Masons and do not do these good deeds based on the commands of Islam? Why do you not ascribe doing this good to Islam instead of ascribing it to other doctrines and beliefs?

Another example is Rotary Clubs. Someone may boast: 'I am a member of the Rotary Club.' Asked why he is so proud of that, he would answer: 'These are clubs that boost collaboration, communication, affection, and compassion among people.' This poses a question: does Islam not command the same things? Why then do you need to belong to this group or that? This sounds like hostility to the religion of Allah.

So, Allah does not accept repentance of those who defy Him by persisting in sinning. They are like a man whose soul incited him to break his fast during *Ramadan* by drinking a glass of wine for the price of a stolen pig! The first sin he commits is neglecting fasting in *Ramadan* even though it is mandatory. Second, he breaks his fast by drinking wine even though this is forbidden. He also wants to buy the glass of wine for the price of a pig even though Muslims are forbidden from eating pork. In addition, the pig itself is stolen! When he was asked why he committed all that, he answered: 'To defy divine ordinance through a complex act of disobedience'!!

This is a flagrant infringement of the laws of Allah and a complete deviation from His Path. Will Allah then accept him if he professes repentance just at the moment of death? No. 'Whereas repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour...' (*an-Nisa'*: 18) having indulged in countless unlawful pleasures, when death comes, the daring sinner is overcome by cowardice. Why does he not insist on his disobedience till the end? When death comes, this is the moment when one cannot deceive himself anymore: '... until their dying hour and then say, 'Behold, I now repent'....' (*an-Nisa'*: 18) Such repentance is not fit to be accepted, and what benefit would society or the world gain from it? What is the use of declaring repentance at a time when the evildoer is no longer capable of doing any mischief?! This shows disrespect for Allah; therefore, repentance will not avail him.

The verse makes a distinction between two types of sinners: those who embrace faith but persist in sinning and those who die as disbelievers. Now,

ponder the mercy of Allah towards the former and His respect for their declaration of faith by testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah gives sinners from among the believers a less-severe recompense than that of the disbelievers. His torment will be commensurate with the sins he committed. He will not be treated like the disbelievers, and this is why Allah adds: ‘...nor from those who die as deniers of the truth...’ (*an-Nisa*: 18). The disobedient believers will receive torment in proportion to their acts of disobedience, but they will finally be admitted to paradise as a reward for their having kept their faith. This is why Allah does not conclude the verse by saying, for example, ‘...They will be the dwellers of Hell; there to abide.’ Rather, He says: ‘...it is these for whom We have readied grievous suffering...’ (*an-Nisa*: 18). Suffer they will—both disobedient believers and the disbelievers—but the torment of each will be commensurate with his sins. Allah says in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا
بِبَعْضِ مَا ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَحِشَةٍ مُبَيِّنَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ
كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

You who believe, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, nor should you treat your wives harshly, hoping to take back some of the bride-gift you gave them, unless they are guilty of something clearly outrageous. Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind: if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something in which God has put much good [19] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 19)

We have said before that when Allah calls upon His believing servants, saying: ‘O you who believe’, it means He tells them that since they have voluntarily chosen to believe in Him as the One God Who is the All Knowing, Almighty, All-Wise, and Self-Subsisting, then they must obey His ordinance. Using this special and honourable form of address indicates that non-believers are not included. Rather, Allah calls upon those who have willingly embraced

faith. He says: 'There is no compulsion in religion...' (*al-Baqara*: 256). In the verse we are dealing with, Allah wants to address a problem that has to do with women and the way they are oppressed and mistreated. In the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, women suffered from injustice and bias. Allah says: 'O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). The context of the verse refers to inheritance, or a thing which a deceased person has left behind to an heir. The command in the verse is addressed to heirs and it forbids them from taking hold of a thing that belonged to the deceased person yet is not fit to be inherited. Allah has made it lawful for heirs to inherit the wealth of a deceased person and set laws for just distribution of wealth among heirs. However, not everything left behind by a dead person is fit to be inherited. What is that? Allah says: '...You are forbidden to inherit women against their will...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). Is this meant to refer to slave women? No, an heir is entitled to inherit the slave women left behind by the deceased person. Bear in mind that when the word *an-nisa'* (Arabic for 'women') is used in an indefinite way, it is taken to refer to free women since slave women are considered to be rightful possessions of men and therefore can be inherited by heirs. Allah says: '... You are forbidden to inherit women against their will...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). How can a woman be inherited?

In the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, when a man died, his heir would come and throw his gown over the deceased man's wife heralding that she has become his. If the woman then refused, he would take her against her will. If he had no desire for her, he would lock her up in his house until she died and would then inherit her wealth. Alternatively, he would marry her to a man and take her dowry for himself. In short, he treated her as if she had been a possession of his. For this reason, Allah revealed His clear command: '...You are forbidden to inherit women against their will; and you should not *'ta'duluhunna'* (treat them with harshness)... ' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). The Arabic word *'ta'duluhunna'* is derived from the root *'adala'* which denotes 'forceful prevention.' We say a woman *'addalat'* (constrained) her fetus, which refers to muscular contractions which prevent her from delivering her baby. This is the etymological root of the word. Out of the Grace of Allah, when a woman delivers a baby, her muscles expand and contract; they expand so there would be a large enough space that allows the baby to get out. However, these

muscles may contract during delivery, which prevents the baby from coming out. In such a case an operation is conducted to get the baby out, like the well-known Caesarian section.

So the Arabic word ‘*adala*’ refers to a difficult childbirth, and it also refers to an egg having difficulty leaving a chicken’s body due to muscular contractions resulting from a defective movement. But what makes the muscles move at odds with the expansion process required for delivery? Allah has willed that things do not always happen as expected as if everything were functioning mechanically. Rather, Allah wants us to bear in mind that He is the One Who disposes all affairs and who brings effects and results. Causes have no power in themselves, so if He wills, He may suspend them and prevent them from producing the anticipated outcomes.

When we see anomalous and exceptional events happening contrary to what their causes usually lead to, this is evidence of the infinite Power of Allah. If everything happened as expected, people would perhaps think that the mechanical order of the world is so precise that it may never falter. Allah draws our attention to the fact that He possesses full power and control over His Kingdom. Contrary to the beliefs of Deists, Allah did not only create the universe and then leave it to function mechanically through the interaction of material causes. No, Allah is the All-Sustaining One Who never slumbers or sleeps; He orders the causes to operate or not to operate, and He is the One Who holds control over all things.

Allah shows us these abnormalities in the universe so that we will not be allured by the monotony and constancy of natural causes and in order that we will continuously remember Allah and the fact that He is the One Who has created all causes and means and conferred power on them so they can produce effects. This is meant to protect us from becoming indifferent or heedless of the Creator due to the constant monotony of the process of causation and results. Allah reminds us of His existence through the various instances in which He diversifies natural causes or suspends them. He thus teaches us that these causes are not autonomous actors; they have no power in themselves. Rather, they act the way they do because Allah has created them and ordered them to act in this manner, and if He wills, He may suspend them.

We have addressed this matter while discussing the miracle of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. His people threw him in the fire, but he was not burnt. Allah could have saved Prophet Ibrahim in a different way, but was it only about the survival of the Prophet *peace be upon him*? If this had been the case, Allah would not have let him fall into their hands at all, but He did let them capture Ibrahim and did not enable him to escape from them. Allah could have ordered the sky to rain when they threw him in the fire to extinguish it. However, it did not rain and the fire was inflamed and got fiercer. By this, Almighty Allah wanted to send us one of His signs: ‘But We said, “Fire, be cool and safe for Ibrahim (Abraham).”’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 69) Was this not a provocation and defiance of those who wanted to burn Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham)? It was indeed! They were indeed capable of catching him and throwing him in the fire. No rain fell to extinguish the fire, while he was in it. Still, the fire did not burn him. This is the greatness of the Might of Allah.

Back to the verse at hand; Allah says: ‘...and you should not *‘ta’duluhunna*’ (treat them with harshness)...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 19). What does ‘harshness’ here refer to? As we have clarified, the Arabic word *‘ta’duluhunna*’ is derived from the root *‘adala*’ which denotes ‘forceful prevention.’ We say a woman *‘addalat*’ (constrained) her fetus, which refers to muscular contractions which prevent her from delivering her baby. What does this word mean then when it is used to refer to women? It means forcefully preventing a woman from her natural right (when her husband dies) to marry whomever she wants or whoever proposes to her after the widow’s prescribed waiting period is over. To stop that pre-Islamic habit, Allah has sent down this command to prohibit keeping a woman under such constraint. Allah commands us not to lock them up in our homes and deny them access to their legitimate rights, but why would a man do so? What is the practice against which the Quran here means to caution? Allah explains the reason in the same verse: ‘... that you may take away part of the *Mahr* [mandatory marriage dowry] you have given them....’ (*an-Nisa'*: 19) The verse then presents two distinct rulings: do not inherit women as if they were your property, and women should not be prevented unjustly from marrying whom they want.

A good example of the latter is when a man who hates his wife decides not to live in a healthy marriage with her, but also never to divorce her, and

instead, leaves her suspended between marriage and divorce; so he is neither a husband to her, nor does he divorce her and let her marry another man. A bad man may choose to do so because he wants to force his wife to free herself from constraint by waiving her alimony and all or part of her dowry. Islam thus protects women by prohibiting such deeds.

When are men allowed to exercise such constraint on their wives? Here is the answer: '...unless they commit open illegal sexual intercourse...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). In this case, the man is allowed to lock his wife up and prevent her from leaving home. This was prior to prescribing the punishment for adultery, namely stoning to death. Some scholars of Islamic jurisprudence have said a husband may take from his wife whatever she is willing to give in order to free her. This was in the form of money or any other thing if she was guilty of adultery, or if she was a bad companion to him. This is different from what we call *khul'*, or the divorce granted in return for a compensation paid by the wife to the husband. The latter is a gift to women who want to end their marriages even without any reasons at all. This is unlike the aforesaid punishment that was prescribed for adulteresses before the stoning punishment was ordained.

Allah continues: '... and live with them *'bil ma'ruf*' (honourably)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). The Arabic word *'ma'ruf*' (here rendered as 'honourably') is wider in its meaning than the word *'mawadda'* which denotes 'affection.' The latter refers to being good and kind to someone to whom you are bound by affection and intimacy. The word *'ma'ruf*', on the other hand, means treating someone in accordance with what is fair and kind even if you dislike them. Some orientalists who are antagonistic towards Islam have scrutinized the Quran only to find anything that may be used as a proof that the Quran involves contradictions. They argue: 'Your Quran says, '[Prophet], you will not find people who truly believe in Allah and the Last Day *'yuwadduna'* (giving their loyalty to) those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they may be their fathers, sons, brothers, or other relations...' (*al-Mujadala*: 22). This includes a command to the believers that they should avoid *'yuwadduna'* (be affectionate/ loyal) towards a son, father, or anyone of their clan just because the latter is a disbeliever.' Contrarily, those orientalists argue, 'The Quran says in another verse: 'If they [your parents] strive to make you associate

with Me anything about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them. Yet keep their company in this life '*ma'rufa*' (according to what is right)...' (*Luqman*: 15). So how come the Quran forbids the believers in one verse to '*yuwadduna*' (give loyalty to) their relatives if they are disbelievers, yet meanwhile orders them in another verse to keep company of their disbelieving parents based on '*ma'ruf*' (what is right/ fair/ kind)?

That allegation is founded on a failure to understand the difference between *mawada* (affection/ loyalty/ friendship) and *ma'ruf* (honourable treatment, i.e. based on justice and goodness). The former denotes love that leads to loyalty and friendship, whereas the latter refers to treating others based on justice and goodness irrespective of our love for them. If you find a hungry person and you give him food and try to satisfy his material needs, this is an example of *ma'ruf* (just and kind treatment). As for *mawadda*, however, it involves showing kindness or advocacy to someone based on your affection towards them. When a believer is good towards his disbelieving father, it is not affection that really drives him, but keenness to abide by the command of Allah to treat him based on justice and goodness. A Muslim is ordered to treat his disbelieving parents well, but as to advocating for them, taking their side, or giving them loyalty—as disbelievers—this is a completely different thing, and this is what we are forbidden to do.

Did Allah not blame Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) for turning down a guest when he found out he was a disbeliever? Our Lord told Prophet Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: 'Do you want to change his religion to host him for only one night whereas I have been sustaining him for forty years while he is a disbeliever?' What did Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) do then? He ran after the man, and when he reached him, the man asked Prophet Ibrahim what made him change his attitude so suddenly. The Prophet *peace be upon him* answered: 'By Allah, my Lord has reproached me because I have behaved in this manner towards you', so the man told him: 'Your Lord blamed you even though you are a Prophet and I do not believe in Him; the Lord Who justly blames the ones who love Him for the sake of His enemies must be a great Lord!' The man embraced faith as a result! This is what we mean by the word *ma'ruf* (treatment based on justice regardless of feelings). These are the values Allah

has enjoined on spouses in the course of their marital lives. Muslims should heed this so they do not destroy their homes. Some believe that families are built only on the basis of love, yet in case love is absent, Allah tells us to '...live with them *bil ma'ruf* (honourably)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 19). Even if you do not love your wife, treat her based on what is fair and kind. Some men dislike their wives only because they are not beautiful enough on the outside and therefore do not arouse sexual desire in their husbands. Here is a serious misunderstanding: Allah has not prescribed marriage for a man to have a woman who would arouse his desire. Rather, marriage is meant to give you a spouse with whom you can lawfully practice the intimate relationship whenever your desire is excited chemically due to its nature. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'If any of you sees a beautiful woman and feels his desire aroused, he should hasten to have intercourse with his wife. His desire will be equally quenched this way since his wife has what that other woman has [the same physical form, natural ability, etc. required for intercourse].'⁽¹⁾

This means that women are of the same nature as to the satisfaction of one's sexual lust. That is why when a man came to 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* and said, 'O Commander of the believers! I hate my wife and I want to divorce her', 'Umar replied: 'have families been built only on love?! What about values?' The man thought that his wife would continue capturing his heart until the end of her life, to the extent that he believed that he would kiss her or have sexual intercourse with her as often as he liked. But, 'Umar drove the man's attention to the fact that even though such a thing may happen at the very beginning of marriage, later, the family is built upon the mutual respect between the husband and his wife.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '... Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind...' A man might have hated his wife for a particular reason, yet she may perfect her character later on in such a way that enables her to remedy and correct any deficiency she may have had. So, a man should not shape his opinion about this issue on the idea that he wants a woman who looks like a fashion model and who can constantly excite his instinctive desires,

(1) Narrated by Al-Khatib on the authority of 'Umar

even when he has no desire at a certain moment. In truth, Allah *the Almighty* created woman to offer a man companionship, and this includes satisfying his sexual desire when he is naturally aroused. But if a man believes that a woman is nothing but something through which he can arouse his sexual desire, this denigrates her to the status of a live-in prostitute to be with him for the sake of sex only. This is a great wrong because there are various factors that constitute the relationship between a husband and his wife. Thus, a man should not mould his opinion about a woman on the idea of sexual desire only; rather, he should consider other aspects.

In the same vein, a man should know for certain that Allah *the Almighty* conferred His Favour on His creatures in different ways; He *Glorified is He* may cause a woman to be beautiful while giving another a sound mind. He *the Almighty* may grant wisdom to a woman while causing another to be honest and trustworthy. He may grant success to a particular woman and not another. So, the Provision of Allah is distributed to His creatures in so many ways. If you want to be fair and wise, you should take all of these different aspects into account. Thus, to believe that woman serves only as a means to arouse sexual desire is a vast misjudgement. That is why He *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying ‘... if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something in which Allah has put much good.’

If you contemplate over the Quranic verse, you will find it extremely succinct. That is because you may rightfully or wrongfully dislike something, but if you dislike something about which Allah *the Almighty* says that He has put much good in it, Allah will compensate you in full in other ways, so long as you are patient with her and if your hatred of her is not pertaining to her religion. Because Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who causes this good, one must be assured that He *the Almighty* will compensate him in other respects if he shows patience for his hatred of certain things about her.

Even though the context of the Divine Speech has to do with the affairs of the family, He *the Almighty* lays down general rules and principles here. He *the Almighty* could have said, “If you dislike women, it may well be that you dislike them even though Allah has put much good in them”, but He did not say this. Rather, He *Glorified is He* wants to generalize the matter to include everything

that a man may dislike. It goes without saying that reality proves the truthfulness and veracity of the Quran, for there are so many things that man dislikes even though they are good for them and vice versa. This clearly indicates that man does not judge things correctly all the time because he may wrongfully dislike something even though it is good for him. As well, he may like something which is evil or bad. As such, it becomes clear that Allah *the Almighty* causes matters to be contrary to man's own judgment. So, when He *Glorified is He* says: '... if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something in which Allah has put much good', this means that man should all the time believe that the act of dislike, stems from him himself, while good is put into woman by Allah. So, you should not let your hatred overcome the good put into the woman by Allah. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَأِنْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَسْبَدَّالَ زَوْجَ مَكَاتِ زَوْجٍ وَءَاتَيْتُمْ إِحْدَهُنَّ
قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَأْخُذُوا مِنْهُ شَيْئًا أَتَأْخُذُونَهُ بِهْتِنًا وَإِذَا مُمِيتًا

**If you wish to replace one wife with another, do not
take any of her bride-gift back, even if you have
given her a great amount of gold. How could you
take it when this is unjust and a blatant sin? [20]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 20)**

If you have exhausted all means of tolerance and endurance in an endeavour to live with your wife in a reasonable manner and it transpired that the marital life cannot continue in a manner satisfactory to Allah—to the extent that you became afraid of losing control of yourself and doing things that Allah has prohibited—what should you do, then? Allah *the Almighty* says: 'If you wish to replace one wife for another...', this means that you have the right to replace your wife with another in the event you fear falling prey to committing what Allah has forbidden. While doing so (replacing the wife with another), you are supposed to adopt the path of belief which is indicated clearly in the statement of Imam Al-Hassan *Allah be pleased with him* to a man who consulted him concerning the engagement of his daughter: 'Marry your daughter to the good and pious man, for if he loves her, he would treat her gently and kindly; and if he dislikes her, he would not wrong her.'

As such, when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If you wish to replace one wife for another...', this means that your desire has been totally diverted away from the first wife and that you cannot overcome this desire except by deviating away from the Path of Allah. It may also happen that a man may get fed up with his wife even though he does not feel any aversion towards her. He thus divorces her and does not get married to anyone else immediately. So, the question to be asked here is, "What are the stipulations and conditions laid down by Allah *the Almighty* in this regard?"

He *the Almighty* says: '...do not take any of her bride-gift back, even if you have given her a great amount of gold....' Linguistically, the two words "*qintar*" and "*qantarrah*" refer to a thing which is great. The word "*qintar*" itself gives the meaning of money. It was estimated in the past to be equivalent to the amount that could fill the skin of a cow. When a cow is skinned, its skin looks like a big bag, and the particular amount that can fill such a bag is called *qintar*. The *qintar* that is known to us today is a measure of weight. When Allah *the Almighty* uses the word *qintar*, He wants to give us an example of a big dowry: that is, even though you might give your wives big dowries, you are not allowed to take anything back from it in the case of divorce, but why? That is because the dowry you give your wife is in return for enjoying her in sexual intercourse even for a moment, and not for the entire period of time you spend with her.

Therefore, the dowry (even if it is equal to a *qintar*) cannot be taken back after the moment the marriage is consummated. By the way, this verse reminds me of that particular incident where 'Umar ibn Al-Khatib *Allah be pleased with him* upon addressing the topic of high dowries, said: "'Umar made a mistake and a woman was right.'" 'Umar asked the Companions not to give high dowries to women, whereupon a Qurayshi woman answered him, 'how can you say that even though Allah *the Almighty* says: "...even if you have given her a great amount of gold"?'

It is narrated that 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* while delivering a speech at the pulpit, forbade people to give more than four hundred *dirhams* as a dowry to their wives. Upon descending the pulpit, a woman from Quraysh went to him and said: 'Did you not hear the saying of Allah *the Almighty*

“...even if you have given her a great amount of gold...”?’ ‘Umar then replied, ‘I seek pardon from Allah. All people understand religion better than ‘Umar.’ He *Allah be pleased with him* went up to the pulpit once again and said: ‘I have already forbidden you to give them (women) more than four hundred *dirhams* as dowry, but now you are allowed to give whatever you want from your money.’⁽¹⁾

In the same vein, it is narrated on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn Mus‘ab that ‘Umar said: ‘Do not pay dowries to women more than forty *uqiyyah* (one *uqiyyah* equals forty *dirhams*), and whoever does so, the excess will be put in the treasury of Muslims.’ A woman then said: ‘You do not have the right to do so.’ ‘Umar replied, ‘Why?’ The woman answered, because Allah *the Almighty* says, “... even if you have given her a great amount of gold...”’, whereupon ‘Umar said: ‘A woman told the truth and a man made a mistake.’

The Quran then indicates clearly that it is even forbidden to think of taking the dowry back from the wife. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘How could you take it when this is unjust and a blatant sin?’ But, why does the Quran impose such a ruling? Because the dowry you give your women is not paid in return for enjoying her for a long period of time; rather, it is for consummating the marriage with her, a matter which is resolved the moment the two have enjoyed sexual intercourse together. So, man will be sinful if he takes back any portion of the dowry from his wife after their marriage is consummated, unless she freely consents to that. The saying of Allah ‘*ithman mubina*’ (or “a blatant sin”) means that this sin is manifest and destructive.

He *the Almighty* does not even suffice with describing this act as a blatant sin; rather, He *Glorified is He* makes another firm and strong denial in His saying: ‘How could you take it?’ In this verse, He *the Almighty* strongly and firmly denounces the act of taking back anything from the dowry.

He *Glorified is He* says:

(1) Narrated by Sa‘id ibn Mansur and Abu Ya‘la

وَكَيْفَ تَأْخُذُونَهُ وَقَدْ أَفْضَى بَعْضُكُمْ إِلَى بَعْضٍ
وَأَخَذَ مِنْكُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿٢١﴾

**How could you take it when you have lain with
each other and they have taken a solemn pledge
from you? [21] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 21)**

If you try to consider all the acceptable ways to take any portion of the dowry back, you will find nothing at all. But why? Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘How could you take it?’ He *Glorified is He* states clearly that the main reason behind this prohibition lies in the fact that both of them have lain with each other. So, it becomes crystal clear now that the dowry is paid to the woman in return for sexually pleasing one another. Since the Quran is Divinely inspired by Allah, the meaning of the word “*ifdaa*” (meaning “lying with each other”) includes all the possible meanings of sexual intimacy between the man and his wife. In reality, the word “*afda*” is derived from the verbal noun “*al-fadaa*” which gives the meaning of “a spacious place.” Thus, the saying of Allah “*afda ba’dukum ila ba’d*” (meaning “lying with each other”) indicates that you have given yourself to each other in a way that was not restrained or forced. As such, *al-ifdaa* means that you have revealed yourselves to each other in the widest and most comprehensive sense, to the extent that she had enabled you to see her private parts which she concealed from her father and brother, and even her mother and sister. As a matter of fact, this represents the climax of giving oneself to another. You have given yourselves to one another in the truest sense of the word; you touch each other; you are in contact with each other; you have sexual intercourse with each other; you use the same entrance and the same exit of your shared home; you use the same bathroom and the same kitchen. This clearly means that all your life implies the giving of oneself to another. So, as long as you gave yourself to her and she gave herself to you—in accordance with the fact that Allah *the Almighty* described in the chapter of *al-Baqara* that man and his wife are clothing for each other (*al-Baqara*: 187)—there is nothing greater than this. So, when a woman harshly and badly treats her husband, he may get angry, but we ask him: “Is it not enough for you that Allah *the Almighty* has allowed you from her what He *Glorified is He* forbade to others? Did she not allow you to have sex with her?” So, when she

acts and behaves like this, do not get angry and remember the Hadith of the Messenger Muhammad, *Peace and Blessings be upon him*: 'The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives.'⁽¹⁾

The word "*mithaq*" (meaning "solemn pledge") in the Words of Allah *the Almighty* 'How could you take it when you have lain with each other and they have taken a solemn pledge from you?' gives the meaning of a pledge made between two parties. This pledge has been made when you asked the guardian of the woman to give her in marriage to you and the guardian consequently accepted and approved your request. It goes without saying that this solemn pledge of "marriage" will constitute the nucleus for the establishment of a new family. At this point, it is of great importance to know that any pledge made between people themselves is viewed as ordinary, apart from that pledge made between the man and the woman concerning marriage, which is judged as a "solemn" pledge. As a matter of fact, throughout the Quran this description is never applied to any other pledge except that Pledge made by the Prophets. (*al-Ahzab*: 7) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* describes the relationship between a man and his wife as giving oneself to another, while He *Glorified is He* in another place in the Quran describes both the husband and the wife as clothing for each other; and that is why the pledge of marriage is described as "solemn." In truth, this solemn pledge obliges you to treat her kindly and gently in case life becomes difficult. In addition, if a peaceful life with her becomes impossible, you are allowed to replace her with another, yet you are not allowed to take anything back from the dowry you gave her. That is because this dowry is paid in return for giving oneself to another. It actually has nothing to do with the period of time a man spends with his wife, be it short or long.

Concerning this particular verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'How could you take it when you have lain with each other and they have taken a solemn pledge from you?' It is of great importance to know that Allah *Glorified is He* establishes rights but He *the Almighty* meanwhile does not forbid the conferment of favour, a fact which is definitively proven and clearly indicated in the same

(1) *At-Tirmidhi, Sahih*

chapter when He *Glorified is He* states clearly that it is allowed for men to take in satisfaction and ease what their women give up to them willingly. (*an-Nisa'*: 4)

As such, there is a difference between the due and basic right owed to a woman and the favour to be conferred by the woman. It is at this point that the following story may be recounted: One day a judge said to his people, "You have chosen me to settle the conflict taking place between you, so how do you want me to judge? Am I to judge you based on justice or on what is better than justice?" The people said to him: "Is there anything which is better than justice?" whereupon the judge replied, "Yes, grace is better than justice, because justice entails that everyone shall take his due right whereas grace means that both of the two parties may waive their rights. Thus, grace is better than justice." In the same vein, when Allah *the Almighty* establishes rules, He issues guarantees that secure the fulfilment of these rights, yet He *Glorified is He* does not stop people from conferring favours to each other. This is a fact which is clearly indicated in the Quran.

He *the Almighty* orders both of the parties in marriage not to forget this act of grace between them. (*al-Baqara*: 237) He *the Almighty* also orders us in the chapter of *al-Baqara* to write down debt owed, for this process of writing it down protects not only the creditor but the debtor, as well. That is because when the creditor knows for certain that the money is legally documented, he will not be able to deny it. Yet, in case the debt is not documented, he may deny it. As such, Allah *the Almighty* protects the rights of both the creditor and the debtor. In fact, this is the due right to be fulfilled. This does not mean that He *the Almighty* makes no room for favour and grace. As a matter of fact, when one borrows a sum of money from someone else, the debtor may ask for no legal documentation for the loan, an act which is not prohibited by Allah *the Almighty* if both of them trust one another and fear Allah. Since He *the Almighty* makes room for grace and favour in the light of the obligation of rights, you, Oh Muslims, should not forget that.

So, what about the "solemn pledge"? In truth, there is no pledge which is as solemn as that made by the Prophets to Allah and that made between the wife and her husband. That is because it implies the establishment of a relationship which is not eligible except between both the husband and his wife. A man is

duly obliged to fulfil the rights of his wife. He is not allowed to take anything from her unless she willingly approves it. This is based on the verse mentioned previously in the beginning of this chapter where Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that in case the wife gives up anything from her dowry to her husband willingly, he is thus allowed to take it in satisfaction and ease. (*an-Nisa*': 4)

As long as the woman gives up her dowry freely and willingly, this indicates that consent is existing between the two parties, a matter which deeply expresses the affection and mercy that existed between the married couple. Even though the dowry is the woman's due right, it is not a must to pay it to her in full. It is allowed for the husband to delay the payment of the dowry. This means that he can pay it in full at the beginning of marriage, but he is also allowed to pay some of it and delay the payment of the other part. However, in case the marriage ends in divorce, she is entitled to receive all of her due dowry if the husband did not pay it at all, or to receive the rest of it if he did not pay it in full. When the ownership of the dowry moves to the wife, she may give up some portion from it willingly and freely to the husband in a way that lays emphasis the continuity of affection, mercy, and love between the married couple.

It is on this point that we wish to shed light: what if the dispute between the man and his wife flared up to the extent that the woman strongly dislikes her husband and wants to redeem her freedom? If this is the case, the man will likely get married to another woman and thus he is allowed to receive back some of the dowry he gave her, as proven by the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* states that in case the two fear that they will not keep within the limits set by Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she excuses herself from the marriage—her dowry. (*al-Baqara*: 229)

Stressing the fact that the woman must receive her due right, Allah *the Almighty* uses the exclamation style to refer to that very issue on the impermissibility of taking anything from the dowry of the wife, except in the above case. He *Glorified is He* says: 'How could you take it when you have lain with each other and they have taken a solemn pledge from you?'

This exclamatory style indicates clearly that man has no right to take anything from the dowry given to his wife. So, using the interrogative style in this particular Quranic verse implies the absolute and total prohibition of such an

act. As well, we previously explained that all the pledges made between people do not particularly tarnish one's honour, apart from that particular solemn pledge made between the husband and his wife. Pledges or covenants made between any two parties may have to do with money, or providing a service, or blood money or even giving a hand to someone who is in need; these are different forms of pledges and covenants which have nothing to do at all with the topic of honour (chastity) which represents a solemn pledge between the married couple.

Allah *the Almighty* then sheds light on a very important topic by means of which the purification, dignity and nobility of the family is maintained. As well, it is through this topic that love, mercy, and affection are preserved and kept among the family members and thus there will be no room to break off or damage this relation. He *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا مَا نَكَحَ آبَاؤُكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ
سَلَفَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَمَقْتًا وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٢﴾

**Do not marry women that your fathers married –
with the exception of what is past – this is indeed
a shameful thing to do, loathsome and leading to
evil [22] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 22)**

This verse indicates that this act used to be practiced before the advent of Islam, so there was no blame for the son to get married to the wife of his dead father if she was not his real mother. For example, Safwan ibn Umayyah, one of the leaders of Quraysh, got married to the wife of his late father Umayyah ibn Khalaf. Her name was Fakhitah bint Al-Aswad ibn Al-Muttalib. Allah *the Almighty* wants to put an end to such an act, but the question to be asked here is “Why does He *the Almighty* want to do so?” That is because the fatherson relationship is characterized with affection, mercy, love, kindness, and righteousness. As well, the son is obliged to show submissiveness and politeness towards his father. When a man gets married to a woman while having a son, this clearly indicates that the man was married to that son's mother before this new marriage. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* does not want the son to be too emotionally attached to the wife of his father. The son may like her and thus say, “After the demise of my father, I will get married

to her.” As such, he may be happy with the death of his father due to having this hope of getting married to his wife. He may even think of getting rid of his father. All of you know for certain how strong the sexual desire is. That is why Allah *the Almighty* wants to block the means for the son so that he would not even think of that matter; rather, he should consider his father’s wife as his mother. In reality, if the son firmly adheres to the Divine Guidance in this regard, he will be able to protect himself from the seduction of Satan.

In this verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Do not marry women that your fathers married.’ The word “*nikah*” (usually meaning “marriage”) in this context refers to sexual intercourse. It may also give the meaning of making and concluding the marriage contract. But, its indication to sexual intercourse is viewed as the most correct opinion in this regard, a point which is proven by that particular verse of the chapter *an-Nur* in which Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that the fornicator shall not marry any but a female fornicator; that is, fornication involves unlawful sexual intercourse by two unmarried people. (*an-Nur*: 3)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Do not marry women that your fathers married, except for what is past...’, so what is meant by *salafa* (“what is past”)? This means the act of marrying a woman who was previously married to one’s father used to be practiced before the advent of Islam. But, when Islam came, it was prohibited completely. Allah is saying that even though you used to practice this act before the advent of Islam, you are no longer allowed to practice it now. That is why He *the Almighty* says “*illa ma qad salaf*” (meaning “except what is past”); the relative pronoun refers to the past tense. This means that such act can in no way happen in this new era (that of Islam).

Let us imagine that there is someone who got married to the wife of his father before the revelation of this ruling: can this marriage be judged sound and valid after its revelation? The answer is no, because the time during which this act was practiced is over. As such, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* “*illa ma qad salaf*” (meaning “except what is past”) refers to that particular period of time during which this act was practiced. Since that time is over, this new period of time shall in no way witness the existence of such practices. For this reason, He *the Almighty* used the relative pronoun “*ma*” instead of “*man*.” It is of great importance to know that if He *Glorified is He* used the relative

pronoun “*man*” in this context, this would mean that all the marriages of this kind that took place before the revelation of this ruling were valid. But, He *the Almighty* did not use it; rather, He used the relative pronoun “*ma,*” to indicate that this kind of marriage shall never be practiced in the future. As well, it is a must to nullify marriages of such kind.

In truth, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to tell us that all of His Laws and Decrees go hand-in-hand with sound human nature. In this context, He *the Almighty* did not say that the practicing of this act falls under the category of fornication, even though people in the past used to call it so. Sound human nature can in no way accept such practice. However, when people became misguided from the right path, they married the former wives of their fathers. People in the past used to call this kind of marriage “*nikah al-maqt*” (meaning “hateful marriage”). In addition, they used to call the offspring produced from this marriage “*al-maqt*” (meaning “the detested offspring”).

Allah *the Almighty* says “*innahu kan*” (meaning “indeed it was”) referring to this act of getting married to your fathers’ former wives. It is as if He is saying “It was prohibited even before I (i.e. Allah *the Almighty*) declared it as a shameful thing to do, loathsome and leading to evil.” Therefore, He *the Almighty* wants to tell us that all of His Legislations are in accordance with sound human nature which may be plainly evident in some matters and completely obliterated in others. Cases in point are when someone got married to his mother, or his daughter, or even his sister. It becomes clear now that there were certain acts that none dared to practice even in the pre-Islamic period. Therefore, He *the Almighty* laid down this rule which nullifies and invalidates this act (getting married to the former wives of their fathers) practiced by people in the pre-Islamic period and which is against sound human nature. He *Glorified is He* says, ‘Do not marry women that your fathers married, except for what is past....’ He *the Almighty* describes this act of getting married to one’s father’s former wives as a shameful thing to do, loathsome and leading to evil (i.e. having detrimental repercussions on the family).

He *the Almighty* then starts telling about those other women to whom that man cannot get married. Here, it is very important to know that even though people in the pre-Islamic period also prohibited marriage to these women,

Allah *Glorified is He* did not tell us about this ruling because of that; rather, He *the Almighty* does so because it is in line with sound human nature. Concerning the fact that people in the pre-Islamic period did not commit this act, this clearly means that it is a sound nature that the period of ignorance was unable to change. Allah *the Almighty* says:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ اللَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخَوَاتُكُم مِّنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبِّبُكُمُ اللَّاتِي فِي حُجُورِكُم مِّن نِّسَائِكُمُ اللَّاتِي دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَإِن لَّمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُم بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَائِلُ أَبْنَائِكُمُ الَّذِينَ مِّنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَن تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأُخْتَيْنِ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ سَلَفَ إِنَّكَ اللَّهُ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾

You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of brothers and daughters of sisters, your milk-mothers and milk-sisters, your wives' mothers, the stepdaughters in your care – those born of women with whom you have consummated marriage, if you have not consummated the marriage, then you will not be blamed – wives of your begotten sons, two sisters simultaneously, with the exception of what is past: God is most forgiving and merciful [23] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 23)

But the question to be asked here is, “Who is the One Who has the absolute right to legislate?” It is undoubtedly Allah *the Almighty*. It is of great importance here to know that even though people in the pre-Islamic period had deviated from the pure religion, they had still declared marriage to those women mentioned in this verse as prohibited. In other words, there are certain prohibited acts which are not acceptable even by non-Muslims, a point which is crystal clear in the fact that the disbelievers in the pre-Islamic period had forbidden marriage to one's mother, daughter, sister, etc. So, the question to be asked here is, “Why did they do so?” Allah *Glorified is He* gives us the answer in the Quran where He *the Almighty* states clearly that there is no people group which has existed without having been sent a Messenger from Allah to warn them. (*al-Ahzab*: 24)

Guidance revealed by Allah *the Almighty*, is as old as the creation of mankind itself; it is a point of view which is proved by the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He*

while telling us about the story of expelling Adam and Eve from the paradise, told us that He would reveal to them Guidance from Him. In addition, He *the Almighty* asserted that whoever follows this Divine Guidance will not go astray nor suffer total misery. (*Ta Ha*: 123)

This clearly indicates that the moment Allah *the Almighty* created Adam and his wife, He *Glorified is He* sent them down the Guidance they must follow and adhere to. The elements of this Guidance are incontrovertibly complete and perfect. Thus, to find some practices from the pre-Islamic period which are in line with the teachings of Islam mean that all religions are of one Divine Source, although some people may think that these practices are associated with customs and traditions and not Divinely inspired in the previous religions.

Modern science undoubtedly helped us gain profound and deep understanding of many rulings revealed by Allah *the Almighty*. Scientists discovered that the greater the variation of blood relation between parents, the stronger the offspring. This pertains to plants, animals, and even mankind. When the parents of male and female are close relatives of each other, their offspring will be weak. That is why scientists of agriculture and zoology devised a new technique to keep the offspring strong called "outbreeding." In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *Peace and Blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said: "Get married to women who are not from your relatives so that the offspring would not be weak." As well, he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said: "Do not get married to women who are from your relatives, for the offspring will be weak."⁽¹⁾

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* orders us not to marry from among our relatives because the offspring will be weak. It is well known that the offspring of these families whose members are accustomed to getting married to each other are weak to the extent that they may be afflicted with mental retardation, or sexual impotence, or even weakness in the immune system. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* orders us not get married to our relative women. The word "*dawi*" implies weakness. So, if you want your offspring not to be weak, you must keep away from getting married to women to whom you are closely related. Arabs were

(1) *Ihyaa' 'Ulum Ad-Din, Gharib*

fully aware of this fact even before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declared it. A poet in the pre-Islamic period is related to have said:

I advise whoever wants to marry his children to their cousins no to do so

For if he did he would never be safe from weakness and illness

When the Egyptians want to praise the strength of a person, they say that he is a *futuwah* (or a “well-built man”), that is, he was not bred by a female paternal cousin. The same applies to plants: if you want to grow corn in Al-Gharbiyyah Governorate, you are supposed to bring the seeds from Ash-Sharqiyyah. In the same vein, the seeds of the sweet Chilean watermelon are imported from America. But, some people may refuse to buy from such seeds due to its high prices and thus take seeds from the previously planted watermelons. It is for this reason that the yielded crop is always weak. But if he continues to import the seeds from outside –even if the price of the kilo reaches a very high price –he will harvest a good crop.

The same applies to animals and humans. That is why the Arabs used to say, “Only foreigners can overcome heroes because they come from a different race.” This means that this hero inherited the complete and salient characteristics of another race. Indeed, the cross-exchange of the good attributes in each race yields better attributes.

The prohibition of getting married to the mother, the sister, etc. may also be seen from an organic angle. Why did Allah *the Almighty* forbid marriage to the mother, the sister, etc.? It is because mothers represent our origin and sisters are descended from them. Brothers and sisters are descended from the same origin. The same ruling applies to getting married to paternal and maternal aunts, the daughters of brothers and daughters of sisters, your milk-mothers and milk-sisters, etc. Thus, the reason behind this prohibition is complex and has to do with family relations. Allah *the Almighty* wants human offspring to be strong.

In addition, He *Glorified is He* wants to draw our attention to the fact that marital relations are prone to psychological fluctuations. A man may get married to a woman, but after a period of time, disagreements begin to emerge between them due to psychological fluctuations, to the extent that he may dislike her so much that they cannot live in peace. How would the relationship between a

mother and her son be if they were to marry one another? Naturally, the mother-son relationship obliges the son to be permanently loyal to her. The same applies to his relation to his daughter, sister, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, etc. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* orders us to stay away from this main source of discord.

Sound human reason decrees that we must not engage in reciprocal marriage, an arrangement wherein the sister of a particular man gets married to another man provided that the sister of the latter marries the first man. In such a case, if disagreement occurs between one married couple, it will extend to afflict the other one even though they may usually live in harmony. That is why sound reason requires that a man must not marry his sister to another one in return for marrying the latter's sister. We should also consider they how the stance of the mother will be when she sees that there is disagreement between her daughter and her husband, while her son lives in happiness with his wife (i.e. sister of the mother's daughter's husband)? It goes without saying that the area of disagreement and discord has unreasonably widened.

In truth, we should know that Divine Wisdom is not only pertaining to one particular topic; rather, it is comprehensive and covers all different topics. That is why when He *the Almighty* says: 'You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters...', it is taken for granted that the prohibition of marriage to the mother includes the grandmother, be she paternal or maternal, as well as whoever descends from her. In the same vein, one is not allowed to get married to the mother of his wife. The prohibition of marriage to the daughters includes the daughters of one's son and whoever descends from them. The same applies to the daughters of one's daughter.

He *the Almighty* declares that it is prohibited for a man to get married to his sisters, his paternal and maternal aunts, his brother's daughters and sister's daughters, and his milk-mothers, but the question to be asked here is, "Why does He *the Almighty* forbid marriage to the milk-mother?" That is because the body of that particular man who wants to marry her had been formed somewhat by her milk and thus he is viewed as part of her. It is for this reason that a man is not allowed to get married to his milk-mother. It is of great importance here to quote scholars' different opinions concerning this point as such: a group of scholars holds the position that it is not allowed for the man to get married to

such a woman who nursed him since it is likely that the milk of that woman had participated in the formation of his cells. Another group of scholars yet opines that it is allowed for the man to get married to that woman who nursed him, so long as it was only once or twice. Imam Abu Hanifah is of the opinion that it is not allowed for the man under any circumstance to get married to any woman who nursed him. But the most correct opinion in this regard is that a man is not allowed to get married to the woman who nursed him for five or more different sessions. As well, he is not allowed to get married to that woman who nursed him for a day and a night. The last two rulings are to be put into practice in case the act of nursing takes place in the period fixed for breast-feeding which is estimated by two (*Hijri*) years. (*al-Baqara*: 233)

It is historically recorded that 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* had discussed this topic with 'Uthman ibn 'Affan *Allah be pleased with him*. It is narrated that a woman had given birth to her child after a six-month period of pregnancy. It is known that women usually deliver their babies after nine months of pregnancy. In some exceptional cases, they may do so after seven months of pregnancy. When the woman was brought before 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him*, he wanted to afflict the legal punishment on her on accusation of committing fornication because if she delivered her baby six months after conception, this means that she committed fornication. It was at that point that Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* explained the matter to Caliph 'Uthman. He said, 'Oh Commander of the Believers! Why are you going to punish her?' 'Uthman replied, 'Because she has given birth to her baby after six months!' Here, Allah *the Almighty* provided Imam 'Ali with deep and profound understanding of the issue. Sometimes, a man may not pay attention to a subtle observation mentioned in the verses of the Quran. This subtle observation yet may be understood from one particular text or from two or more texts. Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* reviewed the Book of Allah and extracted that particular verse that provides solution for this issue. He said to 'Uthman, 'Allah says otherwise' (That is, she has committed no major sins and thus she did not deserve any punishment).'Uthman said to him, 'What did Allah say in this regard?' Imam 'Ali consequently told him about that verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in which Allah *Glorified is He* states clearly that mothers should nurse their babies for two whole years. (*al-Baqara*: 233) Based on this

aforementioned verse, the child must be nursed for two whole *Hijri* years, i.e. twenty-four months. In addition, He *the Almighty* says in another place that the period of pregnancy and breast-feeding altogether extends to thirty months. (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) ‘*Ali Allah be pleased with him* explained that point, as follows: the sum total of the period of pregnancy and breast-feeding is thirty months, while the complete period of breast-feeding is twenty-four months, so if we deduct the latter period from the total sum, this will clearly indicate that pregnancy may last for just six months. Imam ‘*Ali Allah be pleased with him* extracted the legal ruling from the Quran. One may not have profound understanding about all the subtle observations mentioned in the Quran. In the same way, He *Glorified is He* did not specify a particular period of time with prominent scholars while depriving other times from them; rather, His Revelations cover all ages and places. Someone yet may say that Muslims nowadays do not reach the rank of the companions. But, whoever holds this position is unaware of what Allah *the Almighty* said in the chapter of *al-Waqi'a*. He *Glorified is He* states clearly that there will be a group of people at the end of time not deprived of being close to Allah, and so will be able to deduce rulings from the verses of the Quran.

As we have said, scholars differed concerning the issue of breast-feeding: some scholars hold the position that one suckling or two may entail prohibition of marriage; another group is of the opinion that there is no prohibition except in the case of suckling ten times; there is still a third group of scholars who opine that prohibition is entailed by nursing the baby for five separate sessions within the period fixed for breast-feeding. So, if the child was nursed by a woman in a period of time other than that one fixed for nursing, it may be said that he became in no need of milk as he was sustained with solid food. Clearly, the issue of breast-feeding is complicated, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said: ‘What becomes unlawful (for marriage) through breast-feeding is that which becomes unlawful through lineage.’⁽¹⁾

The list of those women who are prohibited through breast-feeding includes the milk-mother, the milk-daughter, the milk-sister, the milk-paternal aunt and the milk-maternal aunt. Thus, due to the complexity of this topic of

(1) *An-Nasa'i, Sahih*

breast-feeding, all Muslim families must pay it full attention. If we consider things more deeply, we may see one of the deeper reasons why we are not perfectly happy in our homes.

All people must be attentive to the Instructions and Teachings of Allah *the Almighty* and they must hurry to work upon them and implement them. The Divine Transmission is continuous; we just need sensitive reception systems to receive it, for if the reception system is defective, one will not avail him/herself of the transmission even if the latter continues to flow. Assume that a radio broadcasting station was trying to air a program using a defective microphone: how would the transmission reach the people? As such, the Support and Blessing of Allah are sent down all the time, but there are some people who do not receive them because they have certain problems that prevent them from doing so. It goes without saying that the first and foremost reason for attaining the Blessings of Allah is that all the corners of the family must be founded on obedience to Allah; the husband-wife relationship must be a lawful one. In fact, there are a lot of people who may unintentionally commit prohibited acts as a result of paying no attention to that complex issue of breast-feeding. Some women may nurse the children of each other without taking into account the subsequent legal ruling. We say to such people: "You have taken all precautions to guarantee the soundness of the biological health of your children. You keep a record for each child that includes his birth certificate and the dates on which he should take his vaccinations against Polio and Diphtheria. So, why did you not insert a paper in this file including the name of those women who nursed the child other than his mother so that when he is going to get married, we may inform people of authentic information on that point." If we do this, we will be able to build new families on solid and concrete foundations. If we do not do so, we may be extremely surprised when it transpires that a man and a woman who got married and had kids are milk-brother and sister and thus, religious, civil, and social problems ensue because people no longer heed the Divine Guidance as much as they do the material one.

Muslim families must insert a piece of paper in the file of their sons and daughters including the names of those women who nursed them. Anyway, this becomes no longer a necessity since the dry milk that comes from animals

can suffice and put an end to the problem. We thus may be able to avoid this complex issue which may cause a man to get married to his milk-sister, or milk-mother, etc. A marriage like this (wherein a man marries his milk-mother or milk-sister) would consequently not attain the Blessings of Allah. He *the Almighty* says: 'You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts, your brother's daughters and sister's daughters, your milk-mothers and milk-sisters...' On the same topic, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* is narrated to have said: 'What becomes unlawful (for marriage) through breast-feeding is that which becomes unlawful through lineage.'⁽¹⁾

The Quran sheds light on these major issues only. So, when one gets married to a particular woman, is he, under any circumstance, allowed to marry her mother? It is something which is not acceptable at all. The word "*rabibah*" in the saying of Allah '... the stepdaughters in your care—those born of women with whom you have consummated marriage...' means the daughter of your wife from a previous marriage. A man may get married to a previously married woman, be she a widow or a divorcee, and the daughter of that particular woman is called his *rabibah*. It is expected that the mother's new husband will protect her and raise her up. As such, she will be considered his daughter. But the Quranic verse implies a condition: a man's marriage to this girl's mother must be consummated. So, in case the man finishes the marriage contract, but has not consummated the marriage yet, he is thus allowed to marry that woman's daughter. The issue is yet totally different with marrying the mother: a man is not allowed to get married to the mother of his wife even if the marriage has not been consummated.

The phrase "*hala'il abnai'kum*" refers to the wife of the son. Inserting the words "*min aslabikum*" in this context indicates that the word "*abnaa*" used also to refer to those sons who were not from the loins, otherwise He *Glorified is He* would not add the words "*min aslabikum*" to the phrase "*abnai'kum*." This clearly indicates that the pre-Islamic period witnessed the existence of sons who were not from the loins of their fathers—i.e. adopted sons—a matter that was common among the Arabs during that period of time. A man used to

(1) *An-Nasa'i, Sahih*

adopt a child and give him his name, to the extent that they allowed those adopted sons to inherit from them. But, upon the advent of Islam, this practice was completely abolished. It stated clearly that a man is in no way allowed to attribute to himself sons who are not from his own loins. The legal wisdom behind that prohibition is that these adopted sons of your father will be the brothers of your sisters. As well, they will be fully aware of all your private secrets. *Allah Glorified is He* nullified this act at the hands of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*.

We know for certain that Zayd ibn Haritha was abducted from his family. He was sold as a slave and was bought by Hakim ibn Hizam. He was then given to Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* who, in turn, gave him to Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Zayd became the slave of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. When the family of Zayd knew that their son, who was abducted, was in Mecca, they went to Prophet Muhammad and asked him to let Zayd go with them. So, he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said to them: 'Let him choose between staying with me or departing with you.' But how did Zayd respond to them? His belief in and love of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* motivated him to say: 'I will choose none but Messenger Muhammad.' He stayed with him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad consequently wanted to reward Zayd for this and thus, he adopted him and briefly called him Zayd ibn Muhammad. *Allah the Almighty* wanted to put an end to that act that reached the house of Prophet Muhammad himself. He *Glorified is He* states clearly that Prophet Muhammad was not the father of any one of the men of Quraysh. (*al-Ahzab*: 40) This Quranic style indicates clearly that the legal ruling in this regard is decisive and conclusive.

Some people who are adversaries to the Quran may say: "Messenger Muhammad had sons—including Ibrahim, At-Tayyib and Al-Qasim— so how can the Quran state that he is not the father of any men?" We answer those people saying: They died while they were children; they did not even reach the age of puberty, and when Allah talks about this fact in the Quran, He *Glorified is He* states clearly that he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was not the father of any men. Even if we assume that children were men, the Quran does not say that he was not the father of his son; rather, it says that he

was not the father of your men (oh Quraysh). This consequently means that there is nothing wrong when we declare that Prophet Muhammad is the father of his sons, the father of Al-Qasim, the father of At-Tayyib and the father of Ibrahim. This issue was mischievously used to make a big issue by the opponents of Islam and the orientalist. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who adjusted that act of adoption practiced by Prophet Muhammad himself. As a matter of fact, this modification by Allah *the Almighty* is viewed as something which gives great honour to him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. If we ask about the One Who makes this reform of Prophet Muhammad, the answer will be "It is Allah *the Almighty*."

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...wives of your begotten sons...' indicates clearly that it is the wife of the begotten son who is not allowed for the father to marry. The saying of Allah, "*min aslabikum*" obviously indicates that there were sons who were not from the loins of their fathers, a point which means that the act of adoption was common before the advent of Islam and thus Allah *the Almighty* wanted to abolish it at the hands of Prophet Muhammad. In the same vein, it is important to know that Allah did not want Prophet Muhammad to be a mere conveyer of the ruling; rather, He *Glorified is He* wanted to give a practical example through him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* so that the ruling would be judged decisive and conclusive. Also, we must consider the fact that the act of adoption itself aimed at attributing a clever son to a man's family to give him all the rights his begotten sons were given as a sign of ennoblement.

That is why we must observe that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* acted in a human way in the light of the ultimate human justice. When Prophet Muhammad adopted Zayd, he did so in order to compensate him for his family because Zayd preferred him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* to his own father. As such, this act of adoption of Zayd by Prophet Muhammad was done in fulfilment of his human perfection and justice for a person who preferred him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* to his family. So, Allah's Modification to this Prophetic ruling was in fulfilment of the Divine Perfection and Justice. Thus, there will be no blame if Divine Perfection and Justice correct the human counterparts. That is why He *Glorified is He* revealed that verse in the Quran in which He orders Muslims to call their

adopted sons by their begotten fathers' names, stressing meanwhile that this is more equitable with Him *Glorified is He*. (*al-Ahzab*: 5)

The word "*aqsat*" (meaning "more equitable") must be discussed in the light of the two comparative adjectives "great" and "greater." As a matter of fact, the opposite of the comparative adjective must be derived from its stem. So, the comparative form of "great" is "greater" and so is the comparative form of "equitable" which is "more equitable." As such, we deduce that the act of adoption by Prophet Muhammad was equitable and just, but the modification made by Allah *the Almighty* is more equitable and just. Thus, we must be fully aware of the fact that there is a big difference between human perfection and justice and those divine ones. Undoubtedly, Allah *the Almighty* conferred His Favour upon that person whom He chose to judge according to the Divine Justice instead of the human one.

Orientalists tried to exploit this incident to accuse Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* of making a mistake. We say to them: You do not understand the matter properly because it is Allah *the Almighty* who corrected the matter for Prophet Muhammad. As well, He *Glorified is He* corrected that act practiced by him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* in the light of his human nature. Furthermore, when Allah declares that this act of asserting the relation of those adopted sons to their father is more equitable, can we draw a comparison between the human equity, justice and perfection and those of Allah *the Almighty*?

There is a lie that is promulgated by the adversaries of Islam and the so-called Muslims that Islam, Allah forbid, contains lies and fabrications. Since none of these people can adhere to the Divine Guidance, they believe that the only thing to save them is to declare that this religion is false and incorrect. They hold this position because if they say otherwise, this will imply their damnation. Thus, they lie to themselves and make fabrications hoping that they will be safe. Ironically, such people have no hope but that this religion must be based on fabrications!

Now, let us discuss this story that made orientalists rejoice: Prophet Muhammad's name is Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib. His grandfather 'Abd Al-Muttalib, had a daughter called 'Umaymah bint 'Abd Al-Muttalib and thus she is the sister of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib.

‘Umaymah gave birth to a female baby who was named Barrah. But Prophet Muhammad changed the name of the girl to be Zaynab because he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* hated that people may say afterwards: “Messenger Muhammad came out of the house of Barrah.” ⁽¹⁾ Barrah was the daughter of ‘Umaymah and thus she was the cousin of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We previously explained that Zayd ibn Haritha was abducted and sold as a slave. Zayd moved from the ownership of different people until he came under the ownership of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* who wanted, out of his human perfection, to honour Zayd and thus called him Zayd ibn Muhammad.

When Zayd ibn Haritha wanted to get married, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* married him to Barrah (later called Zainab) who—being the daughter of the leader of Quraysh—reluctantly accepted the marriage to Zayd, Prophet Muhammad’s slave. It should be taken into account that Messenger Muhammad did so because he wanted to achieve unity among the Muslim society in such a way that indicates no difference at all between a master and a slave. Accordingly, he married his female paternal cousin to Zayd. After the consummation of marriage, their marital life was extremely unhappy in a manner that paved the way for divine decree to be fulfilled.

By Allah, if she had fallen in love with him and they lived in harmony, would Allah, upon willing to decree His Rulings, do so at the expense of two sympathetic, loving hearts, and tear them apart? No. As such, the entire matter was preparing the Muslim society for the consequent Divine Rulings. She did not have any desire for him, and when a man realizes that his wife does not have interest in him, his dignity is immediately threatened, especially if he were the adopted son of Messenger Muhammad. Thus, Zaynab’s rejection of Zayd was not an easy matter for him and thus he went to complain to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. It is narrated that Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*: ‘I did not like being the consort of Barrah and I want to divorce her.’

(1) "Barrah" means "righteous" and this name is not bad in itself, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not like names that claim piety which no one can confirm. It is up to Allah to decide.

Allah *the Almighty* willing to totally abolish the act of adoption had predestined all that had happened between Zayd and Barrah. He *Glorified is He* did so because people in the pre-Islamic period used to prohibit men from getting married to the former wives of their adopted sons. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the story of Zayd and Barrah. In the chapter of *al-Ahzab*, He *Glorified is He* tells us that Prophet Muhammad told Zayd to keep his wife and to fear Allah even though he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was previously told by Allah that Zayd would divorce Barrah. (*al-Ahzab*: 37)

The Quranic style in the chapter *al-Ahzab* clearly and plainly indicates that Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* had a strong desire to divorce her. But the adversaries of Islam—and their proponents from among Muslims—mistakenly interpret the saying of Allah *the Almighty* to Prophet Muhammad: ‘... and you concealed in your soul what Allah would bring to light...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 37) They accuse him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* of falling in love with Zayd’s wife and therefore concealing the matter in his soul. We say to those people: You do not have a profound and deep understanding of the text, for you do not listen to reason. When Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran that He is going to bring to light what Prophet Muhammad concealed in his soul, justice entails that if you want to know what he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* concealed, you must consider what Allah *the Almighty* revealed later. Instead of propagating such lies and fabrications to satisfy the sickness of your soul, you were supposed, first and foremost, to know about the minute details of the story. He *Glorified is He* tells us that He is going to reveal what Prophet Muhammad concealed in his soul, so the question to be asked is “What did our Lord *the Almighty* expose and reveal?”

In truth, when our Lord reveals a matter, this is precisely what His messenger has hidden and concealed. Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* went to Prophet Muhammad and told him that he wanted to divorce Barrah, but Messenger Muhammad—as clearly shown in the Quran—told him to keep his wife with him and to fear Allah *the Almighty*. As a matter of fact, he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was told previously by Allah that He *Glorified is He* wanted Muhammad to marry Barrah, the wife of his adopted son, Zayd. He *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was fully aware of the fact that Allah wanted to totally abolish the act of adoption and to tell people that they are allowed to

marry the wives of their adopted sons. It goes without saying that when Prophet Muhammad applied this himself, this was a striking and perfect example.

But there are some people whose hearts are still full of disease. Undoubtedly, hypocrites fall under this aforementioned category. That is why Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* wanted this command to be included by Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran. If this command was just inspired by Allah to him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* they would have said: "This is the fabrication of Muhammad." For this reason, the Quran tells us clearly that he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* told Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* to keep his wife with him and to fear Allah; The Quran tells us clearly about the minute details of the story. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* did not say: "Our Lord inspired me" or "placed this in my consciousness"; no, this command was revealed plainly and obviously in the Quran. As I said previously, Allah *the Almighty* gave us minute and vivid details about this story in the chapter of *al-Ahzab*. He *Glorified is He* tells us that a believing man and a believing woman should have no choice in their matter when Allah and Messenger Muhammad decided a matter. He *the Almighty* then states clearly that whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger is far astray.

After that, He *Glorified is He* sheds light on the story of Zayd and Barrah. He tells us that Zayd went to Prophet Muhammad to tell him that he wanted to divorce Barrah, but he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* ordered him to keep her with him and to fear Allah. This particular verse of *Al-Ahzab* shows clearly the legal wisdom behind Prophet Muhammad's later marriage to Zayd's previous wife: He *Glorified is He* wanted to totally abolish this act of adoption through giving a striking example using Prophet Muhammad himself. As such, He *the Almighty* tells us that a man is not blamed if he gets married to the former wife of his adopted son. (*al-Ahzab*: 36-37)

These aforementioned two verses in the chapter of *al-Ahzab* also tell us that Allah *the Almighty* has conferred a favour upon Zayd by making him embrace Islam and so did Prophet Muhammad by adopting him. He *Glorified is He* advised Prophet Muhammad: You, Messenger Muhammad, should not fear that people would say, "Muhammad granted the divorce between the woman and Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* to marry her himself." It is as if the ultimate

goal of this marriage (Zayd's and Zaynab's marriage) was to make Muhammad's adopted son, Zayd, get married to Zaynab—previously called Barrah—whom Prophet Muhammad married later, thus abolishing the previous ban on marriage between a man and his adopted son's ex-wife. This is proven by the aforementioned verse of *al-Ahzab* in which Allah states clearly that when Zayd had decided to divorce Zaynab, He *Glorified is He* gave her to Prophet Muhammad as a wife. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who ordered Prophet Muhammad to get married to Zaynab, and that he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* did not do the act out of his own desires.

Accordingly, if you want to examine the issue, you are supposed to ask Allah *the Almighty* why He did so. When He *Glorified is He* states clearly in the Quran that Zayd's marriage to Zaynab was none but a mission to be conducted by both of them, this clearly indicates that the entire matter was pre-destined, and that the ultimate objective of this marriage was to allow men to get married to the previous wives of their adopted sons. Zayd, Prophet Muhammad's adopted son, got married to Zaynab even though she was reluctant to take part in that marriage. Thus, Zayd thought that his dignity had been destroyed and declared that he wanted to leave her. Afterwards, he went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* and said: "I want to divorce Barrah", whereupon he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* ordered him to keep her and to fear Allah, although Allah *the Almighty* had told him previously that he would marry Zaynab. In truth, what Allah *the Almighty* revealed is what He, *Glorified to He*, states clearly to His Messenger Muhammad: that Zayd was married to Zaynab only to conduct a mission commissioned of him by Allah *the Almighty*. As for Prophet Muhammad's role, he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was ordered by Allah to marry Zaynab.

Those who want to examine this topic to falsely and unjustly accuse Prophet Muhammad should ask Allah *the Almighty* why He decreed this order. He *Glorified is He* states clearly in the Quran that the ultimate objective behind Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab was that there should be no difficulty for the believers in respect of the previous wives of their adopted sons. It is clear now that the entire matter has mainly to do with abolishing the act of adoption and allowing men to get married to the former wives of their

adopted sons. Allah *the Almighty* clearly states that it is He Who would reveal to us what Prophet Muhammad concealed in his soul. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* tells us all that the ultimate objective of this matter is predestined in accordance with the Divine justice and perfection; That is, men shall not be prohibited from getting married to the former wives of their adopted sons, those who are not from the loins of their so-called fathers.

It is taken for granted that whenever our Lord wills a particular matter, He *Glorified is He* does it. You have believed in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a Messenger, and if you denied his Message, your denial would be more sinful than just criticizing his demeanour. Why then do you propagate lies and fabrications against him *peace and blessings be upon him*? In reality, your denial of Muhammad's Prophet-hood is even severer than criticizing his marriage to the former wife of his adopted son. But, if you believe that he is a Messenger of Allah, then you must know for sure that he is delivering the Message revealed to him from Allah.

Thus, the actions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* who delivered you the Message of Allah represent the main criteria by means of which the soundness of your actions and deeds are judged. So, do you dare to say to such a Prophet, "We are going to weigh your deeds and actions according to the criteria we established"? It is inappropriate for anyone to do so. In fact, if one said so, s/he would be judged as committing the mistake of subjecting that which is perfect to that which is relative and imperfect. The basic assumption about Prophet Muhammad is that all his actions and deeds are perfect. Thus, you should not create a criterion for perfection on your own and then weigh the actions and deeds of him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* according to this imperfect criterion. In doing so, you would be setting the yardstick of perfection on your own and then weighing the demeanour of Messenger Muhammad according to it, a matter which clearly indicates self-contradiction since you have believed in him as a Prophet.

He *Glorified is He* then moves to lay down a general ruling: He *the Almighty* states clearly that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was not the father of any men of Quraysh; rather, he is the seal of all Prophets and Messengers. (*al-Ahzab*: 40) But how should one understand the fact that

Muhammad was not the father of any man? We should interpret it to mean that he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* is your father. That is true; he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* is not the father of a particular one, but all of you. The proof of this is that his wives are your mothers and you are absolutely forbidden to marry them. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad is the father of all of you. Accordingly, we must pay full attention to the accuracy and precision of the expression when He *the Almighty* states that He *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* is not the father of any particular one because reality tells us that he is the father of all of you. That is why he would never pick one of you and say: "This is my son." He did not do so because he is the father of all of you; all the believers are his sons, a point which is conclusively proved by the fact that his wives are the mothers of the believers. But it is at that point that someone may object and say: "Muhammad had sons."

We respond to that person and say: His children did not reach the age of puberty. Even if we assumed that they would reach this age in the future, this clearly means that they were his men and not yours. Bearing the Message and being the seal of all Prophets and Messengers gives Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* an honour that surpasses being a father. In reality, Allah *the Almighty* revealed this story in the Quran, to urge Zayd not to be sad because Prophet Muhammad had honoured him by attributing him to himself, to the extent that people used to call him Zayd ibn Muhammad. Yet, what gives you greater honour is that you believed in him *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. As such, the greatness of Muhammad stems from the fact that he was the Messenger of Allah.

For this reason, we previously stated that the idea of being a blood or biological father is meaningless in the sight of Prophets. That is why we find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* stating clearly and plainly that "Salman Al-Farisi is from his family."⁽¹⁾ Based on its style and its rhetorical structure, when Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that Muhammad is not the father of any particular one of you men, this plainly means that he *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* is a father to all of you, Oh Muslims.

(1) *At-Tabarani, Classified as "Weak"*

Therefore, none of you should try to solely single himself out with the honour of being the son of Messenger Muhammad.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse by stating that Muhammad is His Messenger and the Seal of all Prophets, stressing meanwhile that He *Glorified is He* is All Knowing of everything. (*al-Ahzab*: 40) As such, Zayd was called once again under the name of his biological father, so Zayd ibn Haritha. It is like Allah was saying to Zayd: "If you believe in him as a Messenger, then this fact shall make up for the annulment of his adoption to you because you also fall under the blessing of Messenger Muhammad's fatherhood to all the believers." As a matter of fact, if we reflect more carefully upon this Quranic verse, we will realize that Allah *the Almighty* comforts and compensates Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* as well. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell Zayd: "Though you have publicly lost the name Zayd ibn Muhammad—which was a source honour for you—you should bear in mind that you are the only one among the companions of Messenger Muhammad whose personal name is explicitly mentioned in the Quran; this is a better honour for you. The name "Zayd" has become part of the Quran that is recited and remembered day and night. In addition, people worship Allah *the Almighty* using the recitation of the Quran. Moreover, those believers who recite the Quran are ennobled and given high ranks by Him *Glorified is He*. Accordingly, He *the Almighty* has compensated you, Zayd."

If we assume that Zayd was still called "son of Muhammad," what would happen then? We will only read about it in the biographies of Prophet Muhammad, but Zayd's honour has been elevated, evidenced by the fact that we read his name in the miraculous Book of Allah whose recitation is an act of worship and which Allah *the Almighty* has promised to preserve. As such, Allah *the Almighty* has guaranteed the name "Zayd" will be preserved until The Day of Judgment. Which one of the two names then takes priority: calling him Zayd ibn Muhammad throughout his life or mentioning his name in the Quran for all time? It goes without saying that mentioning his name in the Quran undoubtedly takes priority.

Back to the chapter of *an-Nisa'*; the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...wives of your begotten sons...' indicates that you are permitted to marry the former

wives of your adopted sons that you used to prohibit in the pre-Islamic period. Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...two sisters simultaneously...’ Forbidding having two sisters as wives at the same time is decreed because they have familial ties that bind them and which in turn require that affection, mercy and harmony should exist among them. But, were they married to the same man, animosity may flare up. That is why He *the Almighty* declares that it is forbidden to take two sisters as wives at the same time. Yet, scholars differed concerning how to understand the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... you must not have two sisters as wives at the same time...’ and the saying of Allah ‘...other women are lawful to you...’ We must first state that she-slaves do not have the right to ask their masters to have sexual intercourse with them. Thus, the master is not obliged to his slave woman or women who are mothers to his children.

At this point, it is of great importance to mention that Imam ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* and ‘Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* had two different positions concerning this issue of having two slave girls under one’s ownership: is one allowed to have sex with them both or just with one of them only? When ‘Uthman was asked about this issue, he answered: ‘I would neither command nor forbid you to do so because one verse had admitted this, while another forbade it.’ Thus, ‘Uthman abstained from giving his opinion. Imam ‘Ali forbade having intercourse with the two sisters that are possessed by one master. As for possessing without having intercourse, it is lawful. This is actually the opinion viewed the most authentic by the majority of scholars. There is no consideration for any contradictory opinions.

He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: ‘... except for what is past: Allah is most forgiving and merciful.’ This means that if such a practice took place before Allah *the Almighty* decrees His Ruling, He *Glorified is He* will not—out of His Mercy and Compassion—hold us guilty or accountable for committing it by a retroactive application of the law. Nothing is condemned except with a clear text and there is no punishment without condemnation and conviction. Since the ruling was not revealed before that point, it would be then applied starting from that point onwards. It has thus become clear that it is forbidden for anyone to marry two sisters at once or to have sexual intercourse with both of them when they are under his ownership. One must not also have

two sisters at the same time even if one of them is his wife, while the other is a possession of his right hand. He *Glorified is He* then says:

وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأُحِلَّ
لَكُمْ مَا وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا بِأَمْوَالِكُمْ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفِحِينَ فَمَا
أَسْتَمْتَعْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْهُنَّ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِيمَا
تَرَاضَيْتُمْ بِهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْفَرِيضَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٢٤﴾

women already married, other than your slaves. God has ordained all this for you. Other women are lawful to you, so long as you seek them in marriage, with gifts from your property, looking for wedlock rather than fornication. If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift – this is obligatory – though if you should choose mutually, after fulfilling this obligation, to do otherwise [with the bride-gift], you will not be blamed: God is All Knowing and all-wise [24]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 24)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘and [forbidden to you are] all married women...’ is in conjunction with the prohibitions mentioned in the aforementioned verse. This means that He *Glorified is He* will add married women to the previous list of women that one is forbidden to marry. But why are married women described as *muhsanat* (meaning “chaste and pure”)? The etymological root of derivation often leads to a common meaning between the original sense of the word and the way it may be otherwise used in a specific context. The Arabic word “*muhsanat*” is derived from the word “*hisn*,” or “fortification” which means the place wherein people take refuge to defend and protect themselves against their enemies. Thus, if they protect themselves by staying in the fortification, they will be safe from their enemies or else, they will be prone to their attacks and raids. This is the exact and precise meaning of the word “*Al-hisn*.” There are a lot of derivations deduced from this root. For example, He *Glorified is He* describes Maryam (Mary) as the one who had guarded her chastity.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 12) This means clearly that she *peace be upon her* protected herself from being approached by any man.

As for the word “*Al-muhsinat*” (meaning “chaste women”) in this particular verse under discussion, it refers to “married women.” So, if a woman is married, this means that she is not eligible for any other man and thus no man but her husband is allowed to take her in marriage. In other words, she is no way allowed to agree to another marriage contract with any other man so long as her contract is still valid. Thus, the meaning of “*al-muhsinat min an-nisa*” refers to those women who secure their chastity through marriage.

In the following verse, Allah *the Almighty* ‘talks about the legal punishment prescribed for the slave women who committed fornication.’ (*an-Nisa*: 25) So, the question to be asked here is: “If the slave women protect and guard their chastity through marriage, would this imply that they are to be considered equal with the free married women?” The answer is no; there is a big difference between the two cases. Undoubtedly, slave women who protect their chastity are not included among the free married women who guard their chastity through marriage, for if they are included among them, the ruling thereby should be the same for both of them. Yet, He *Glorified is He* states clearly that the legal punishment prescribed for them is half the penalty prepared for the free married women.

Free women are originally described with chastity, for they never allow anybody to approach them. At this point, we may quote the saying of Abu Sufyan’s wife who, while hearing Prophet Muhammad ordering women not to commit fornication, wondered, “Is it even possible that a free woman could commit adultery?” It is as if adultery is a disgrace that can only be committed by slave women because they do not have dignity and do not have either a father or a mother or even honour. Therefore, anyone may have the audacity to approach a slave woman because she has neither dignity nor a family to protect her. For this reason, her legal penalty is half that of a free woman because slave women may be highly vulnerable to the seduction of a lot of people who want to commit fornication with them due to the fact they have none to protect them.

Thus, *ihsan* is used to refer to chastity and to free women. As well, it may be used to refer to married women. Free women are furthermore called “*Al-muhsanat*.” In general, a free woman often has a family that protects her and dissuades

anyone from having the audacity to illegitimately assault or offend her chastity and honour. But, if we assume that there is a married woman whose people fought against Muslims and then she was taken as a captive by Muslims, this woman is no longer able to be a *muhsinah* for she has become a she-slave. Accordingly, the fact that a woman is possessed by the right hand of a man supersedes and takes precedence over the fact that she was once married. A Muslim is thus allowed to marry her and enjoy her if he possessed her even if she was once married. This is because there is a difference between the two settings and contexts; she is now in the land of Islam coming out of the land of the war and thus becomes eligible for being rightfully possessed by any Muslim. Yet, there must be no sexual intercourse with her except after assuring that her womb is empty of any embryo that may have been begotten by any of her people. This ruling is deduced from the Saying of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* concerning those women from the tribe of *Awtas* who were taken as captives by the Muslim army: 'There must be no intercourse with a pregnant woman until she gives birth to her child or with the one who is not pregnant until she has had one menstrual period.'⁽¹⁾ As a matter of fact, this legal ruling honours and ennobles the female captives because it allows them to enjoy their masters sexually and emotionally after being separated from their husbands. In addition, they will be under the protection of their master and thus be safe from the audacity of people.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Allah has ordained all of this for you...' means that He *Glorified is He* has enacted this ruling upon you and has documented it in His Book; it is thus a documented command. It is of great importance to know that if you adhere firmly to this ruling, you will gain considerable benefit. He *Glorified is He* then says: '... Other women are lawful to you...' This means that the main causes behind prohibiting man from getting married to certain women include blood ties, breast-feeding and binding marriage. It also means that it is lawful and admissible for you to marry them, a point which is definitively proven by the fact that He *the Almighty* follows this aforementioned part of the verse with His Saying '... if you seek them in marriage...'

(1) [Abu Dawud, *Sahih*].

It is taken for granted that money is the fruit of one's labour and thus one must exert great efforts to acquire it. That is why nearly all people passionately like money, to the extent that they may sacrifice their souls for protecting it. Even if you inherited this wealth, this means that the person you inherited from had formerly exerted considerable efforts to possess this wealth. We previously explained that if someone labours for a period time estimated, for example, to be ten years, Allah *the Almighty* may provide him with a great wealth which will enable him to live comfortably for the rest of his life; Similarly, He *Glorified is He* may provide that man who labours for twenty years with a considerable wealth that enables him and his children to live comfortably for the rest of their lives; And in case there is someone who labours for thirty years, Allah *Glorified is He* may thus provide him with such considerable wealth that enables him, his children and even his grandchildren to live comfortably for the rest of their lives. Thus, all the inherited fortunes you may see are the result of the labour and toil of the parents.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...so long as you seek them in marriage, with gifts from your property...' means clearly that man is the one who is particularly entitled to pay the dowry of marriage. This is proven by the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* in which he says: 'Oh young men, you should get married, for it is more effective in lowering the gaze and protecting one's chastity. Whoever cannot afford it should fast, for it will be a restraint (*wija'*) for him.'⁽¹⁾

If one's possessions are dear to him—being obtained through labouring, toiling, and sweating—he ought to spend them only on what accrues to him immediate good. As well, he should consider what will bring him good in the future. In truth, if he obtains an immediate good while being oblivious to a delayed or future evil, he has not then used the money properly. He *Glorified is He* then says: '... so long as you seek them in marriage, with gifts from your property, looking for wedlock....' We previously explained that the word "*muhsinin*" indicates various meanings: it may refer to those people who refrain themselves from offending and infringing upon the honours of the people, for example. The saying of Allah, '...with gifts from your property...' means that

(1) *An-Nasa'i, Sahih.*

people should invest the possessions they earned through hard labour in what will accrue to them immediate and future benefit. Thus, you must not exploit your wealth to offend and destroy the honour of people.

A man may possibly desire to have unlawful sex with a woman by offering her some of his possessions and thus he does not guard his chastity and purification. We say to this person: You have elicited an impermanent, worldly gratification, but you were oblivious to a future evil. This forbidden relation is described by Allah *the Almighty* as *sifah* (meaning “fornication”). Thus, be careful not to unlawfully satisfy your sexual desire.

As mentioned before, the word “*muhsinin*” means “adhering firmly to chastity.” In this particular verse, He *the Almighty* explains the meaning of this word (*muhsinin*) through the meaning of its opposite—*musafihin* (meaning “fornicators”), which is derived from *as-safh* which gives the meaning of pouring water down forcefully. In fact, water may fall drop-by-drop, but this is not the meaning of *as-safh*. For this reason, the foot of the mountain is called *as-safh* because water falls from all parts of the mountain as if it were poured.

At this point, we can extract a wonderful subtle observation: Allah *the Almighty* describes chaste men as “*muhsinin*” using the Arabic diacritic mark “*kasrah*” (or the lower accent) under the letter “*sad*” (Arabic letter for the “S” sound), but while describing chaste women, He *Glorified is He* says “*muhsanat*” using the diacritic mark “*fathah*” (or the higher accent) above the letter “*Sad*”, so what is the wisdom of that? The wisdom is clear in the fact that the original case is that men are the ones who seek after women and not vice versa. The word *istimta'* (enjoying) in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift...’ means gratifying the self. As a matter of fact, enjoyment starts with the period of engagement. Once a man gets engaged to a woman, this implies enjoyment and so is the case when they conclude the marriage contract and consummate the marriage. All of these are undoubtedly stages of enjoyment and rejoicing. Yet, it is very important here to point out that enjoyment is not the only purpose of marriage. Allah orders you to give her the dowry as long as you enjoyed her. But in case you divorced her before the consummation of the marriage, you are supposed to pay her half the dowry, for you have enjoyed her for a while: the period of

engagement. This clearly indicates that the matter of enjoyment is not totally restricted to sex, for it were so, he would not have been asked to pay her anything of the dowry. As such, it becomes clear that the matter of enjoyment stems mainly from proposing to the daughter of such-and-such a man, going through the engagement period, and then concluding the marriage contract; all of these are unquestionably preludes to the greater enjoyment of consummating the marriage.

Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* wants us to build our families on the basis of purification and on securing one's psychological faculties. In truth, man finds no fear at all when he closes his door for the sake of having intercourse with his wife, a matter that is totally different from the case when he is with an unmarried woman. It is in such a latter case that his psychological faculties will start to conflict with each other; he will fear the exposition of his sin and he will be in a terrible state of fear and trepidation, but why? That is because his psychological faculties are not in harmony with each other because by doing so, he is only gratifying one particular desire, while all of his faculties are in a terrible state of fear. This plainly indicates that what he is doing is unnatural and that is why his psychological faculties oppose it. As such, it becomes clear that Allah *the Almighty* wants the family to be built on purity and security. It is this psychological security that gives the soul all its power and enjoyment.

We have explained before that if one had a girl and discovered that a young man was passing frequently by the house to sneak glances at the balcony hoping that he may see the girl, how would this father act in case he discovered the matter? It goes without saying that he would be extremely angry. But, if the young man came with his father and knocked on his door and said: "I would like to get engaged to your daughter", and his father said "I would like to have your daughter as a wife to my son", what would be the stance of the father of the girl at that point? He would definitely be delighted and happy. He would be content with the matter, and the marriage ceremony would be held after that to publicly announce the fulfilment of marriage. The reason for this great happiness is that Allah the One Who created the two spouses, the male, and the female—prepared human psyches to be content with gathering with each other. For this reason, Arabs used to say: "The lawful [pursuit] has cut

off the nose of jealousy.” This means that even though the father previously showed jealousy about his daughter, he is now the one who sends out the invitations to her wedding himself. This clearly indicates that jealousy implies zeal and fervour. Thus, if one adopts a wrong methodology in fulfilling his desire, the soul must be in a state of terrible anger, but when he does so in a legitimate way, the soul is content with the act. As a matter of fact, one finds difficulty in understanding how the soul addresses both of the two cases, but the question to be asked here is “Who caused the soul to be content and Who caused it to feel angry?” Undoubtedly, it is Allah *the Almighty* who does so.

A person must consider that he is composed of several powers and faculties. So, how do the marriage contract, the approval of marriage, and the presence of witnesses make the soul feel happiness and delight? It is the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. This is a well-known matter. When you meet a new friend of yours, it is enough to say to him: “peace be upon you.” But the case is totally different when it is your intimate and long-life friend who will not suffice with just verbal greetings and thus wants you to shake hands with him. Thus, affection and loyalty make chemical changes in the human soul. Repulsion, on the other hand, occurs as a result of committing what Allah has forbidden. Adhering to the Way of Allah thus causes affection and loyalty among people. When the poet addressed the one whom he loves, he said:

I would sacrifice my dad for the one I love but from whom I was separated
 But Allah then decreed a reunion of us
 I have desired him so that when we were united
 His shaking hands with mine was like bidding adieu to me

This means that the poet wants to elongate the period and time of greeting so that he could give and receive deep affection from his beloved friend. He, in other words, is saying: “I met with the one I love and so he dissolved in me and I dissolved in him.” This emanates from the combination of the two souls. As such, emotions serve as a means to achieving unity among people who follow the Way of Allah; otherwise, they will serve as a means to stirring up hatred. But the question to be asked here is, “What causes the soul to act as such?” It is the Bounty of Allah *the Almighty* Who created both man and woman. Thus, when the union takes place in accordance with the laws decreed by Allah,

one should not exclude the possibility that the Creator *Glorified is He* would harmonize the constituent atoms of the two souls to mix with each other and thus loyalty and honesty shall naturally come into existence. But if the union between the male and the female does not happen according to the *Sharia* of Allah, there will be no harmony. This would thus imply a negative impact.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* wants the Muslim families to be built upon this basis of purification, mercy, and affection. You know for certain that unlawful unions take place in secrecy and its fruit or yield is often disowned and repudiated. Thus, if pregnancy takes place, the baby will likely be thrown out into the streets and so becomes a foundling child, or they may even kill him. But as for that fruit produced from lawful unions, it elates and delights everyone.

The Saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘... Other women are lawful to you, so long as you seek them in marriage, with gifts from your property, looking for wedlock rather than fornication. If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift...’ indicates that “enjoyment” involves a lot of things. The Shiites, on the other hand, use the saying of Allah, ‘...If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift...’ to declare the permissibility of *Nikah Al-Mut‘ah* (or “temporary marriage”). They opine that this verse refers clearly to that kind of marriage because Allah *the Almighty* orders us to give women their *ajr* (meaning “dowry”) in return for enjoying them. Answering them, we say that “*ajr*” is an Arabic word which is used in the context of true marriage, a point which is proven by the story of Moses *peace be upon him* when Prophet Shu‘aib *peace be upon him* asked Moses to work for him for eight years in fulfilment of the dowry Moses should pay to his daughter. (*al-Qasas*: 27) Also, this particular word—*ajr*—has been used in the following verse in reference to dowry. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... so marry them with their people’s consent and their proper bride-gift...’ (*an-Nisa*’: 25) so, we shall ask them—the Shiites— “Why do you interpret this verse as such?” If they say, “This kind of marriage was taking place during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad,” we will say to them, “Yes, we agree on that point, but what are the reasons that led to its occurrence?” It is the true that this temporary marriage was happening during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad, and that was for a great wisdom, but what should be the case after the legislator

peace and blessings of Allah be upon him totally abolished it before his death? It goes without saying that this ruling has thus been invalidated and nullified. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* allowed this kind of marriage for a short period of time and in exactly one of the battles. Some people went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* out of their true belief, and said: "O Messenger Muhammad! Should we emasculate ourselves?" If *Jihad* required staying away from their wives, why should they not emasculate themselves so that they would no longer have desire for women? Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* thus allowed them this kind of marriage, but he abolished it totally later on. This is because 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said concerning this kind of marriage: "If anyone marries a woman for a defined period of time, I will stone him." The status of 'Umar is known to all Muslims. His suggestions were in conformity with the Quran.

As such, it becomes clear now that this kind of marriage has been totally abolished, a point of view which is supported by Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him*. But, the Shiites quote the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas in this regard and say that he once allowed this kind of marriage. Yes, it is true that Ibn 'Abbas held this position for a while, but he later admitted that he was wrong. We know that the Companions of Messenger Muhammad did not receive knowledge in classes; rather, they used to go to Messenger Muhammad to learn from him after finishing their work. Thus, some heard certain things that others did not. This is actually the main reason why some may narrate a saying of the Prophet, while others do not. Consequently, Ibn 'Abbas admitted that he knew about the permissibility of the temporary marriage and that he did not hear about the news of its annulment except at the end of his life.

Thus, the opinion of the Shiites on the permissibility of temporary marriage is based on a wrong deduction. Therefore, we shall understand the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift—this is obligatory...' in the light of His saying in the following verse, '... so marry them with their people's consent and their proper bride-gifts...' That is because there is a difference between a normal price and *al-ajr* (meaning "compensation"): A price is paid for a specific object

but the compensation is paid for the benefit procured from an object. A man does not own or possess a woman by paying her the dowry; rather, he is entitled to enjoy her and thus it is acceptable to refer to the dowry with the word "*ajr*." The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... If you wish to enjoy women through marriage, give them their bride-gift—this is obligatory...' indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who enacted this due dowry. He *Glorified is He* then leaves the door open to favour and says: '... though if you should choose mutually, after fulfilling this obligation, to do otherwise [with the bride-gift], you will not be blamed...' This means that there is a big difference between what is legally due and what is done out of favour and grace; even though a man is obliged to pay the dowry to his wife, she, upon being content, may accept to give it up for him. In the same vein, favour also entails that the husband, out of love, may increase the dowry of his wife. This is truly what is profoundly understood from the Order of Allah *the Almighty* to the married couple not to forget the grace towards each other. Thus, there shall be no reproach or blame for anything that is voluntarily and mutually agreed upon by both spouses if it is done lawfully. As a matter of fact, the phrase '... if you should choose mutually to do otherwise...' is implied in His Saying '... though if they are happy to give up some of it for you, you may enjoy it with a clear conscience.' (*an-Nisa*: 4)

In our modern age, we find that women use the dowry they take from their husbands to furnish their houses. This happens in spite of the fact that a man is the one who is mainly responsible for furnishing the house, while the dowry should all be left to the woman. But it is cooperation that brings about sympathy and solidarity.

He *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...Indeed, Allah is All knowing, All-Wise.' Thus, all the Rulings decreed by Him *the Almighty* are based on the fact that He *Glorified is He* is All-knowledgeable about what is best for His creation; He is never oblivious to anything and thus everything is predestined by Him *Glorified is He* by due measure. The delaying of the ruling or legislation means that the lawgiver was not fully aware of some relevant particulars at the time of legislation and thus he is obliged to issue new laws upon discovering the defection of the ones he previously enacted.

As to those who believe that Divine Legislation does not satisfy the needs of humans, we say: "Who will then issue such laws that satisfy these needs? Will you thinkers modify the Legislation enacted by Allah *the Almighty*? Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* exposes your deficiency; you come up with all these Rulings and edicts which later on reveal their defects and mistakes. You thus find yourselves compelled to amend them. But, Allah *the Almighty* is All Knowing and All-Wise." Thus, if He chooses to delay the enactment of a certain ruling, He does so because His Wisdom decrees that.

A good illustration of this point is the prohibition of drinking wine. He *the Almighty* did not prohibit the drinking of wine all at once; rather, He did so gradually, because this bad thing that is done by habit and custom must be addressed patiently. Accordingly, the ruling of the prohibition of drinking wine had to be enacted in several stages each of which paved the way for the forthcoming one. The matter would be so difficult if the ruling was decreed all at once because giving up a habit immediately and not gradually is often difficult and onerous, especially if it was a daily habit which was practiced day and night. This is proven by the fact that when a person who is addicted to wine does not consume it for a particular period of time, he feels annoyed and disturbed and thus rushes to drink a glass of wine. Accordingly, the first stage in the prohibition process required that He *Glorified is He* should disrupt this habit. If it is a deeply entrenched habit in the soul of the person, he will not be able to give it up all at once. Thus, the first stage of prohibition took the form of a piece of advice: He *Glorified is He* ordered them, in the very beginning, not to attempt to pray while they were in a state of drunkenness. (*an-Nisa'*: 43) As such, He *the Almighty* prevented them from drinking it during five windows of time each day—the time during the five daily prayers. He thus accustomed them to be able to give up drinking wine only for particular periods of time in the beginning. Thus, with time, they were accustomed to give it up the whole day. Then, He *Glorified is He* moves to the second stage of prohibition: He states clearly that both wine and games of chance (gambling) include both little benefit and great evil. (*al-Baqara*: 219)

But those who are fools often tend to continue in committing sins. The aforementioned saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Baqara* indicates

clearly that the evil acquired from both of these two acts—drinking wine and playing games of chance—is greater than the benefit to be obtained from them. He *the Almighty* then declares the total prohibition of these evil and bad acts. In truth, it is the Wisdom of Allah *the Almighty* that decrees that this prohibition should be carried out gradually, a point which is definitively proven by Him *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in which He clearly states that whenever He abrogates a verse, He, out of His Ultimate and Unchangeable Power, brings another one which is better or even similar to it. (*al-Baqara*: 106)

Allah *the Almighty* is All Knowing of everything to the extent that nothing could be concealed from Him. He knows that a woman may love her husband to the extent that she no longer cares about such *ajr* (or compensation) or a man may love his wife to the effect that money becomes of no value to him. Because He *the Almighty* is All-Wise, He may predestine the course of events to proceed based on the grace of the people involved and not on the inevitability of what He *the Almighty* imposed. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَنْ لَمْ يَسْتَطِعْ مِنْكُمْ طَوْلًا أَنْ يَنْكِحَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ فَمِنْ مَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ
مِنْ فَنِيَتِكُمْ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِإِيمَانِكُمْ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَانكِحُوهُنَّ بِإِذْنِ أَهْلِهِنَّ
وَأَتَوْهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ مُحْصَنَاتٍ غَيْرَ مُسَفِّحَتٍ وَلَا مُتَّخِذَاتِ أَخْدَانٍ ۚ فَإِذَا
أُحْصِنَ فَإِنَّ أَتَيْتَ بِفَحْشَةٍ فَعَلَيْهِنَّ نِصْفُ مَا عَلَى الْمُحْصَنَاتِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ ۚ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ
خَشِيَ الْعَنَتَ مِنْكُمْ ۚ وَأَنْ تَصْبِرُوا خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٥﴾

If any of you does not have the means to marry a believing free woman, then marry a believing slave – God knows best [the depth of] your faith: you are [all] part of the same family – so marry them with their people’s consent and their proper bride-gifts. [Make them] married women, not adulteresses or lovers. If they commit adultery when they are married, their punishment will be half that of free women. This is for those of you who fear that you will sin; it is better for you to practice self-restraint. God is most forgiving and merciful [25]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 25)

The word “*istita‘ah*” (meaning “ability”) means that you are capable of doing a particular thing which you claim you are in a position to do, and that

this thing would not be resistant to whatever you want to do with it. If one holds a piece of iron and bends it, it would be under his control. The story of the two sons of Adam offers a striking example for that point. Both offered a sacrifice to Allah, but He *the Almighty* accepted it from one of them and rejected the sacrifice of the other. The son whose sacrifice was rejected told his brother that he would kill him, whereupon the latter told him that Allah accepted only the sacrifice of those who are pious. The soul of the sinful son then prompted him to kill his brother and thus he became one of the losers. (*al-Ma'ida*: 27-30)

What does the phrase "*taw'at lahu*" (meaning "prompted him") mean? It means that his soul made him capable of killing his brother. Upon reflecting more carefully upon this phrase, we will find that it contains a pronoun which refers to killing his brother himself, a point which means that a man has multiple powers and faculties, and one of these faculties may entice him to kill, while his conscience orders him not to do so. Yet, his soul incites him to evil and tells him to kill; thus, he becomes in a state of total confusion.

As well, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '... his soul prompted him...' clearly indicates that his inner self did not want to submit to his own will. But his soul that incites him to evil encouraged him to kill his brother. After he had satisfied his desire by killing by his brother, he lamented and regretted his deed. This regret was then explicitly expressed in his own discourse recorded in the Quran: Allah tells us that he felt bitter regret for being unable to conceal the nakedness of his brother. (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

He killed his brother and fulfilled his wish, so why did he regret his deed? The reason is that the good powers and faculties always encourage and foster one to do the good and dissuade one from doing evil. One may start his life with doing evil, but if his good powers are predominant, he may change and his evil tendency may be mitigated. However, if his evil powers are predominant, he may start his life with doing little evil and then this evil will aggravate. He may thus say to himself, "That person did such-and-such to me and I want to avenge myself by slapping him on the face!" Afterwards, his evil may be further escalated and so he may say to himself, "I will beat him." But, if a good person undergoes such a situation, he will say to himself, "This person has conspired against me; I do not want to shoot, slap or even rebuke

him.” Thus, instead of considering the more-evil choice, he starts considering the one that is less evil.

The story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* illustrates this point fully for us. His brothers, in the very beginning, planned to kill him or to cast him out to another land, but then they moved to another a lower level of evil that is, throwing him *peace be upon him* into the bottom of a well. (*Yusuf*: 8-10) They, the brothers of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) were from the tribes of Israel and were the sons of Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob). They thus wanted to find a way to mitigate their evil intention so that they would not kill Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*. That is why they thought of another less-harmful means to get rid of him: they thus decided to cast him out to another land. They even thought of another means which was of more less evil: they thus decided to throw him into the bottom of a well.

Thus, His saying ‘... not being in the position...’ refers to that one who is not capable of subjugating a particular thing to him for meeting his needs. This is actually the true meaning of the word “*at-tawl*.” So, the phrase “*talathu yadahu*” means that he became able to do that particular act. Also, when the Arabs say that someone “*tafaddal ‘ala*” it means that he conferred a favour upon another. Furthermore, when they say that someone “*tatawal ‘alayya*”, this means that he insulted someone and abused him; all of these meanings come from the root “*at-tawl*.” As such, in this context, the word “*al-tawl*” means “being capable of marrying the one you like.” Accordingly, it here means that you do not have enough money to marry the one you like. But there is another possible way for you through which you can fulfil your desire of getting married. There is no need to marry a free woman if her dowry is too high for you; you can marry instead a slave woman or maiden from among the captives you have because their livelihood and expenses are relatively light. Furthermore, they do not have a family who will dispute with you about the dowry. He *Glorified is He* thus says: ‘And as for those of you who, owing to circumstances, are not in a position to marry free believing women, [let them marry] believing maidens from among those whom you rightfully possess.’ We deduce from this verse that marrying the ones rightfully possessed is possible for the one who does not own her because her master does not need to marry her; he may enjoy her without marriage since she is a rightful possession of his hand.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* allowed Muslims to marry a woman that is rightfully possessed by someone else, provided that he gets the permission of her master. That is because by getting married, she will take away a portion of the time and service she devotes to her master and that is why the master should be asked for permission so that her dedication to the service of her husband may be known to him, her master. He *the Almighty* also decreed that we should not look down on a slave-maiden because she is possessed and humiliated and so refuse to pay her the dowry to which she is entitled. Slave-maidens should be paid the dowry due to them in an equitable manner based on the custom of the society they live in. That is because the dowry is paid as a compensation for consummating the marriage. But since He *Glorified is He* orders us to ask their masters for permission and to pay them their due dowries, a problem may arise: the one who is possessed does not possess anything at all since the slave and what he possesses is a possession of his master.

To the person who may be concerned about this problem, we say: "Yes, this is true. But if you say that a slave and whatever she possesses is a possession of her master, she should firstly own a possession so that this possession becomes then possessed by her master. So, if you trespassed her and gave the money to her master, then you would not be giving her the due dowry in the first place." The statement "the slave and whatever his hands possess" implies that you should give her a chance to be an owner and possessor by honouring her and giving her the dowry due to her. Thus, the fact that her other money is possessed by her master is a different issue. Afterwards, you may then go and marry her; this is permitted. But could we infer from this that if you are financially capable, you should not marry maidens or slave women? The answer is "No." Does this belittle maidens? The answer is also "No." But why should you not? We should consider the deep and profound wisdoms that are only done by our Lord. Allah *the Almighty* wants to abolish slavery. As a matter of fact, when one marries a maiden possessed by someone else, her children will also be slaves. It is important to know that children shall follow the pure religion adopted by the better one among their parents; however, concerning freedom and slavery, they follow their mothers. Thus, if someone marries a slave woman of someone else, the children she may bear for him will also be slaves. But if he leaves her to her master and marries a free woman, the child

she will bear from her master will be free. As such, He *the Almighty* wants to totally abolish slavery. This is an aspect of the wisdom intended here.

The other aspect is crystal clear in the fact that marriage is the union of the male and the female to establish the nucleus of a family. Thus, if the husband and wife are of equal status, the husband will not feel any superiority over his wife and the wife will not feel any superiority in dealing with her husband since they are equivalent to each other. Such equality undoubtedly guarantees that their life and association with each other will be balanced and steady. As a matter of fact, when one marries a slave-maiden who does not have a family, he may exploit her weakness and deal with her with superiority. He may also humiliate her and disgrace her for being a slave. Further, if she bears children, people may abuse them by telling them that they have no maternal uncle whatsoever. The Legislator wants to build a balanced family life. For this reason, he stipulated equivalence in social status among the spouses as a condition for the soundness of marriage.

In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that corrupt and immoral men shall only get married to corrupt and the immoral women, while good and pious men shall only get married to good and pious women. (*an-Nur*: 26) When some people see a good woman, they think that she must be married to a good man. To these people, we say: "This is a law enacted by Allah and the law is an assignment and so it is subject to being obeyed or disobeyed. When Allah *the Almighty* decrees that good women are for good men and that corrupt women are for corrupt men, this means that if you apply the ruling, the matters will be upright and correct." This fully truthfully answers those who say, "Since our Lord decreed that law—that good women are for good men and corrupt women are for corrupt men—how is it possible that one of the two already married couple is good, while the other is bad?" We say that the ruling is not about a case of a universal fact; rather, it is a legal case we are required to obey by marrying good men to good women and bad men to bad women so that balance may be achieved. In the case of bad men and women, they may exchange insults often. Therefore, it is [advisable] he does not insult her so that she does not insult back. The good couple, however, are lenient and tolerant with each other.

‘And as for those of you who, owing to circumstances, are not in a position to marry chaste, free believing women.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 25)

The word *muhsanat* is translated as ‘free [married woman], who cannot marry another person. They may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess.’ The word *girls* usually refer to any slave young girl, or an old maid. Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* taught us not to use the word ‘slave’ when [speaking about or calling] the servants, but rather, we should say: ‘my boy’ and ‘my girl’ to those your right hands possess.’ Some people wonder why one would marry a woman that he possesses. We say to these people: No. She is lawfully his since he rightfully possesses her; he can thereby have a child from her. Thus, in this context, it means those women whom men’s right hands possess because Allah addresses believers as one single unit. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘A believer must support his fellow believer like a building wherein each part supports the other.’⁽¹⁾ The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And neither shall you defame one another...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 11). He also says in a different place: ‘But whenever you enter [any of these] houses, greet one another—a greeting from Allah.’ (*an-Nur*: 61) Should a believer greet himself or greet the ones whose houses he enters? Through this ruling, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to make the believers be like one body. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* also says: ‘and do not kill one another.’ This means do not kill other believers. In other words, the unity of faith should make us stand in solidarity with each other.

They may wed believing girls from among those whom your right hands possess. And Allah knows all about your faith’ You may assume that the faith of a young captive girl is weak so one can use it as a pretext [for not following the ruling of Allah]. The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells you: No, ‘... Allah knows all about your faith.’ It may even be the case that a maiden’s faith is better than yours because this is an internal matter of the heart, and it should be enough for you to know the apparent.

When the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* addresses a matter, He does so [in a manner] befitting a Lord who knows the reality of what He created and

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa’i on the authority of Abu Musa

provides all the needs of His creatures. At first, He explains that if you are incapable of marrying free women, then marry the slave ones. This is intended to further contribute to the abolition of slavery.

After this, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah knows all about your faith; each one of you is an issue of the other.’ Thus, if you plan to get married, bear in mind that each one of you is an issue of the other.’ This means that all of you descend from Adam *peace be upon him* and since you have believed, this belief has made you all equals. Accordingly, if you want to get married, and then bear in mind that Allah *Glorified is He* addresses an existing reality. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: So marry them with the permission of their people.’ This gives the impression that the maiden girl under one’s care should be treated as if she were a member of his family, compensating her for the loss of her family in her home country, and so that she would feel in the custody of Islam the same way she used to feel when she was in the custody of her family, parents and maybe more.

Thus, the master should act as if he were a member of the family of the one in his custody. This way, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* gives more reasons to abolish slavery. He thus explains that if you do not free the slave you possess, he will continue to be a slave, which entails feeding him of what you eat, dressing him from the same clothes you wear and assigning to him what he is capable of undertaking; if you do so, you will have to assist him. When you have a person that you feed from your own food and dress from the same clothes you wear, and you find that he is trying to do a task he is incapable of doing, you would help him. But what kind of treatment is this? It is the way you treat a member of your family.

Consider how many issues and matters the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses; He addresses the one proposing for marriage, the maiden or slave woman and the masters. It is indeed the law of the Lord of all. He does not decree a ruling for one party at the expense of the other. As long as she is a maiden and has a master, this master has issues to attend to, and therefore she has to ask for his permission since he may not be able to dispense with her because she serves him.

Thus, He says: ‘...with the permission of their people.’ But with respect to the question of dowry, He says: ‘...Give them their dowry according to

what is reasonable.' A slave woman is married after the permission of her master so that the husband, who will have intercourse with her, would know there is someone else; and after the permission, she is no longer his. As permission was granted, no one can intrude. Thus by granting the permission and marrying his slave woman to another man, he prepares himself for the fact the he will not be able to have intercourse with her again, and that all what is left for him is that she is his slave. As for the right of sexual intercourse, it has been transferred to the husband.

'Give them their dowry according to what is reasonable.' This warns one not to say that for a slave woman, anything should suffice. No, she is entitled to a dowry corresponding to what is customary in the community, which would thus preserve her dignity in her community. '[They should be] chaste, neither [of] those who commit unlawful intercourse randomly, nor those who take [secret] lovers.' They should be chaste women, not women who commit adultery; such women are also called public women.

And when they are married, and thereafter become guilty of adultery, they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free married women are liable.' This means that if slave women were married and one of them was found guilty of adultery, then she is to receive a penalty. But if she is not married, then she should not submit to a judge; rather, her master should punish her and penalize her because the slave woman is customarily humiliated, which changes after she gets married. Thus, if she commits an immoral conduct we say to her: You have your designated penalty. You will not be penalized in the same way a free woman is penalized because the free woman always finds it difficult to commit adultery, unlike the slave woman who finds it easy to do so since she does not have a father, a brother or a family. He thus says: '...thereafter become guilty of adultery, they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free married women are liable.' This means half the penalty to which the free married women are liable. But *Al-khawarij*⁽¹⁾ limited the meaning of the word to a single interpretation to serve their purpose. They consider the 'chaste

(1) *Al-khawarij* is mostly associated with their political orientation. In this *Fiqhi* case, the definition would not be of crucial importance because the background it will provide, would not affect this particular issue.

woman' as the one who is married. They want to interpret it this way so that the slave woman would be liable to half the penalty to which the married woman is, at which case the married woman would not be stoned since stoning cannot be halved. They adopted this interpretation and said that the Quran does not mention stoning; thus they were contented with their view of whipping the adulteress hundred times. We say to them: You have interpreted the word *muhsana* as married, and forgot, 'and as for those of you who, owing to circumstances, are not in a position to marry free believing women.' The word *muhsana* actually refers to the free women. So why did you switch the meaning of the word *muhsana* to mean 'free' in the first mention and 'married' in the second? You have to take the meaning as 'free women' and you do not have any justification to adopt this fallacious rationale. Thus, the premise of their argument falls apart because if the evidence carries a potential probability, it cannot be used as a premise for valid argument.

We move to the next point. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'they shall be liable to half the penalty to which free married women are liable to.' If the ruling follows the generalized sense, the True Lord would not have said penalty.' It is as if she is liable for half the penalty/punishment. What is punishment? It means the infliction of pain on the one who is susceptible to feel pain. Stoning does not involve inflicting pain because it is intended to put an end to life. The verse shows that half the penalty is an infliction of pain. But what does not involve an infliction of pain is a process of putting an end to life and the ruling is not related to it. Pain is only possible for the one who can feel pain. Pain is felt by a living thing, whereas stoning is the termination of life. Thus, stoning is not part of the 'penalty.' The evidence that penalty is the opposite of death is that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and his investigation of the birds. He *Glorified is He* says: 'He inspected the birds, and said: 'How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Or could he be absent? I will punish him most severely or will kill him unless he brings me a clear reason.' (*an-Naml*: 20-21) Killing and terminating life is thus the opposite of penalty. Therefore, His phrase 'half the penalty to which free married women are liable,' means that what is being addressed in this context is the infliction of pain, not stoning, nor the termination of life. Thus, using it as proof is invalid.

We say to those who say that the verses of the Quran do not refer to stoning: Who told you that the Quran encompasses all the rulings of the path of Allah in Islam, and that it detailed everything? The Quran was not only revealed as a Book about the path of life, but it also came as a miracle and a Book about principles of such a path. It is, therefore, left to Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* the task of explaining to people what was revealed to them, not to mention that Prophet Muhammad, as per the statement of the Quran, was authorized to issue laws, which is a privilege granted to the seal of the Prophets and Messengers. The evidence is that Allah *Glorified is He* says about the essence of the Quran that includes the principles of the path of Islam: ‘And whatever the Prophet (Muhammad) has given you, take; and what he has forbidden you, refrain from.’ (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Prophet Muhammad has a role with the Quran, otherwise the one who claims that the Quran includes all the rulings of the religion of Allah should tell me from where he learnt the detailed ruling regarding praying five times a day? In what verse is it mentioned the Dawn Prayer consists of two rak’as? And from where did he learn that the Noon and Afternoon Prayer are each four rak’as, while the Sunset Prayer consists of only three rak’as, and the night one is four? From where did he acquire this knowledge? Nothing of this sort exists. What is the meaning of that? The meaning is that the Quran was revealed as a miraculous Book, and it includes a methodology that addresses its fundamentals which gave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the right to legislate; his legislation is binding and authorized by the Quran. For this reason, if an adamant disputer asks you about a specific ruling and says: Show me the basis for deducing this ruling from the Quran, and then you looked in the Book of Allah but did not find it, tell him that the evidence of the ruling in the Quran is the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘And whatever the Messenger (Muhammad) has given you, take; and what he has forbidden you, refrain from.’

Based on this, any ruling that you come across but failed to locate its basis in the Book of Allah, yet you are asked to provide it, then say: ‘And whatever the Prophet (Muhammad) has given you, take; and what he has forbidden you, refrain from.’ This methodology is simply an array of commands and

proscriptions. Obviously, obedience to it requires following commands and avoiding proscriptions. Every religion or path of life consists of an array of commands and proscriptions; you have to follow the command and avoid the proscription. If you leaf through the Quran, you will find that commands and proscriptions are tied to the verses that address the obedience required of the one who believes in the path of Allah and who professes that there is no God worthy of worship but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, if you read the Quran you will find—as we have said before—that the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says about obedience: ‘Say: ‘Obey Allah and the Messenger.’ (Al-‘Imran: 32)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has not repeated the command related to obedience, but rather, the person obeying is repeated. But whom should we obey? We should obey Allah *Glorified is He* and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In another instance, He repeats the command of obedience: ‘Hence, obey Allah and obey the Messenger (Muhammad).’ (Al-‘Imran: 92) In a third instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Obey the Prophet so that you may receive mercy.’ (an-Nur: 56) In a fourth instance He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad), and those from among you who have been entrusted with authority.’ (an-Nisa’: 59) Here, Allah has included ‘people of authority’ for the first time. In one instance, He commands us to be obedient, and then He repeats the recipient of this obedience. In another instance, He repeats the command and also repeats the recipient of obedience. In the third instance, He says: ‘...and obey the Messenger.’ So, if Allah *Glorified is He* says to you: ‘obey Allah and the Messenger,’ then know that the matter in question involves a ruling by Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace be upon him* which makes obedience a must. In addition, if Allah’s command is general, whereas the Prophet’s command is detailed, as is the case with prayers, *zakat* and pilgrimage, then you have to obey Allah and obey Prophet Muhammad.

In case the matter in question lacks a ruling by Allah, but rather came as an implicit authorization when Allah say: ‘And whatever the Messenger (Muhammad) has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from,’ then obey Prophet Muhammad in such a matter. Moreover, in another verse, Allah says: ‘He who obeys the Messenger (Muhammad) has obeyed

Allah.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 80) Why? That is because Prophet Muhammad acted in accordance with the authorization granted to him by Allah; the True Lord says: ‘And whatever the Messenger (Muhammad) has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.’

We are left with the obedience to ‘those in authority,’ that was mentioned when He says: ‘Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger (Muhammad) and those in authority.’ This means that obeying ‘that in authority’ is part of obeying Allah and Prophet Muhammad. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has not singled out ‘those in authority’ with independent obedience, rather, as a part of ‘obey Allah and obey the Messenger.’ He did not say ‘obey that in authority’; instead, He mentions that in authority only as a part of obeying Allah and His Prophet, Muhammad. This shows the precision of the style of the Quran.

We must ponder well over the words of the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted*: ‘And whatever the Messenger (Muhammad) has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrained from’ We have already said that obedience is submitting to Allah’s commands and avoiding His proscriptions. Similarly, we find two clauses in this verse ‘he has given you’ and ‘he has forbidden you.’ ‘He has given you’ has been used instead of ‘he commands you’; and the act prohibition is present in ‘forbidden.’ But why has Allah not said: ‘Accept whatever Prophet Muhammad commands you to do and refrain from what he prohibited you to do?’ Further, why did He not briefly say: ‘Accept whatever Prophet Muhammad gives you?’ The reason is that if the act of giving a command is undertaken by Prophet Muhammad, it assumes the form of either an utterance or an action. But would the proscribed thing be an actual deed that Prophet Muhammad does? No, it is impossible that this would be the case.

Prohibition comes exclusively in the form of proscription of an action, whereas a command is expressed by giving it and it can be in the form of both an action and an utterance. For instance, when He says to you to not drink wine, there is no way that Prophet Muhammad would do such an act in order to learn to avoid it. Prophet Muhammad has certainly never drunk wine or any other intoxicant. The command is related to the Prophet’s utterance or action, whereas a prohibition is only conveyed verbally. Is it even possible that someone would assume otherwise? Indeed, it is not.

Then, we turn to another round in response to the *khawarij*. Prophet Muhammad was sent to convey the message so as to teach us the ruling in order that we act accordingly. Thus, if a ruling is stated in the text—meaning in the Quran,—the action of Prophet Muhammad explains it, and when Prophet Muhammad does it, would there be any room left to argue about the meaning of the text yet? No, it would have been concluded. Thus, action is the best reflection of the textual proof it promotes as far as command is concerned because, without an action, the textual proof will be open to interpretation. But when Prophet Muhammad follows the textual statement with his action, the ruling becomes binding because the one who undertook the action is a lawgiver.

Did Prophet Muhammad stone or did he not? Prophet Muhammad did stone, and his action proves the text. Action is not a verbal or textual statement subject to interpretation and construing. Prophet Muhammad stoned Ma'iz and Al-Ghamidyyah. He also stoned a Jewish man and a Jewish woman, even though they were protected by their marriage and freedom. Hence, the action of Prophet Muhammad is the fundamental origin of the ruling. The evidence of the *khawarij* does not suffice as the basis to support the conclusion they reached. Thus, what is left is the action of the legislator, Prophet Muhammad, who is authorized by Allah to legislate through his sayings and actions or even through the mere tacit approval of an action.

Now we will investigate the issue rationally. If you want to claim that the only bound penalty for committing adultery is whipping, would you hold those who are married and those who are not as being equal? The married one has honour, a husband, familial ancestors and descendants. Would you equate this one with the one who has not been married? This is rationally unacceptable. The ruling of stoning actually exists and its source is Prophet Muhammad. The evidence that *al-khawarij* adduce is indeed probable at best, and if the evidence is probable, it cannot serve as a premise for logical deduction.

‘And after they have been taken in wedlock, if they commit illegal sexual intercourse, their punishment is half the punishment assigned for free (unmarried) women. This is for him among you who is afraid of harming his religion or his body.’

What is intended by 'this'? It refers to the permission to marry slave women and girls granted to those who were incapable of marrying free women. What does '*al-anat*' (translated as 'harmed in his religion or in his body') mean? It means toil and exhaustion, the wearing out of nerves and the corruption of ethics and values because when a man's desires are spurred, he may either retain chastity or become morally loose. If he is morally loose, he has become corrupted. But what would happen if he retains his chastity? He may suffer from a psychological and nervous breakdown. This is why Allah allowed him to marry a slave woman if he could not afford to marry a free one.

In view of this elaboration, the meaning of the verse would be that the one who does not fear 'the harm' does not necessarily have to marry a slave woman.⁽¹⁾ This is not a discouragement to marry slave women; it involves respect for her because if she got married, and then bore a child from the one whom she married, her child would also become a slave. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to abolish slavery. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to the person interested in getting married to a slave woman: leave her to her master; if he likes her and had sexual intercourse with her, and later she bore his child, both she and her child will become free.

The True Lord wants to abolish slavery. He *Glorified is He* then say: 'But it is better for you that you practice self-restraint.' This instructs patience and endurance, not resorting to marry slave women. Stay in chastity and purity, away from committing sin; this is better for you than marrying a slave woman. Therefore, marrying free women is indeed better.

The True Lord then appends the verse: 'And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' This means that He is much forgiving of what you have committed and the sins you perpetrated but repented from. He is also Merciful to you, as He does not haste to punish you, out of pity for you and love for your returning to Him.

(1) Some jurists stipulate the presence of certain conditions for someone to marry a slave woman: first, the one marrying a slave woman must have found no free woman to marry; second: the slave woman he chose to marry must be a Muslim. Further, he must be in a state where he fears falling prey to sin.

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ
 قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

**He wishes to make His laws clear to you and
 guide you to the righteous ways of those who
 went before you. He wishes to turn towards you
 in mercy – He is All Knowing, all wise [26]
 (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 26)**

What does He ‘make clear unto us’? Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear and explains to us the laws governing the steadiness and organization of life. We have said that the condemnation of any act is not possible except with an explicit text, and there is no penalty unless the act penalized is condemned. Before Allah punishes you for a matter, He tells you that it is a crime and He explicitly states it; He does not come to tell you that you did something, and here is the punishment, since you may say: ‘I have done this before and I did not know it was prohibited and condemned, and that I deserve to be punished for it.’ You cannot be punished unless you have committed an act that is condemned; thus you cannot be condemned except based on explicit text in which Allah condemns the act you committed. Allah wants to enlighten you about what is best for rectifying the course of your life. Allah is indeed more concerned with you than you are with yourself because Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created you, and He knows those whom He created. Allah *Glorified is He* alone enacts what is best for His creation; hence, the idea that He creates you and then leaves you to be the lawgiver is a transgression because Allah *Glorified is He* enacts laws upon whom He best knows—and to Allah pertains the highest example. We have said previously: the engineer who manufactures a TV is the one who sets the rules for its maintenance since he is the one who designed the machine, and he is the one who is best qualified to set its maintenance rules. ‘This key is for such a function; that button is for adjusting the volume, and that other one is for the image,’ the engineer would say.

The One who created man is the one who ordains the law that is best for his preservation and well-being, and that is manifested in the ‘do’s and don’ts’ that He reveals. Allah *Glorified is He* left out a number of matters about which He

did not reveal any 'do's and don'ts.' Those are considered permissible, so you may do or not do them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And to guide you onto the [righteous] ways of life of those who preceded you.' The 'righteous ways' in this context is the *Sunnah* governing the course of life. The True Lord says: '[This is] the established way of Allah with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of Allah any change.' (*al-Ahzab*: 62)

There were messengers who preceded Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We have also learnt about what happened to those who obeyed the Messengers sent to them and what happened to those who disbelieved and repudiated the Messengers sent to them. The True Lord says about them: '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 (awful) Cry [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)

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to clear to us the paths which the preceding nations pursued. These paths refer to the methods that they used to rule with, and how it turned out for the people of truth as well as the people of falsehood. Therefore, this is not a baseless ordinance; rather, there are a lot of precedents that support its verity and document it. Allah *Glorified is He* explains, clarifies and forgives. 'For Allah is All Knowing, Wise,' because He is a Wise Creator Who puts things in their rightful place. Wisdom is the rightful disposition of matters, which Allah *Glorified is He* does based on His knowledge. Knowledge, in a general sense, implies vastness of knowledge. Wisdom is the placement of anything included in this knowledge in its rightful place. The next verse says:

وَاللَّهُ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتُوبَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ الَّذِينَ
يَتَّبِعُونَ الشَّهَوَاتِ أَنْ تَمِيلُوا مَيْلًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٢٧﴾

**He wishes to turn towards you, but those who
follow their lusts want you to go far astray [27]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 27)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the previous verse: 'Allah wants to make [all this] clear unto you' followed by and to guide you,' and afterwards accept

your repentance.' In the verse we are currently discussing, Allah says: 'and Allah wishes to accept your repentance.' Why does He initially say 'accept your repentance', and then follow it with wishes to accept your repentance'? In this respect, we say that repentance had already been decreed lawful by Allah initially; otherwise, how would you repent from a sin and ask Allah to forgive you had He not already decreed repentance as lawful? Would this repentance be correct? Allah *Glorified is He* first decrees repentance as lawful. After that, you may repent in the light of what He decreed, and He may then accept that repentance. So far, we have three stages: 1) The decreeing of repentance as lawful by Allah as a sign of His mercy for us; 2) The actual repentance of the slave; 3) Allah *Glorified is He* accepts the repentance out of His mercy. In short, the repentance of the slave is between two repentances originating from Allah: the decreed repentance and the accepted repentance. And Allah wishes to accept your repentance. But would Allah *Glorified is He* decree repentance as lawful and then refuse to accept it? No, since He has decreed repentance and taught you how to repent, this means that He has opened the door to repentance and forgiveness for you, which is a part of the Mercy of the All Knowing and Wise for His creation. Moreover, when the True Lord created man, He privileged him over other species with the power of free will. Man can always choose to either do a certain action or refrain from it. Further, he made all his faculties flexible to comply with both commands and prohibition. The eye can see one of the signs of Allah in the Universe, and learn from it, just as it can also look at what Allah has forbidden. The same can be applied to the tongue; it can be used for cursing as much as it can be used for remembering Allah and saying: 'I profess that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah,' besides all other kinds of remembrance of Allah. The hand can be used for beating as much as it can be extended in aid of someone who stumbled and fell on the street.

This is the meaning of choice in one's statements, action and limbs. Free will is an absolute power that is directed by the will of the one who chooses. If you consider the hand, you will find that if you want to raise it, you do not need to know anything about the muscles to make such movement. What does the one who raises his hands do? And what are the muscles that he uses in the process of raising his hands? You may see this, for instance, in robots, levers

or cranes that lift heavy weights. Just consider how many operations are performed for these machines to operate? You do not know anything about this matter, but if you want to move your hands, you are capable of doing so, and your hands obey your will. By contrast, when an engineer desires to move a robot, he instructs it through certain calculations to do so, but the normal human being can move his hands, legs or eyes as soon as he wills to do so.

When the True Lord deprives man of his power —Allah forbid—He causes him to be paralyzed. If this paralyzed person wants to do something, his hands will not move, and he will not know what defect caused such malfunction until he goes to a physician to check his nervous system. Then he will know why his nerves did not execute the orders they received; it is a long process. Accordingly, when a man wants to move, he just directs the power and faculties that were originally created by Allah. In actuality, he is incapable of doing anything. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* rewards and forgives one for being obedient only inasmuch as he employs his faculties to do good things. When you hear that all of us—humans—are helpless, know that this statement is correct because no one knows how to do anything; one just wills. Therefore, your task is to voluntarily channel your energy to behave and act in accordance with Allah's enactments. Hence, the meaning of free will is to be able to obey the command just as you are able to do its opposite.

When the True Lord clarifies and reveals the path, you should follow it. He tells you to channel your energy to do is the right, not the wrong. This means that you are capable of doing both. Therefore, if you do what lies outside the scope of the path of Allah as to whether or not you should 'do' or 'don't' do in a way that is not corruptive or damaging to the cosmic order and to your life, then know that what you have done is lawful and admissible.

When the True Lord has decreed repentance, He has explained that if someone wills a particular act, but directs his power to do the opposite; his desire and craving may overwhelm him which leads him to do something evil in a moment of weakness. For this reason, repentance has been decreed and ordained. Why? The reason is that if we were to expel someone out of the obedience realm for one evil act he did, all his actions and deeds would be evil afterwards. This is the one that we described as the one who is lost or

went astray. The True Lord, however, has enacted that if you commit a sin, do not despair as He will forgive you and absolve your sin.

Inasmuch as Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed repentance, He spared the society the evils of the one who first committed sins. Indeed, if repentance did not exist, the number of sins would proliferate. The opposite of the saying of the True Lord: 'And Allah wishes to accept your repentance,' and his assertion that he may purify one of the sins he committed through repentance are the people who follow their lusts and cravings, and want you to commit new sins. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'but those who follow their lusts wish that you (believers) should deviate.' 'Deviate' in this context means committing sins, whatever they may be. By doing this, you drift away because drifting means deviating from the righteous path delineated by the All-Wise.

But who has created this righteous path? It is the All-Wise. If a man deviates once, our Lord will direct him back to the righteous path and tell him: 'I have forgiven you.' Allah *Glorified is He* does so to protect the world from that person's evil. But those who follow their lusts not only want you to deviate once; they want you to deviate to extremes. Why? The reason is—as we have said before—that even if man lies, he would respect the honest person; and if he is a traitor, he would respect the loyal. To prove it, if a traitor had something he is worried about, he would choose an honest person to entrust it with. Honesty, truth, and faithfulness along with all other values are ingrained in us and recognized by our natural inclination. If a man were not able to compel himself to follow the righteous values, but then finds someone else capable of doing so, he would be quite frustrated. What would comfort him? He cannot right his wrongs, and nor is he able to rectify himself. For this reason, he tries to make the righteous person a deviant like himself. Thus, if both, the righteous and the deviant became friends, the latter would be ashamed of himself for his deviance and would try to make his righteous friend deviant as well so that he would not feel inferior to him. He would not even want him to deviate from the righteous path in the same way as he did. He would want him to be even more deviant so that he would be better than him. Thus, even the deviants and the corrupt recognize values. Indeed, remember well the wise saying we read in the chapter *Yusuf*: 'And there entered the prison with him two young men. One of them said, 'Indeed, I have seen myself [in a

dream] pressing wine.’ The other said, ‘Indeed, I have seen myself carrying upon my head [some] bread, from which the birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; indeed, we see you to be of those who do the good.’’ (*al-Hajj*: 36)

They were in prison with Yusuf (Joseph). Each had his own reason for being in prison. They were in prison because they committed a crime, but the reason underlying Yusuf’s presence in prison is that he was innocent. The innocent only thinks about Allah. Unlike those who have deviated from the righteous path, they saw that he was in a good condition; the evidence is that they were concerned about something related to them, viz. that each of them saw a dream.

That is why they went to the one whom they thought was a good person, despite being in prison with them. They admired him given that they said to him: ‘We see you to be of those who do the good.’ If someone says such statement, it implies that he has the ability to distinguish values. They measured Yusuf’s action against that scale of values they used to assess; how would they otherwise make a judgment? Therefore, they went directly to Yusuf when it was something about their own selves.

Another example is of a thief who keeps stealing and never quits until something happens that requires him to travel to an unsafe place. In that case, the thief would look for an honest person to spend the night with; he would not go a thief like himself. Values are values. When the companions of Yusuf said: ‘We see you to be of those who do the good,’ Yusuf took advantage of this matter as he noted their confidence in him. So he has not immediately interpreted their dreams; rather, he called them to believe in Allah. He said: ‘O [my] two companions of prison, are Different Gods better or Allah, the One, the Prevailing?’ (*Yusuf*: 39) He diverted their attention from their story to his. As long as they wanted to take advantage of the fact that he appeared to be a good man, and knew how to interpret dreams well; why would he not take advantage of their need and preach to them the religion of Allah? It is as if he were telling them: ‘You came to me because you say that I am a good person. You did not see all that I have, which Allah has given me from His grace and bounty.’ The True Lord *Glorified is He* says that Yusuf said: ‘That is from what my Lord has taught me.’ (*Yusuf*: 37) This means that the honest Yusuf has a lot of knowledge, and that he acknowledges Allah’s grace and

endowment as he asserts that the knowledge was not from him.' That is from what my Lord has taught me.' Afterwards, Yusuf called them to worship Allah so that they can invoke Him to save them and redeem them instead of the several deities that they used to worship because, in fact, they can neither harm them nor benefit them: 'Are separate lords better or One Lord (Allah), the One, the Prevailing?'

Values do not change and Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to forgive the sins of all, but those who follow their lusts want you to deviate from the righteous path so that you would not be any better than them in a way that would make them feel contempt and despise themselves even more. They want you to be more deviant than them because they want to be distinguished as much as you want to be; they say to themselves: 'if we are evil, there are others who are worse than us.' Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُخَفِّفَ عَنْكُمْ وَخُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ ضَعِيفًا

God wishes to lighten your burden; man was created weak [28] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 28)

After Allah *Glorified is He* has said: Allah wants to clear unto you' to direct our attention, He follows it with: And wishes to accept your repentance' to forgive us; He now says: Allah wants to lighten your burdens to make things easier for us. These are three important matters. Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'In the chapter of *an-Nisa*', there are eight verses addressing the followers of Muhammad which are better than whatever upon which the sun rises and sets.'

The first:

'Allah wants to make clear to you [the lawful from the unlawful] and guide you to the [good] practices of those before you and to accept your repentance. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.' (*an-Nisa*: 26)

The second:

'Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow their lusts, wish that you (believers) should deviate tremendously away from the Right Path.' (*an-Nisa*: 27)

The third:

‘Allah wants to lighten your burdens: ‘for man has been created weak.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 28)

The fourth:

‘If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden to do, We shall remit from you your (small) sins, and admit you to a Noble Entrance (i.e. paradise).’ (*an-Nisa'*: 31)

The fifth:

‘Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allah has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 48)

The sixth:

‘And whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allah's Forgiveness, he will find Allah Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 110)

The seventh:

‘Surely! Allah wrongs not even of the weight of an atom (or a small ant), but if there is any good (done), He doubles it, and gives from Him a great reward.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 40)

The eighth:

‘Why should Allah punish you if you have thanked (Him) and have believed in Him? And Allah is Ever All-Appreciative (of good), All Knowing.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 147)

These are the eight verses that no other nation has been given their like except the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Among them is the saying of the True Lord: Allah wants to lighten your burdens: ‘for man has been created weak.’ But what is that weakness? Weakness is his proneness to be deviated by allurements and losing the capacity to conjure up Allah's reward for obedience and His punishment for sinning because the one whose self is directed by lust often disregards the idea of punishment. For instance, if a thief bore in mind that his hand would be chopped off if he stole, he would be reluctant to steal. But he may try to choose a safe way for himself and think: ‘I will steal, deceive people, and then do this and that in order to escape.’

Man is weak inasmuch as Allah has given him the freedom to choose. He is prone to be swayed by his transient desires. However, if man examines all his desires in order to identify the most exalted among them, he will realize that no desire is more worthy of his care and attention than his desire to deserve Allah's contentment and meeting Him in the Hereafter.

The True Lord says: Allah wants to lighten your burdens: for man has been created weak.' We notice that Allah lightened the burdens of the believers in proportion to their human weakness. As we explained above, human weakness is an outcome of freedom of choice which is conferred upon the human to choose to follow or to not follow Allah's obligations. The One Who made him weak also gave him freedom of choice so that he may obey or disobey. Man always needs some kind of motivation or enticement to fulfil any obligation. In fact, the temptations of this life are in the present, whereas those of the hereafter are in the future, but man always gives the transient present priority over the eternally abiding future. Afterwards the True Lord says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ
تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُمْ رَحِيمًا ﴿١٩﴾

You who believe, do not wrongfully consume each other's wealth but trade by mutual consent. Do not kill each other, for God is merciful to you [29] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 29)

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to invite His creatures to believe in Him, He directs their attention to the universe and the phenomena He has created so that they may be assured that these phenomena could not have been produced except through the will of the All-Capable, All Knowing and All-Wise Allah. If they voluntarily choose to believe in Him, they will willingly receive His assignments as they are presented in the array of commands and proscription He has revealed to them. Thus, when Allah imposes His obligations, He always preludes it by reminding them that they have committed themselves to accept their assignments, and that Allah did not force them to do so; rather, they have voluntarily chosen to believe in Allah. As long as they have voluntarily chosen to embrace faith, they must submit to every ruling Allah

imposes on them. In other words, they must submit to all the do's and do not's that He ordains. In this respect, none of them should wonder why they should do something and why they should not. It is enough to say: 'I have believed in Him as He is Allah who is All-Capable and All-Wise.' Allah *Glorified is He* is entitled to command and forbid. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* always prefixes the verses that involve His assignments with 'O you who have believed.' This explicitly shows that Allah does not ordain an obligation for everyone, but rather, for those who believed in Him. It is not unjust for Allah to decree an array of obligations on the one who believes in Him simply because they have voluntarily believed in Him.

But if you command someone to do one of Allah's obligations, like praying or refraining from a prohibition, he might tell you: 'There is no coercion in religion.' (*al-Baqara*: 256) If this ever happens, you have to respond by saying that he did not understand the words of the True Lord properly. In principle, belief in Allah is hinged on free choice, not on compulsion. But once you voluntarily believe in Allah, you are bound to follow to Allah's Commands and avoid His Proscriptions. The verse, 'O you who believed,' provides us with circumstances that demand obedience to Allah's obligations, which is belief in Allah as the All-Capable and All-Wise God. Once you believe as such you have to submit to all the commands and proscriptions of Allah *Glorified is He*. But if you pause and reject any command or proscription, you should revisit your faith in Allah.

Accordingly, Allah says, 'There is no coercion in religion,' which means that you are free to have faith in Allah or not. But if you do, beware not to violate a ruling from Allah in Whom you have believed. If you do so, you will be committing sins.

The preceding rulings assigned to those who have believed are concerned with the principles of preserving the believers' honour and constituting the family based on a pure system so that reproduction occurs in a sound manner. The verses also speak about the women whom you are forbidden to marry as well as those whom you are allowed to marry. Here Allah *Glorified is He* talks about money which is the engine of life. Wealth and possessions are generally, as we know, the fruit of one's toiling and labour. Everything that is exchanged

and used as sustenance is considered to be wealth and possessions; wealth is divided into different kinds: wealth that provides a direct benefit –like owning food, drink and/or clothes; and wealth that provides an indirect benefit like money or currency, of which one cannot avail himself directly; rather, one may benefit and avail himself of it to obtain something that he can directly use, and from which he can procure benefit.

Accordingly, wealth is divided into direct livelihood and indirect livelihood. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to protect the course of life because by doing so, He encourages those living to flourish. But if we were to assume that He is not protecting the cycle of life, what would happen? The cycle of life would be broken. We notice that in any society wherein the purpose and fruit of human labour is not secured, work diminishes, and everyone works only as much as his capacity allows him. One will even say to himself, why should I work? The fruit of my labour is not guaranteed or secured.’ But if he were sure that he would reap the fruit of his labour, such security would entice him to work more. If he worked more, society would benefit more, even though that person did not intend so. It is not necessary that one should intend to benefit the society with his work. No, let everyone work for his own benefit and advantage.

We have given an example in this respect before; someone may have thousands of pounds that he keeps in a safe. He then wonders: Why should I keep it in a safe? Why would I not build another house and rent out two apartments in order to generate some income for me? Did this person bear the good and interest of the society in his mind? No, his mind is concerned with maximizing his own interests. For this reason, let everyone worry about his own interests. This way the entire society will benefit from his work whether he intended it or not. The reason is that when the time comes to lay the foundation of his new house, he will have to pay the workers he hired for the task; similarly, when he goes out to buy the bricks, he will pay for them. He will also pay the engineer and the construction workers’ wages. Therefore, strive in pursuit of fulfilling your personal interests in the light of the law of Allah, and society will subsequently benefit from it whether you intended it or not. It is quite surprising that when you want to benefit yourself, Allah *Glorified is He* explains

that you will benefit others before any benefit accrues to you from the revenue of the house you are building. Do not think that someone will usurp the livelihood that Allah has prepared for His creatures, and then will not dispense it to His creation. No, the entire society will benefit from it against your will.

Accordingly, preserving the natural course of life and securing the livelihood of everyone who works and labours is conducive to the best interest of society. Then, if we wish to pass any judgments about that person, we have to keep our eyes wide open as to whether he earns such livelihood in a legitimate and lawful way or not. If he earns his livelihood in a lawful manner, we should thank him; but if he earns it in an unlawful manner, we should question him. If one does not follow the lawful way of earning his livelihood, the natural course of life would be disrupted, and this is detrimental to those incapable of working. Why so? The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* has distributed talents among people. Not everyone possesses the same energetic ambition, and nor everyone has a sound logic whereby he can plan. Only few in society undertake the mission of planning, while the rest of the members of society function as faculties or agents that execute the plans devised by the thinking minds. This structure is analogous to that of the human being in the sense that one's reason controls the rest of his faculties. Thus, there is often one main thinker who devises a plan from which a lot of people benefit.

We have to honour and secure the work of the one who strives to earn his livelihood because society benefits from it even if he or she does not do so except for the fulfilment of his own interests. However, it is true that the one who is only concerned with his own selfish interests misses the divine reward for his work. It is also true that whoever keeps other people in his mind reaps the fruit of his work coupled with receiving a reward from Allah.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* fully explains issues related to financial issues to protect the progress of the course of life and foster people to work more. This way, the number of people who work hard would increase, and then benefit would accrue to society. He says: 'O you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly.' In some instances, you may find a command phrased in a plural form. For example, when we say to a group: 'Get in your cars', this actually means: 'May every one of you get in his car.' Similarly,

when a teacher walks into his class and says to his students: 'Get your books out'; this means that every student has to get his book out. Thus, the plural form necessarily applies to each person involved. Accordingly, the statement means that none of you should consume his possessions, but what is the way by which we are forbidden to consume our possessions? The True Lord explains: unjustly.' Each of us is required not to devour his possessions wrongfully. Man eats to avail himself of what he eats. The True Lord *Glorified is He* commands you not to spend a single penny of your money except in something that is lawful and honest. This would be the meaning if the verse addressed each person alone. Thus, no one should devour his own possessions wrongfully; rather, he should direct these possessions towards something beneficial that is not forbidden, and that will not incur any torture in the hereafter.

In contrast, if the intended meaning were that no one should devour the possessions of another, we will clarify it via the following example. Let us assume that a student told his teacher: Sir, my pen was here and now it is lost. The teacher then responds to the students: Do not steal each other's pens'; does this mean that the teacher said that none of them should steal his own pen or rather, he means that no one should steal the pen of another? Therefore, the alternative meaning of do not consume one another's possessions is that none of you should devour the possessions of his brother wrongfully.

How could it be that Allah *the Exalted* says: '...Your wealth...'? And since it is their wealth, then should they not be blameworthy for consuming it? No, the intended meaning is that every one of you should not wrongfully consume his brother's wealth. So, why does Allah *the Exalted* not say that instead of saying '...your wealth...'? The reason is that the commands ordained by Allah *the Exalted* are not usually directed towards two groups: one is created to consume people's wealth and another to have their wealth consumed. Rather, everyone is liable to be a consumer of someone else's wealth and, in another instance, to have his wealth consumed. Thus, if I consume the wealth of someone else, another may consume mine. By doing so, I would set an example to the latter who, following my example, came forth and consumed my wealth. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* says to you: 'Do not consume one another's wealth wrongfully in order to protect your own wealth.'

Allah *the Exalted* wants the believers' society to be one entity. Thus, He explains that everybody's wealth is for the interest of all people. Therefore, if you preserve other people's wealth, they will preserve yours. But if you encroach on anyone's wealth, they will encroach on yours. Indeed, in so far as you consume the wealth of someone else, you embolden thousands of people to consume your wealth. Similarly, when you refrain from consuming the wealth of others, it is as though you have not consumed your own wealth.

The word 'consume' in this context means 'to take' because 'eating' is the most important process in life due to its recurring characteristic; you may live in one house throughout your entire life and buy new clothes every six months, but you have to eat every day. When this verse was revealed, the Muslims said: 'we should not consume one another's wealth wrongfully.' Thus, they became embarrassed to eat at each other's houses. Afterwards, the matter was referred to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who explained that eating the food served to you by your host was not wrongful consuming. Allah *the Exalted* also revealed a verse stating that there is no blame for someone if he ate in his relatives' or friends' houses. (*an-Nur*: 61) This verse relieved them of any embarrassment about eating at each other's houses; but when the companions heard the part about wrongful consuming, they said: 'We would not take anything from anyone unless we give him something in return.'

What does *al-batil* (wrongfulness) mean? It is to take something to which you are not entitled. An example of that would be usury because it means that someone will have a surplus and another who is in need, does not have a principal. How could the needy be asked to repay the principal with an excess to the one who already has the principal?

How could this be admissible? This is the meaning of taking money by usury. The same ruling applies to taking money by stealing, embezzlement, bribes or cheating in commodities. All of them are different forms of wrongfully consuming the wealth of others. When you decide to wrongfully consume someone else's wealth, it is as if you want to unrightfully enjoy the fruits of someone else's labour and, by doing so, you get used to enjoying it. Consequently, your capacity to work declines and you become dependent on misappropriating the wealth of others—coercively and unrightfully. As a result, your labour in

life breaks down and you become a jobless person—who will become a bandit. Further, the one who works and exerts effort will start to live in fear because he is forced to pay tribute to bandits, and his labour, consequently, will diminish. If this happened, how would society look like? In this case, society would suffer from distress and difficulties.

Thus, not wrongfully consuming each other's wealth is a command to all Muslims who are ordered not to practice usury, not to steal, cheat, lie, gamble, embezzle, nor to accept bribes because all of these practices are forms of consuming other people's wealth wrongfully. When you reflect more closely on gambling, you will find that it is quite a weird matter. Gamblers claim to be friends with each other as they wait for one another and eat together, while they are actually sitting together waiting for a chance to seize what is in his friend's pocket. What kind of friendship is this?

Thus, when Allah *the Exalted* commands you not to ever think that the obligations are difficult to be fulfilled because they are onerous, rather, consider not only what the obligations take away by limiting your actions, but also what they give you by limiting others' actions towards you. Allah *the Exalted* tells you that you must not take the wealth of others so that they may not take yours; therefore, you win and society also wins; it is a win-win situation. When a command is ordained to someone to refrain from stealing, it is indeed a command to all people to refrain from stealing. For this reason, whenever you receive any ruling from Allah *the Exalted* do not only consider the way in which the ruling may limit your freedom; rather, consider what the ruling has given you by simultaneously limiting other people's demeanour in their associations with you.

Here is an illustration of the foregoing point. When Allah *the Exalted* strictly forbids you to look at women who are not lawful to you, you must not lay your eyes on the women in custody of others. However, this command is not ordained to you alone; it is a command to millions of people not to lay their eyes on the women who are not in your custody. Thus, when you ponder over the matter, your will realizes that you gain more than what you lose. For this reason, I always say: 'Do not focus on the difficult elements in Allah's obligations or what they take away from you, but always consider what they give

you.' If you adopt this viewpoint, you will realize that every obligation that comes from Allah *the Exalted* is a profit to you. Otherwise, if Allah *the Exalted* let your hands loose to encroach upon all people, He would also let loose the hands of all people to encroach upon you and your properties—you would be affected more than them. Thus, it is for your interest to refrain from that.

Allah *the Exalted* excluded trade by mutual consent from wrongful consumption of wealth (*an-Nisa'*: 29). This means that you should not consume others' wealth unless there is a mutual benefit; that is, upon the condition that you exchange benefits with each other as compensation for what you take or give. Trade was mentioned because it is the ring that connects all vocations and professions in this life since the merchant is viewed as the middleman between the producer of the commodity and its consumer. Commodities are circulated through production and consumption, and the production may be agricultural, industrial or even in the form of services. Thus, trade encompasses all of them.

The phrase 'based on mutual agreement' means that the consent of the person is a condition for the determination of what is given as a compensation for the exchanged benefit. Hence, what is appropriated by way of taking advantage of the other party's bashfulness is proscribed and forbidden. For this reason, I say that everyone needs to reconsider and check his faith to see whether or not he has been fair throughout his life in the compensations he has given or taken in money, trade and exchanges, and whether or not they were equal and proportional. Thus, if any of them transpired to be incommensurate with the benefit he had elicited, he has to ponder over the matter so that he may give everyone, who has a right, his due right so as not to slip into the realm that was defined by the Hadith of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'I am just an ordinary man like you, but you resort to me to arbitrate on your disputes. I may be swayed by the arguments and evidence furnished to me by some of you based on what I hear. So let whoever of you whom I have given a right to which another Muslim is entitled to bear in mind that what he has taken is but a piece of fire; he may thus take it or leave it.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *Related by Malik in (Al-Muwata'), Ahmad in his (Musnad) and Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa'i and ibn Majah based on a relation by Umm Salama*

Allah *the Exalted* then says: ‘...and do not destroy one another....’ (*an-Nisa’*: 29) Here again, a plural is predicated of another plural. He means that you are forbidden to kill your own selves. This is what the one who commits suicide does. Only the one who has found himself enmeshed in a situation from which he does not have means whereby to disentangle and salvage himself, so he commits suicide. We say to this person: ‘you have looked at yourself merely as a human being in isolation from a Higher Creator.’ But the believer never isolates himself from his Creator; thus, when he is struck by a calamity beyond his capacity, he has to think, ‘Am I alone in this universe? No, I have a Lord and, as long as I have a Lord, I have to remember that even if I am not capable, Allah *the Exalted* is All-Able to do everything. In this manner, he would banish the idea of committing suicide from his mind because the one who does so could not find means to handle the conditions of his life, thus he ends it.

The value of faith is that once you find yourself entangled in a harsh condition and have no means to resolve it, you immediately say: ‘Allah *the Exalted* will not let me down and will provide for my livelihood from sources that never even occurred to my mind. He will also open for me doors that I might have never considered.’ In this vein, we have previously given an example to make the meaning more accessible. Thus, we said: ‘assume that someone walks on a road and has only one pound in his pocket; he then loses this one pound while having naught else in his house. He gets depressed about losing that one pound. But the one who loses a pound yet he has other five pounds at home, will be less depressed and his calamity would be less distressing. That is why the one who does not have the means to handle his life, has to take it easy and never despair. Why should he kill himself? Allah *the Exalted* says in a Divine Hadith: ‘My servant has himself forestalled Me; I have forbidden him Paradise.’⁽¹⁾

Are you the one who bestowed life upon yourself? No. For this reason, the One Who bestowed life is the only One Who is entitled to take it back. Thus, whoever commits suicide is not admitted to Heaven because he did not remember that Allah existed. Let us remember the stance of the people of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when they made their exodus out of Egypt

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in (*Al-Jana'iz*)

and were pursued by the people of the Pharaoh; what did the people of Musa (Moses) say? They said that they would definitely be caught by the people of Pharaoh. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) This was true since the sea was ahead of them and the army of the Pharaoh was behind them. They said so based on the means available to them and their human conception. But what did Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* say? 'By no means' is a negation. But how could Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* say: 'By no means'? Also, what are the things that will support him? He did not say it because of his physical humanity. Rather, he, depending on his firm belief in Allah, strongly declared that Allah would support him and guide him. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

Almighty Allah orders us not to kill ourselves. (*an-Nisa'*: 29) This means that none of us should kill ourselves due to losing the means to find a solution for our sufferings. This implies that you made yourself out of the Mercy of your Lord, yet if you still believe in your Creator, your distress will be relieved, and in case of facing such situations, you will say 'indeed the Almighty Allah is with me.'

Faith gives you strength and power to confront such difficulties. The saying of Allah '...and do not kill yourselves' (or one another) may refer to another meaning which is to prevent being killed by not throwing yourself into destruction. Since Muslims are only a unit of faith, the Lawgiver issued that 'if you kill someone, you will be killed. So, do not lead your soul to death,' since the legal retribution is admitted. His saying: '...and do not kill yourselves (or one another)' signifies that you should not do what may lead you to death.

Thus, Allah *the Exalted* let the people endear themselves to their own souls and not only that of the others; rather, He did not say: 'do not kill in order not to be killed' because He previously told us about the existence of retaliation. (*al-Baqara*: 179) When the murderer knows that he will be killed, he will keep himself away from doing so.

We also notice that Allah *the Exalted* orders us to greet one another upon entering houses. (*an-Nur*: 61) Will I greet myself or the people who are in the house upon my entry? It is already known that a man greets people when he says: 'peace be upon you.' This means peace is granted to them, and then they will reply: 'peace be upon you,' as if you have greeted yourself. It is clear

now that Allah *the Exalted* has regarded the believers as one unit, which means whatsoever happens to a single part will affect the whole.

Therefore, His saying, 'do not kill yourselves or one another' means that you should not kill yourselves. Thus, the previous verse may refer to some denotations; firstly, do not lead yourself to commit suicide; secondly, do not throw yourself into destruction by your own free will; thirdly, do not lead yourself to death due to legal retribution; and fourthly, do not kill others since you are one unit of faith; all of you bear the same command; not only one is commanded. Hence, no one is allowed to kill the other. Then, Allah *the Exalted* concludes the verse by telling us that He is Ever-Merciful to us; it is by virtue of His Ultimate Mercy that we are ordered not to kill one another.

وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ عُدْوَانًا وَظُلْمًا فَسَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِ نَارًا
وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

**If any of you does these things, out of hostility and
injustice, We shall make him suffer Fire: that is easy
for God [30] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 30)**

The word *dhalik* (this) is an Arabic demonstrative pronoun translated as 'this.' In the singular form, it means that the discourse is addressed from the Almighty Allah to His Messenger Muhammad, and the believers are addressed implicitly. In another instance, He *the Almighty* says *dhalikum* (plural form); it indicates that His discourse is directed towards us. (*al-Baqara*: 232) The word *dhalika* (that) refers to the preceding verse that prohibits killing oneself or others also refers to the verse dealing with devouring wealth wrongfully. Some other scholars said that this demonstrative pronoun may even refer to the previous verses of the Quran, beginning from the verse that prohibits the son from marrying the women previously married by his father. (*an-Nisa'*: 22) While others said that it refers to all commands and proscriptions mentioned from the beginning of the chapter until this verse. All these opinions are correct.

Allah *the Almighty* then speaks about those who do injustice to themselves (*an-Nisa'*: 30). The Arabic word '*udwan* (transgression) means transcending the limits; this may happen either out of oblivion or wrongfulness. The one

who transgresses wrongfully will take others' rights deliberately. But the one who does so obliviously and without being aware should reconsider his attitude; why so? The reason is that the punishment is severe. Allah *the Exalted* says that whoever does that aggressively will be cast into the fire. (*an-Nisa'*: 30) The verb depends on the power of its subject. Thus, when someone says to you: 'If you do such a thing, my little son will slap you severely', this will be different from threatening you that a strong youth will do so; why? The reason is that the action derived its strength from the doer himself. Then, who will cause the transgressor to receive the punishment of the hellfire? It is Allah *the Exalted* Who will make him suffer severely in it.

The Almighty Allah says that this is an easy matter to do because His Decree does not require processing; rather, it occurs immediately. We know that every action that requires processing needs time. Some actions may need an hour, and every minute of it is needed to accomplish part of the task. When the task is divided into sixty parts, such an action may be accomplished in sixty minutes. But, if it needs ten days, then we will tell the person who is entitled to undertake it, 'Cancel your break times and vacations and divide the work on the time left.' This is what we call processing because it is related to human beings. But the action of Allah *the Exalted* is something different. If Allah *the Exalted* orders something to happen, He would say: 'be, and it is.' Thus, every action of Allah is easy for Him because the order gets done by simply saying: 'be, and it is.' Allah *the Exalted* says that creating and resurrecting you is like one single soul (*Luqman*: 28). He *the Exalted* explains, 'I do not create every human being like Adam *peace be upon him* whom I have created, shaped and then I will resurrect. No. All creatures are like a single soul.'

إِنْ تَجْتَنِبُوا كَبَائِرَ مَا تُنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ نَكْفِرْ عَنْكُمْ
سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَنُدْخِلْكُمْ مُدْخَلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٣١﴾

But if you avoid the great sins you have been forbidden, We shall wipe out your minor misdeeds and let you in through the entrance of honour [31] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 31)

This verse is one of the eight verses about which Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said: in this chapter of *an-Nisa'* there are eight verses that are more

beneficial to this Islamic *ummah* (nation) than everything in the world.' We have said that the first of these verses is the saying of Allah *the Exalted* that He wants to make it clear for us (*an-Nisa'*: 26); He wants to shower us with His mercy; (*an-Nisa'*: 27) and He wants to lighten our burdens. (*an-Nisa'*: 28) Then, Allah *the Exalted* says that if someone avoided the great sins, He *the Almighty* will wipe out his minor misdeeds. (*an-Nisa'*: 31) Avoiding an action does not only mean not to do the action; rather, it means not even approaching any matter that is related to such action. By doing so, the believer would foreclose any possibility succumb to the desire of committing sins or even to imagine it.

These noble verses are considered the best thing for this Islamic *ummah* because they safeguard the human being against foolish choices that might exist in humans when they do not stick to the Path of Allah *the Almighty*. If a man was predetermined or preordained to do an action, he would have been relieved from the burden of choice. The difficulties from which humans are suffering are due to taking pride in the privilege Allah *the Exalted* has bestowed on them apart from all other creatures. This privilege is the mind that Allah bestowed on man to opt for different alternatives, while all other creatures have been content with being subjugated and subservient to do what Allah *the Exalted* has predetermined them to do, without having any choice of their own. We know that the Allah *the Exalted* says that the trust had been offered to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they failed to carry it, then man took it up out of his foolishness. (*al-Ahzab*: 72) Thus, man has wronged himself through the state of hesitation whether to follow his whims or to abide by Allah's Commandments, while other creatures which are subjugated and predetermined, do not have to deal with this issue; each one of these creatures undertakes its function automatically and relieve themselves from the burden of making a foolish choice. Therefore, these verses come to comfort man inasmuch as they assure that, if he makes a foolish choice, then Allah *the Exalted* wants to give him knowledge, forgive his sins and make it easy for him. Allah *the Exalted* also wants to remove man's bad deeds and forgive him in case of avoiding great sins. All of these are reassuring remarks for the human soul so that it would not despair due to the possibility of making a foolish choice. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* explains, 'I am your Creator and I know that you are powerless because you always have the choice between two enticing ways:

the way that Allah *the Exalted* assigns you to follow with the reward He has prepared for the obedient in the Hereafter, and the urgent whims and desires.'

As long as the issues fluctuate between two choices, weakness happens. Thus, Allah *the Most High* explains, 'I regard this situation in which you are because it is a product of your free choice and I am the One Who endowed you with such free choice.' Since Allah *the Exalted* bestowed man—who is the best among His creatures—with choice, he has to submit to his Lord in need and love.

There is a difference between the two cases: when something is predetermined to be subservient and so cannot escape what it has been preordained to do, and then it is actually Allah's Attribute of Omnipotence that works here. Yet, this does not give Allah the character of being beloved because being beloved means that the one who loves has the choice whether to obey or disobey; thus, if one offers obedience, he does so out of love. Therefore, Almighty Allah wants a man to prove his love for Him through his obedience. Despite the fact that everyone has the freedom to obey or to disobey his Lord, he will lean towards the side of obedience due to his love of Allah.

After Allah has finished expounding his obligations concerning matters of honours, possessions, blood issues, which include killing oneself etc., He explains to us, 'Do not ever receive the obligations in a way that may cause you to despair about being unable to do them. I will be pleased enough by you upon avoiding the great sins among the bad deeds you may possibly do.' Thus, the time span between two prayers is atonement for whatever bad deeds you may do in between, and if you pray two consecutive Friday Prayers, the period between them will be atonement for the sins you may commit in between. The same applies for the period stretching between two *Ramadan* months upon the condition that you should not insist on doing the minor bad deeds; why? It is because if you take that into consideration, you should also bear in mind that you may not live long enough to repent to Allah. Accordingly, do not say, 'I will commit the sin and repent later because you cannot guarantee that.' It would also be as if you were ridiculing Allah *the Exalted*.

Allah *the Exalted* then states that He wipes out the minor misdeeds if the great ones are avoided. (*an-Nisa'*: 31) I have said that the Arabic word *kufir* means (concealment). The meaning of concealment of the minor misdeeds is

that Allah *the Exalted* will not punish the sinners for committing them; since concealing the misdeeds means waiving the punishment. Similarly, *al-ihbat* (nullifying) of a reward means making it be in vain. Thus, if someone does something punishable, but avoids great sins, Allah *the Exalted* will efface his misdeeds, that is, He waives the punishment prescribed for them. By contrast, one may do a good deed that Allah *the Exalted* does not accept, so it will amount to nothing. Therefore, *takfeer* (concealment) as I have already said—means waiving a punishment, while *ihbat* of a reward of someone is to bring it to nothing and it becomes worthless.... (*al-Baqara*: 217)

This means that they will receive no reward for doing these good deeds because they did it while being heedless about the One Who gives the reward, that is Allah *the Exalted*. Rather, they were heedful about the created beings, not the Creator. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘You have done these good deeds in vanity so that people may say that you have done this.’

You have done this good deed so that people would acclaim you, and they have indeed done so. They said that you are a great benevolent and charitable person. They said that you built a mosque and read the signboard that you have put on the mosque in the midst of a big celebration. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* will make these good deeds as dust dispersed. (*al-Furqan*: 23) You did such charitable things in order to rejoice in the approval and acclamation of other people and what you desired has happened. For this reason, those who did things for charity and then put marble signboard bearing their names should consider their attitude. If each of them is keen to receive a reward from Allah, he should remove such signboard or hide it, and thus the problem would end. Allah *the Exalted* likes the one who pays alms to the poor, to the extent that he will be from among the seven kinds of people whom Allah will protect in His shade on the Day when there will be no shade. His Messenger Muhammad described them as, ‘...And a man who has given alms and hid it so that his left hand would not know what his right hand spends.’⁽¹⁾ If you give alms to the poor in charity, why should you reveal and expose the one who accepts such alms?

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

The word *ijtinab* (avoiding) means shunning something. That is why some people say: 'so and so avoided me,' which means that when this person met me, he shunned me and turned his back on me. What is intended in His saying, 'if you avoid', is keeping a distance from sins. When Allah *the Exalted* command you to refrain from something and also commands you, in another way, to avoid it, this indicates that avoidance is more eloquent since it means that you should not even be in the same place along with what Allah proscribed. Allah *the Exalted* commands us to shun the filth of idolatrous beliefs and practices and to shun false utterances. (*al-Hajj*: 30) To 'shun' in this context means to keep a distance; why so? The reason is that the sanctuary of Allah is His proscriptions.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear, and between the two of them are doubtful matters about which many people do not know. Thus, he who avoids doubtful matters clears himself in regard to his religion and his honour, but he who falls into doubtful matters [eventually] falls into that which is unlawful, like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Truly every king has a sanctuary, and truly Allah's sanctuary is His prohibitions.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Exalted* also commanded us to refrain from intoxicants, gambling, idolatrous practices and [fortune telling with] arrows. (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) 'Shunning', in this context, means that one should avoid being present in places where such sinful deeds are committed; lest such presence should distract, seduce or occur before him. Therefore, when you are in a place where intoxicants are consumed Allah *the Exalted* commands you to avoid it; that is, do not go to such places because when such intoxicants are present before you and you see people drinking them comfortably and happily, you may drink them yourself. But when you avoid these intoxicants and all the gatherings where they are consumed, you will not fall prey to their traps, nor will you give in to their allurements and seductions. For this reason, we have said, 'Avoidance is more eloquent than mere forbiddance.' There are people who justify drinking intoxicants for themselves upon the pretext that there is no text that explicitly prohibits drinking

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah

them. We say to each one of them, 'It suffices that drinking intoxicants is associated with the loathsome evil of idolatrous beliefs and practices.'

Allah *the Exalted* also commands us to shun false gods. (*an-Nahl*: 36) Shunning false gods does not only mean not to worship them, but it also means not to even try to see them. Accordingly, shunning intoxicants does not only mean not to drink them, but also you should not even be present in the place where they are consumed.

Al-kaba'ir (major sins) is the plural form of *kabira* (a major sin). As there is a 'major sin,' its opposite would be a 'minor sin' and 'smaller sin'; so what is lesser than the 'major sin' is not only the 'minor sin' because there is a 'minor sin' and there is what is smaller than the 'minor sin' which is the 'negligible sin.' Allah *the Exalted* states that He wipes out the minor misdeeds if the great ones are avoided. (*an-Nisa'*: 31) 'Misdeeds' in this context refer to the minor and even the smaller sins. But this is a matter over which the scholars pondered and lingered. Thus, they have said that the meaning is that inasmuch as people have avoided committing "major sins", we will entice them to do bad deeds since they may do the minor sins. We say, no. Insisting on doing a minor sin is a major sin. For this reason, do not allow yourself to do minor sins; Allah *the Exalted* only forgives what you do spontaneously or out of ignorance. Therefore, He *the Exalted* only accepts repentance from those who committed misdeeds out of ignorance. (*an-Nisa'*: 17) That is, He accepts repentance from those who do bad things without prior planning or reckoning. Afterwards, He *the Exalted* stated that He will not accept repentance of those who delay it until death overtakes them. (*an-Nisa'*: 18)

Thus, if you insist on committing a minor sin and repeat it, you will turn it into a major sin. But what if we do not manage to avoid great sins and we slip into them? The scholars whom Allah *the Exalted* made kind and merciful to His creatures maintained that no sin is considered a major one if the sinner repents to Allah. Similarly, no sin is considered minor if one persists in committing it. So, if you want to accept the former statement, you should accept the latter as well—you will have to accept both. There will be no major sin if there is repentance; the opposite of this maxim is that there will be no minor sin if there is persistence in sinning.

When the scholars wanted to define the major sin, they said that the great sin is that for which Allah *the Exalted* prescribed a torment in the Hereafter. Similarly, it is the deed for which a punishment, such as a prescribed penalty, has been decreed. Thus, the sins for which no prescribed penalty was decreed are classified under those sins that could be forgiven via avoiding major, minor or even smaller sins.

‘Amr ibn ‘Ubayd *Allah be pleased with him* was one of the scholars and ascetics of Al-Basra about whom one of the caliphs said, ‘All of them pursue a hunt and reward with the exception of ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubayd *Allah be pleased with him*’, meaning that all scholars go to the caliphs to take gifts and bounties with the exception of ‘Amr ibn ‘Ubayd *Allah be pleased with him*. Hence, people have testified for his integrity and genuineness. That scholar wanted to know what was meant with the ‘major sin’ and insisted on doing so, not through what the scholars said previously about it. He said, ‘I want to know it based on the text of the Quran; anyone who wants to talk to me about what a ‘major sin’ is should adduce for me a text from the Quran.’ When Ibn ‘Ubayd Al-Basri *Allah be pleased with him* went to Abu ‘Abdullah Ja‘far ibn Muhammad As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* who was, as we know, the most worthy of being asked because he was the scholar of the household of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and also because he researched the treasures of the Quran, extracted from it a lot of secrets and lived amid the divine flux of wisdom. Thus, Ibn ‘Ubayd *Allah be pleased with him* said to himself, ‘This is the one that I should ask.’ Accordingly, after he had greeted him and sat down, he read the saying of Allah *the Exalted* ‘...As for those who avoid grave sins and foul acts, though they may commit minor sins...’ (*an-Najm*: 32) He then lapsed into silence. Abu ‘Abdullah Ja‘far ibn Muhammad As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* asked him, ‘What has silenced you, Ibn ‘Ubayd?’ He replied: ‘I wanted to know the meaning of “major sins” based on the Book of Allah.’ Just consider Abu ‘Abdullah’s confidence in knowing the treasures of the Quran when he said to him, ‘I want to know the meaning of major sins based on the Book of Allah *the Exalted*. Abu ‘Abdullah said: ‘Indeed! You have come to one of the experts in it’ meaning that you have come to someone who knows this definition. He then said: ‘the first major sin is “Believing in another God beside Allah *the Exalted*” because He says that He does not grant forgiveness to the

one who associates others in worshipping Him. (*al-Ma'ida*: 48) Allah *the Exalted* will also forbid him paradise. (*al-Ma'ida*: 72) He then added, 'Despairing of Allah's mercy, since only the disbelievers are the ones who despair of Allah's Mercy.' (*Yusuf*: 87)

Thus, Abu 'Abdullah Ja'far As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* brought forth the ruling and adduced its evidence. He also added that one who would ever feel secure from the planning of Allah *the Exalted* because it is only the losing people who would do that. (*al-A'raf*: 99) The fourth great sin is disobeying and mistreating one's parents since Allah *the Exalted*, described the one who commits such a sin as being oppressive and bereft of grace. (*Maryam*: 32) He then added, 'killing a human soul,' as the one who kills another believer will be eternally punished in the Hellfire' (*an-Nisa*': 93).

In addition, those who accuse the chaste women who are unaware and believing women Allah *the Exalted* cursed them and prepared a great punishment for them. As for consuming usury Allah *the Exalted* says: 'But those who take usury rise up on the Day of Resurrection like someone tormented by Satan's touch. (*al-Baqara*: 275) He then added: 'retreating and escaping during battle.' This may happen when Muslims are attacked by their enemies and as they start marching to defend themselves. Allah *the Exalted* prepares severe punishment for those who turn their backs to the enemies during battle. There is also devouring the wealth of the orphan because Allah *the Exalted* stated that the one who devours the orphan's wealth is as if he is devouring fire, and the hellfire will be his abode. (*an-Nisa*': 10) Also, He mentions committing adultery, adding that fornicators will be punished in double on the Day of Resurrection, and they will be in a state of humiliation forever. (*al-Furqan*: 68-69) Further, concealing testimony about something one has witnessed; Allah describes those sin- doers as sinful at heart. (*al-Baqara*: 283) There is also the 'binding oath' which means that someone swears that he did something, while he did not or vice versa; that is, it is not related to something in the future. Those who ignore their pledges in return for little will have no respect in the Hereafter and on the Day of Judgement. Moreover, Allah neither speaks to them, nor will He look at them or purify them. Furthermore, they will have a painful punishment. (*Al-Imran*: 77) There is also *ghulu* which means to

deceive and misappropriate regarding spoils of war. Allah has warned the doers of this sin that they will come with what they had misappropriated on the Day of Resurrection. (*Al-Imran*: 161) In addition, there is ingesting intoxicants as Allah has coupled it with idolatry. Allah *the Exalted* states that intoxicants, along with other misdeeds, are acts of Satan, so we must avoid such practices in order to achieve success. (*al-Ma'ida*: 90)

Furthermore, there is the major sin of abandoning the prayers, since Allah *the Exalted* clarified that abandoning prayer is a reason for being cast into the hellfire. (*al-Muddaththir*: 42-43) In addition, included under this category of major sins are breaking covenants and severing the relationships with kinsfolk with whom Allah *the Exalted* ordered us to maintain good connections. Allah stated that those who do these things will be 'the losers.' (*al-Baqara*: 47)

Thus, all these are the major sins, based on the explicit statement of the Quran. 'Umar Ibn 'Ubayd resorted to a great scholar who managed to reveal to us the wisdom associated with each great sin. Thus, we should consider the basis of deduction by which the son of Ja'far As-Sadiq responded to his question. He answered him in a very organized and courageous way that allowed him to answer Ibn 'Ubayd immediately: 'yes'; meaning that he had the answer he was seeking. Then, he gives him the answer in an organized manner without much reflection or deliberation. This indicates that the answer had already been fomented and crystallized in his mind since the verses he adduced are not consecutive. Rather, they are picked from here and there (i.e. from different positions in the Quran). This indicates that he lived with the secrets of the Quran. That man grew up in the house of Ja'far As-Sadiq who had set a methodology for the believer so that if anything bad should befall him, he would find its remedy in the Book of Allah *the Almighty*. He indeed discovered that his fears are the factors that blur man's vision in life; that is, if someone fears something, this often implies that this thing is limited and well known.

I may be afraid of a specific thing, but someone may suffer from anxiety and grief even though he does not know the cause underlying these feelings. He may tell you: 'I am anxious and anguished even though I do not know the reason.' He may have depression and not know the cause. Also, there may be someone against whom a number of people are conspiring and maliciously

contriving. There may be a third person who likes the worldly life and wants to possess it all. All of these are the distractions of the human self; you may fear something, lament and grieve about something, and feel pity for yourself because of the cunningness and conspiracy being planned against you, or because you desire a worldly matter. Ja'far is the one who said, 'I am surprised by the one who fears something and never seeks refuge in the Saying of Allah *the Exalted* that He is enough for us as a guardian.' (*an-Nisa'*: 173)

Consider the method of deducing evidence when Ja'far said, 'because I have heard Allah *the Exalted* subsequently say: "...and they returned [from the battle] with the Almighty Allah's blessings and bounty, without having been touched by evil...."' (*an-Nisa'*: 174)

Just consider the accuracy and precision of his style and rhetoric. He said, 'I have heard Allah,' and he did not say, 'I have read.' It is as if when a man reads the Quran, he had to be sure that Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who speaks. The awe of Allah overwhelms whatever provisional accidents; that is, the one who reads the Quran is reading the words of Allah *the Exalted*. Thus, the awe and greatness of the Ever-Eternal overwhelms whatever accidental events one may be experiencing, no matter how grave and serious they are. Ja'far *Allah be pleased with him* added: 'I am surprised by the one who grieves and is taken over by sorrow and does not seek refuge in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'there is no God save You, Glory is to glory! Verily, I have done wrong!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87) Then, he said, 'I have heard Allah subsequently stated that He answered his prayer and saved him.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 88) Ja'far then added, 'I am surprised by the one against whom people conspired and contrived and did not seek refuge in the saying Allah *Glorified is He* 'the one should put his trust in Him.' (*Ghafir*: 44) He then added: 'I have heard Allah *the Exalted* subsequently saying "He preserved him from the evil of their scheming..." (*Ghafir*: 45) He then said, 'I am also surprised by those who desire worldly gratification and yet do not seek refuge in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'there is no power except in Allah *the Almighty*.' (*al-Kahf*: 39) Subsequently, he said, 'I have heard Allah saying, '...Although, you see me less than you in wealth and children, it may be that my Lord will give me (something) better than your garden.' (*al-Kahf*: 40)

These are deductions inspired by faith; the deductions here are similar to the ones there. If you consider the deductions that Ja'far made, you will realize that they cover the man's desires that tend to trespass their limits because Allah's Obligations limit man's pursuit of lusts and desires. These verses came forth to limit man's audacity and tendency to trespass limits. They start from transgressing the limits of monotheism and go down to severing one's own kinsfolk. These verses cover all aspects of audacity and tendency to trespass limits. The first of these is manifested in polytheism, since Allah *the Exalted* and says that polytheism is indeed a great injustice. (*Luqman*: 13) 'Wronging' and 'being unjust', as we know, both mean 'to give someone a right he does not deserve or is not entitled to', so by Allah, is it not the greatest injustice to say that Allah *the Exalted* has a partner? It is the most egregious, wrongful deed that one may ever commit against oneself. Do not ever think that you wrong Allah *the Exalted* because our Lord is the Most Sufficient and is in no need of partnership. He says in a Qudsi Hadith⁽¹⁾, 'I am so self-sufficient that I am in no need of having an associate. Thus, he who does an action for someone else's sake as well as mine will have that action renounced by me to him whom he associated with me.'⁽²⁾ When you ascribe partners to Allah, you do wrong to yourself because you would be exhausting yourself in a stupid way. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says 'the one owned by several partners, is not like the one owned by just one owner.' (*az-Zumar*: 29) The state of the one who associates partners with Allah is like that of a slave who is simultaneously possessed by ten masters who are not in agreement with each other. Rather, one of them says to him: 'Go', while another says: 'Come' Consequently, he has exhausted himself. Thus, he wronged himself.

Allah *the Exalted* states that the people are indeed doing injustice to themselves. (*Yunus*: 44) Believing in One God makes you submit to only one destination. There will be no commands from any other party and, accordingly, you will have comforted yourself. This is a matter that is supported by actual evidence for Allah *the Exalted* revealed it in His Quran which is memorized,

(1) *Authenticated saying of Prophet Muhammad wherein he tells us something Allah himself said*

(2) *Related by Muslim and Ibn Majah based through Abu Hurayra*

recited and read by all believers: 'Indeed there is no deity except Allah.' (*Ta Ha*: 14) In response to this statement, a believer would say, 'These are true words', while a disbeliever— Allah forbid—would say, 'This is not a true statement.' But this statement is conclusive, irrespective of the stance one may take. Let us assume that someone came and took over the universe. He then said, 'There no deity but me', so if the one from whom he took the universe were also a deity, the question would be: 'did that deity know that the universe was taken from him or not?' If he did not know, this would be a catastrophic deficiency on the part of such deity; and if he did know, what made him stay silently still? Thus, the issue is resolved; this is the problem of believing in more than one deity.

Hence, believing in the Oneness of Allah comes to relieve and salvage the human being of the bafflement arising from believing in multiple gods. Allah *the Exalted* is the True Lord and He is the One Who is capable of benefiting and harming. Worshipping one God is analogous to being possessed by one owner. But when you worship multiple deities, you would be like a slave who is owned by a number of masters who are in disagreement.

The second worst great sin after associating gods beside Allah is losing hope of Allah's Mercy. *Rawh* (mercy) is an Arabic word derived from *ra'eha* (a breeze). It is as if you are distressed due to the hot weather and then you look around to find an oasis and then, you resort to its shade and its beautiful breeze and take refuge in it. Allah *the Exalted* bestows this comfort to those who do not lose hope in His Mercy. It thus gives him strength and robustness of faith whereby one can handle the different events of life, since life is a constant state of change, and its events are multifarious. Furthermore, the world and the universe follow various laws in so far as its causes and effects are concerned.

Assume that you have exhausted all means available in your attempt to deal with a particular difficulty, what would one, who does not believe in God Who alone can defy and change the laws of causality, do? He will commit suicide as we have already said.

Thus, loss of hope in Allah's Mercy is the thing that renders His Omnipotence which created the laws, equivalent to these laws themselves.

Hence, if one finds no means to handle a great difficulty, he will despair about resolving it. But we say to the believer, 'Do not despair or lose hope because you believe in an Omnipotent God Who is greater than the laws themselves. Therefore, the one who loses hope in the Mercy of Allah *the Exalted* is like the one who denies and suspends the infinity of His Divine Power over universal laws. Allah *the Exalted* is indeed the Creator of these laws. When man loses hope in the Mercy of Allah, he thus equates Allah *the Exalted* with the infinity of His Power to the laws that He created. Even if the laws of nature refused things to happen, Allah *the Exalted* might cause them to happen.

Next, Ja'far has mentioned disobeying one's parents. Parents constitute the first cell in which we grow. Also, they represent the direct cause of your coming to being. Inasmuch as you disobey and mistreat the direct cause of your coming to being, you also disobey and mistreat the first cause of your being; that is Allah *the Exalted* whom you never saw. Accordingly, respecting your parents and treating them well is incumbent upon you not only because they are the cause of your existence, but also because they raised you when you were young. Thus, you have to obey and treat them well. This prompts and fosters you to return the favour of the one who is responsible for bringing you into being and raising you. When you try to trace the matter to its origin, you should start by raising a question, 'Who created your father? It was your grandfather. But who created your grandfather?' Where would you ultimately end up? You will only end at the one who does not have an end; it is Allah *the Exalted* who created Adam.

Ja'far then mentioned, 'killing a human soul.' Killing any being means to demolish and destroy its structure. In this respect, it differs from death which results from natural causes. Death means to die when your bodily structure is sound. But if someone receives a blow on the head, he will die as a result of this blow. This is what is meant by the destruction of a structure whether done through the use of stones, bullets or any other means. Let us read the Quran carefully. Allah *the Exalted* states that 'Muhammad is only a Messenger preceded by many Messengers, so will the Muslims leave Islam if he died or was killed?' (*Al-Imran*: 144).

Death is the deprivation of life without the destruction of the structure. This is only undertaken by Allah *the Exalted* while killing by destroying the

physical structure could be done by anyone. In both cases, the soul only leaves the body upon the will of Allah *the Exalted*. Thus, if someone is killed, it does not mean that the killer has put an end to his life before he was due to die. No; killing is only a means of destruction of the physical structure created by Allah *the Exalted*. Accordingly, even if the killer did not destroy the body of the one killed, the latter would also have died. Therefore, the killer is punished because he undertook the act of killing, while knowing that the soul only dwells in a physical structure of certain characteristics—which requires the brain, heart and other parts of the body to be sound. But when someone is due to die, death occurs even if nobody destroys his physical structure.

We have given an example to make this matter more accessible, and Allah *the Exalted* is above all comparison. We may liken the soul to electricity. You do not know the soul and you have not seen, heard, smelt or tasted it; by which perceptual faculty would you know it? You know that it organizes the life of your entire body. The evidence is that when the soul is taken out of the body, the latter decays. Therefore Allah *the Exalted* made it a piece of self-evidence in the human psyche to demonstrate His Existence—Who cannot be perceived by any sight—though He perceives everything. You may say: ‘We do not see Allah.’ We say: ‘Yes. Allah *the Exalted* orders us to reflect upon our souls.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21)

Allah *the Exalted* does not want you to only observe and watch the signs in the universe around you. First and foremost, the evidence is all present in you. Where is your soul that runs your body? Where is it? What is its shape? What is its colour? What is its smell? Do you know? No, you do not. Although it dwells within, you do not perceive it, so how do you expect to see Allah *the Exalted* Who created something that you are incapable of seeing? You expect to see the Creator though you are incapable of seeing one of His creatures. It is part of the Greatness of Allah *the Exalted* that He is imperceptible through the senses. Allah *the Exalted* talks about the moment when the soul descends into the body when He formed Adam and breathed into him from His spirit, then He ordered the angels to prostrate. (*Sad*: 72)

The reason is that this creature will be a full human being. Thus, if we liken that soul to electricity—and Allah *the Exalted* is above all comparison—

Have you seen it? You have not. Has anyone else done so? Did those who discovered electricity know what it is? No, they did not. They came to know it through its effects. Thus, when we see a light on, we say, 'Electricity is back.' When we see a fan running, we also say the same thing. By contrast, when the motion of such machines starts to wane and abate, people say, 'The thing has stopped moving.' But if it stops completely, it is said to have died. But this is not the case with the hand because the hand may not move due to paralysis while the one whose hands are paralyzed is still alive. For this reason, bring a mirror and put it in front of the mouth or nose. If you notice vapour on the mirror, this implies that the person is still alive, and his soul still dwells in him. The same holds true for the light bulb when it is broken: the electric power will not serve its function and cause the light bulb to produce light. The reason is that for electricity to work, the light bulb has to be intact. It must be an empty container devoid of all air and is designed in a way that, if it breaks, the light stops shining.

Thus, when we demolish the body, the soul cannot find the proper vessel wherein it can dwell. The same holds true for the electrical lamp; if it breaks, the electricity would still be in the wires, but no light will be seen. However, when you get a new lamp light re-emerges. It is the same with the soul. It does not dwell in the body except if it has certain characteristics. Hence, killing is the evidence supporting the incapability of the killer because by killing his rival, he implicitly testifies that he was powerless before his rival. It is correct that he was capable of killing him, that he did beat him and put an end to his life; but this is a foolish facade of the application of human capability; in reality, it is impotence and powerlessness.

By killing and destroying one's life, the perpetrator of the crime makes it clear that he is unable to handle or cope with seeing his rival alive, healthy and successful; that is why, (with heavy grudges filling his heart) he will not rest until he takes the life of his rival. Hence, when the killer kills, he provides enough evidence of his own impotence and incapability. If he had known that his killing of another soul is not evidence of capacity and power, but rather, of his powerlessness and impotence, and also his inability to confront the fact of his rival being alive, except by killing him, he would not have killed the latter.

But Allah, The True Lord *Glorified is He* lays down a system through which the human life is nourished and protected, and consequently safeguarded from wanton killing and destruction so that Allah's plan for man to be His vicegerent on earth would not be hindered or impeded.

We then come to another major sin: slandering married innocent women. We know that preserving and protecting the honour of innocent women is among the key pillars of a sound Muslim society so that the offspring and youth would not suffer from suspicions and disgrace. In any sound society, if no one is subject to unjustified suspicion and degradation, total freedom and happiness will reign. Because of that, anyone, who wants to spread and promulgate corruption and bad deeds, leading to unjustified slandering of innocent women, threatens the foundation of the society. Such act definitely threatens the lineage legitimacy of all individuals, and it also harms innocent people; children are harmed by it without having committed any sin. Allah *Glorified is He* has said: 'And no bearer of burdens shall be made to hear another's burden....' (*Fatir*: 18)

After this, Imam Ja'far *Allah be pleased with him* mentioned another form of major sins: consuming usury. As we know, usury causes an economic imbalance in society by making the rich getting richer at the expense of the needy.

Also, adultery is one of the major sins, as Allah, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And do not commit adultery – for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way.' (*al-Isra'*: 32) Adultery reduces the relation between a man and a woman to a level of mere sexual ravishment and the pursuit of gratification. And this certainly goes against the original relationship between Hawwa (Eve) and Prophet Adam *peace be upon him*, whom Allah designed and premised with the objective of making women a source of comfort for men, not just an instrument of pleasure or sexual gratification. Therefore, sexual pleasure is meant to be only a reason for achieving the higher purpose of preserving the human species. And man has to bear in mind that the effects of sexual pleasure are quite burdensome, as they involve raising children, whose childhood period is quite long and who are in need of care. If Allah *Glorified is He* had not associated these burdensome responsibilities with sexual pleasure, people would not be interested in having children.

Also, another major sin is escaping and turning your back to the enemy in battle. The reason is that such negative behaviour of running away in times of war creates an imbalance in the society of believers. Marching or going out for war implies that the enemies of Islam have already raided us; thus, it becomes compulsory for every Muslim to defend the borders of the Muslim land so that the enemies of Islam are not able to take over the lands of Islam, and the Word of Allah continues to be in the highest status therein. Therefore, for a Muslim, fleeing the battlefield is an example of the weakness of faith. For this reason, I would say that it is not a matter of boasting that a person is a believer because if a person were a true believer and deeply convinced of the ultimate goal which he was fighting for, he would not be afraid of fighting knowing that if he gets killed, he would become a martyr, and martyrs are promised tremendous rewards by Allah. Hence, fleeing the battlefield gives a bad example, not only as far as war is of relation, but also because it shakes man's faith and belief. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* explained that when a believer engages in war, he ought to desire either of two things, and both of them are good: victory or martyrdom. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has said: 'Say: "Are you, perchance, hopefully waiting for something [bad] to happen to us – [the while nothing can happen to us] save one of the two best things?"' (*at-Tawba*: 52)

But the believer should lurk and wait for the moment the following words of Allah would come to pass on disbelievers: 'But as far as you are concerned, we are hopefully waiting for Allah to inflict chastisement upon you, [either] from Himself or by our hands.' (*at-Tawba*: 52) Thereby, Allah, The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* wants the believer to prove the certitude and strength of his belief by sacrificing his or her own life; that is the grand cause behind his upholding to its different aspects because he believes he is going to a better life [in paradise]. However, it does not mean that the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the believers to commit suicidal acts except when that becomes necessary for victory. The evidence is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'For whoever on that day turns his back on them – unless it be in a battle manoeuvre or in an endeavour to join another troop [of the believers] – shall indeed have earned the burden of Allah's condemnation.' (*al-Anfal*: 16)

Thus, one should not engage in a battle if he is not prepared or if he does not think that he has a chance to win; otherwise, he would just be making a

negative impact on the numerical strength of Muslims. So what benefit accrued to us from this? The believer should pursue martyrdom for the sake of two rewards: the first pertains to him, which is heaven; the second pertains to the Muslims and society, which is attainment of security and victory.

After that, Ja'far *Allah be pleased with him* mentioned the issue of a 'hell-bound false oath.' This actually represents another issue related to the overall degradation of society. The reason is that, as the wording implies, a 'hell-bound false oath' dips the one who utters it into hellfire because he takes an oath and swears that something has happened, whereas, in fact, nothing happened, or swears that a particular thing has not happened, when it has. Due to that false oath, things get mixed up and truth gets distorted with lies, and part of its negative effect is that it may affect a judge and render him unable to arbitrate justly on the rights of people. That is why it is important to note that taking a false oath and telling lies—saying that something happened— may lead to harming another person. Further, this will also make it easy for anyone who wants to do injustice to find false witnesses to swear that what he falsely claims and alleges is true. In such a case, people will be filled with a sense of insecurity about life or personal interests.

Then, there comes another major sin, namely 'misappropriating the spoils of war.' This means that when the Muslims engage in battles and win, the take the spoils, which we call *as-salib* in Arabic — enemies' weapons and possessions. For Allah's sake, should a person who engages in battle with the sole purpose of collecting the spoils subsequently claim that he fights for the cause of Allah? Does it make sense? This definitely contradicts the essence of fighting for the cause of Allah. Fighting for the cause of Allah has been decreed so that the Word of Allah would be the highest and most exalted. For this reason, Allah, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And it is not conceivable that a prophet should deceive — since he who deceives shall be faced with his deceit on the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al-Imran*: 161).

We have previously said that whoever misappropriates a cow (a spoil of war), it will come to hunt him on the Day of Judgment, and it will produce a sound. Similarly, if one misappropriates cement, for instance, it will come to hunt him on the Day of Judgment; the same holds true for whoever

misappropriates metals or imports bad meat or rotten fish. All of those will have their sinful deeds coming after them on the Day of Judgment.

Then, another major sin mentioned is perjury. This is also one of the main factors that lead to the corruption of society because it does not let the believer feel safe and secure about his rights.

As for practising magic, it is also another major sin that threatens the fabric of society in a way that weakens its strengths since magic is about mystery, relying heavily on the power the unknown. The reason is that anyone whom magic befalls on never finds any direct or immediate enemy to confront; so this is not a kind of a battle he would know how to prepare for; such attack goes beyond any proper means of defence and protection. For this reason, The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘...Although they know, indeed, that he who acquires this [knowledge] shall have no share in the good of the life to come...’ (*al-Baqara*: 102).

This means that the person who practices magic will not have a share in the Hereafter. But someone may say: If such is the danger ensuing from the practice of magic in a way that it causes the destruction of society and weakens the sense of security, why does it exist? To this person, we respond: Everything is created by Allah, and each creature has a law that governs it. But this law may vary from one creature to another in different degrees and levels. Members of the same species are governed by the same law. When members of the same species are governed by one law that organizes their movement, this means that there will be equal opportunity for every one of them; so you will have an opportunity just like any other member of society in all aspect of life. But if you have an opportunity that another person does not have, this would be a defect and a flaw in the principle of equal opportunity for members of the same species.

Equal opportunity is one of the principles that protect the society because it provides everyone a chance to survive and progress. So what remains is just for everyone to labour and work hard in order to succeed and survive, but using the available means of survival and without tampering with the chances created for others. That is why equal opportunity is indeed a source of mercy for the entire humanity.

For example, the socialist Russia used to be the only super power, and it came from the East. Then, after its collapse, another super power emerged from the West, the United States of America. There are still other countries that are trying to emerge as powerful nations in order to adjust the balance of power; I mean countries like Japan, the united Germany and other countries in Europe are now seeking to form a union aiming to emerge as a superpower as well. All of these efforts are being made to adjust the balance of power, and to guarantee equal opportunity in making use of the God-given resources on earth. What protects the universe from destruction is the sense of control and deterrence. Before any nation thinks of launching a massive evil scheme, it will, first of all, consider what the reaction from other nations will be—and that will certainly deter it from carrying out its evil plan—because it knows the reaction might be even worse than the action. But if there were only one superpower, it might lead to chaos and destruction. Thus, protecting the human species is based on securing the principle of equal opportunity among its individuals. Nevertheless, man is one species and jinn is another. Yet both species have been created by Allah; hence, both have the ability to choose. For this reason, the Quran says: ‘Say: "It has been revealed to me that some of the unseen beings gave ear [to this Revelation], and thereupon said [unto their fellow-beings]: ‘Verily, we have heard a wondrous discourse, guiding towards consciousness of what is right; and so We have come to believe in it. And we shall never ascribe divinity to anyone beside our Lord.’ (*al-Jinn*: 1-2) When they swore, Allah has said: ‘Just as [we do not know how it happens] that some from among us are righteous, while some of us are [far] below that: we have always followed widely divergent paths.’ (*al-Jinn*: 11) Thus they (the jinn) are like us humans... But they have a law and we have a law: ‘...Verily, he and his tribe are lying in wait for you where you cannot perceive them!’ (*al-A‘raf*: 27) So, the jinn, according to their laws, are able to see human beings, while the latter do not see them. This shows that their law is less strict than that of humans because the law of each species is based on the germ of how it was firstly composed and created. We, humans, are created from clay; so we have a sensible and dense matter. But the jinn are created from fire. Only plants and animals are created from clay like us. Let us think of an apple, for instance; it is from clay because all its nutrition and elements of its

constitution are from the soil of the earth and its fertility. But let us assume you sit on one side of the wall and an apple is placed on the other side. Would you get its taste, smell or even perceive its colour from behind the wall? No, the object that stands between you and the apple, namely the wall, keeps you from availing yourself of it. But assume that there is a fire on the other side of the wall. After a while, you will start to feel the heat. This means that the heat has permeated the wall. Similarly, with regard to the jinn, they are naturally transparent and light, which is essential for their movement. Such transparency and lightness are not in the human nature. For this reason, notice that when the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* wanted to explain this fact to us, He gave us the example of our Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* to whom Allah *the Almighty* has subjugated the jinn. 'They made for him whatever he wished of sanctuaries, and statues, and basins as [large as] great watering troughs and cauldrons firmly anchored...' (*Saba'*: 13) When Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* convened with his soldiers and the people around him, he said: '...How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Or could he be among the absent?' (*an-Naml*: 20) After that, the hoopoe came to him and said: '...I have encompassed [with my knowledge] something that you have never yet encompassed – for I have come to you from Sheba with sure information!' (*an-Naml*: 22) 'Behold, I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given [abundance] of all [good] things, and hers is a mighty throne.' (*an-Naml*: 23)

All of this is not important. What is important is the statement of the hoopoe: 'And I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allah...' (*an-Naml*: 24) This is what concerns Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*⁽¹⁾ as a prophet. We have to bear in mind that Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was distinguished by the fact that he was both a king and a prophet. Accordingly, the hoopoe first addressed the issue of kingship: 'Behold, I found there a woman ruling over them; and she has been given [abundance] of all [good] things, and hers is a mighty throne.' (*an-Naml*: 23) These are the fundamentals of being a king. But the matter that concerns Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* '...And I found her

(1) The story of Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, and Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*.

and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allah...' (*an-Naml*: 24) As we can see, worshipping and adoring the sun instead of Allah upset the hoopoe even though he was just a bird. The anger of the hoopoe indicates that it is in a way conscious of the issues of monotheism and faith. Then, it says: 'Should they not worship Allah who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and earth and knows both what you conceal and what you make known?...' (*an-Naml*: 25). The hoopoe is thus mindful of Allah, the One Who deserves to be adored and worshipped. Also, notice that it (the hoopoe) mentioned 'what is hidden in the heavens and on earth' because its nourishment (as a bird) is always hidden under the surface of the earth, and it has to dig it out.

The story continued until Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said to those who were sitting with him: 'O you nobles! Which of you can bring me her throne before she and her followers come unto me in willing surrender to Allah?' (*an-Naml*: 38) This demonstrates that Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* knew that the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) was on her way to see him. The meaning of his saying: '...Which of you can bring me her throne before she and her followers come unto me in willing surrender to Allah?' (*an-Naml*: 38), is that whoever carried this mission would have to travel from Jerusalem to Yemen, unchain the throne, carry it and then bring it to him before the Queen arrived.

By Allah, is there a human law that can make such a thing possible? Never! For this reason, we know that the response was not from a normal human being; rather, it was from a person who knew that the law governing his existence would allow him to undertake that mission. Consequently, Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said: '...before she and her followers come unto me in willing surrender to Allah.' (*an-Naml*: 38) This statement gives indication that he knew that Bilqis and her people were on their way. So would a normal human being be capable of going, unchaining the throne and carrying it before the Queen's arrival? No; so, in this context, we can deduce and glean the rationale of the following words of Allah: 'And never concern yourself with anything of which you have no knowledge....' (*al-Isra*': 36)

In response to the request of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* one of the intelligent jinn said: 'A powerful and crafty jinn replied, "I will

bring it to you before you can even rise from your place. I am strong and trustworthy enough”” Whoever said so is not one of the ordinary jinn. They (jinn) are invisible intelligent beings, but among them there are also those who are powerless and of little of intelligence, like human beings. The one who made the offer made it clear that it was capable of bringing the throne of the Queen before Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would rise from his seat. So, how much time would that mission take? We do not know. Does that mean Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would have to linger with the people with whom he was sitting for two or three hours (until that mission was accomplished)? We do not know. All what we know is that it would take as much time as Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* needed to continue sitting with people, waiting for the Queen’s throne to be brought to him. However, a man upon whom Allah had bestowed illuminations and knowledge from the Book responded: ‘But one of them who had some knowledge of the Book said, “I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye....”’

Absolutely, this is not a word that an ordinary being would say, no! We have seen what a powerful demon from among the jinn said: ‘... “I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place....”’ (*an-Naml*: 39) But listen to what the one on whom Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed some knowledge from the Book had said: ‘I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye....’ (*an-Naml*: 40) For this reason, you have to consider the rhetorical wisdom underling the immediacy with which the Quran described what happened after Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* made this statement: ‘...And when he saw it truly before him....’

Thus, the throne was immediately brought to him, in a twinkle of an eye. In this respect, what is important for us to heed is that the jinn said: ‘...I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place.’ (*an-Naml*: 39) So, this means that it has a certain law that governs its movement and speed. The same applies to a man whom Allah has bestowed with knowledge of the book; he is also tied to a law that governs his capacity and movement. Hence, every species has a law that governs its nature and capacity.

Some people may pause and wonder here, just as some superficial thinkers do, posing this question: Who are the jinn, Angels and this entire

hidden world we are talking about here? We say: 'Do you believe only in what is perceivable? What would you make of microbes that were only discovered after the invention of microscopes? They were always there; but man (being unable to detect them) was completely unaware of their existence. So why cannot one consider that enough evidence of the existence of other (many) things that are not grasped by man's senses or within his limited power of perception? Can you not see that as a reasonable illustration of (many) unidentified beings that are really in existence though you (man) are yet to have the tool for discovering them? Why? Why do you not take this evidence in support of the existence of species that you do not perceive? Why are you stunned and start to wonder when the Quran talks about these unperceivable species? What is the problem with this?

Later, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says in the honourable Hadith (tradition): 'Verily, Satan flows through the (soul of) human beings like blood (i.e. as blood circulates the body through veins).'⁽¹⁾

We may wonder: Does Satan flow through one's body like blood? Does it take the form of fluid or what? We say that Satan is a subtle, invisible creature whose being is governed by special laws. By this, Our Lord *Glorified is He* exposes the ideologies of the atheists and those who do not believe in the Unseen that Allah mentions. For instance, we have made it clear that there are organisms, like microbes that are classified among material species created from clay, but at the same time they are microorganisms. But what does the microbe do? It infiltrates the body, and man is unaware of its presence in his body; subsequently, what does it do to your temperature? What does it do to your body? When Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* tells you that Satan flows in you just as the blood circulates in your body, this should not take you by surprise; should there be any contradiction? If there is something in your matter that is very minute, you do not know how it infiltrates your body, and you do not even feel it when it enters, but all of a sudden, you see changes in your temperature; it tampers with your body and stimulates the white blood cells to resist it and then excrete pus. What contradiction does this entail?

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah

Our Lord *Glorified is He* left a lot of facts about His material universe unknown to us in order to prove the truth of His sayings about other unknown matters. Allah says: 'But one of them who had some knowledge of the Book said, "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye...."' (*an-Naml*: 40) The True Lord *Glorified is He* has made the human being respond to the jinn so that he would not think that Allah reduced its lightness, transparency and speed from its constitutive elements; rather, Allah has made it clear to him that he acquired all these capabilities by the will of the Creator *Glorified is He*. Thus, ones capabilities and powers are not merely a function of the element that constitutes him or her; they are primarily based on and due to the will of Allah. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has explained that He can make a species that is strong due to the nature of its creation, namely the jinn, subservient to and be governed by humans; thus be subjugated to the latter and obeying his will. Allah *Glorified is He* did not make this an absolute power for all humans so that anyone who possessed it would not be tempted into vanity inasmuch as it will give him an opportunity that others do not have. This person may also abuse it through the practice of magic. We have explained this when we discussed the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'They pursued what the devils falsely attributed to the kingdom of Sulaiman (Solomon). Sulaiman (Solomon) was not an unbeliever; it is the devils who are unbelievers. They taught people witchcraft and that which was sent down to Harut and Marut, the two angels in Babylon. But these two taught no one until they had said, "We are but a trial, therefore, do not disbelieve [in Allah's guidance]."' (*al-Baqara*: 102)

A trial? But why is that? Why would magic be a temptation? The reason is that magic provides unequal opportunity in a sense that a person gains advantages over others. When this happens, there is no guarantee that such power will not be misused to bring harm and dangers unto others; yes, that may happen and will surely lead the perpetrator into hellfire. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So men learnt from them that by which they caused discord between a man and his wife; but they can harm none thereby save by the command of Allah; [on the contrary], these people learned that which would harm them and do them no good....' (*al-Baqara*: 102)

By this, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* gives a portion of His Infinite Power to man, who happens to be relatively weaker (in comparison to jinn),

and this power enables them to have jinn—which is, on the other hand, stronger than man—subdued and subject to his control. Jinn know this; for this reason, all those who see jinn only do so for a blink of an eye since the jinn cannot retain the form in which it manifests itself. If it embodies a human or an animal, it will be governed by this specific form, and if it is governed by a form and the one who sees it in such a form points a gun and shoots it, he may have it killed.

For this reason, jinn appear for a moment like a sparkling light and disappear. Such is a sign of the Infinite Power of Allah *Glorified is He* as He gives the lower species—human beings—a capacity to subdue the stronger species—jinn. But lo and behold, this is not in the interest of humans—with potential dangers that might befall them. For this reason, the believing jinn always say that they are contented in how they were created, with the law that governs their existence. The inequality of opportunities may lead us to become tyrants because those who possess an incomparably great power are prone to misuse and abuse this power against other people. The one who casts a charm to make a woman hate her husband or a man hate his wife is the one who has the power to dispel such a charm; however, he may not want to do that because it is in his interest that such situation continues (to boost his ego).

In that case, for one to be able to overcome such temptation—of thinking that he can manipulate others or that others cannot do any harm unto him—one has to always recall the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* ‘...but they can harm none thereby save by the command of Allah.’ (*al-Baqara*: 102) Magic indeed exists, as the Quran has explicitly stated, but you have to know that such a power is not inbuilt in magicians, nor something peculiar to them. If Allah *Glorified is He* had not willed that harm might befall a man through magic, that magic would not work. Also, if knowledge of magic becomes rampant in a society, this will lead to a problem—in the sense that many would be tempted into doing bad things. But let us make this clear: whoever follows magicians gets himself adapted to resorting to them to unravel charms or to cast spells on rivals; that is, he has become so enchanted by magicians, that he will lead a very murky life full of sadness and grief as per the words of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘Yet [it has always happened] that certain kinds of

humans would seek refuge with certain kinds of jinn: but these only increased their confusion' (*al-Jinn*: 6).

It is true that the jinn are capable of practicing magic, but magic only increases the toil and burden of the one who practices it. That is why every believer should protect himself by the prayer: 'Allah you have made some of your creatures capable of magic. However, You have reserved for Yourself the permission to harm; may You forbid and protect me from those whom You have enabled by the power You have reserved for Yourself.' If the believer says this prayer, he will not fear magicians, and they will not have access to him. They only have power over the weak. Magic engenders inequality in opportunity, segregates people and leads to the disruption of the social balance.

Now let us turn to another major sin, which is refusal to pay obligatory alms (*zakat*). When Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* asks us to pay alms, He draws our attention to the fact that we are not paying anything that actually belongs to us. Everything belongs to Allah. For instance, the 'intellect', used by man to plan, was created by Allah; the faculties, through which man performs different kinds of work, are created by Allah, and the land on which you work or the craft you practice is also created by Allah. Thus, everything comes from and returns to Allah. However, despite this fact, Allah made it clear that He will respect man's work, but he has to give to his poor fellow brothers (in charity) some of what Allah has conferred upon him.

Someone may say that since Allah is the Lord of all, why does He make someone poor? We respond that He does so in order to show that change is characteristic of our world, and also to remind the rich that poverty may one day befall them as well; it is also a reminder to the strong that weakness may befall them.

This issue gives a perfect illustration of the (divine) cosmic order through which the heart of the wealth gets imbued with mercy and compassion towards the needy, helping him with alms and charity. Hence, if the duty of alms-giving is not properly observed, its negative effect fills the entire universe in the form of economic disorder, in a way that we all see now. For this reason, all the forms of hunger and starvation around us are a reflection of people not observing their duty of paying alms; this also applies to other forms decadence

and suffering we see in society; it shows that people do not abide or adhere to the Path of true teachings of Allah because our Lord fashioned the entire society on the basis of a divine system that guides equal opportunities so that any deficiency in a specific part should be made up by another part. By this, if what happens is a sweeping poverty here and there, then you know that it is a result of people not been true to the due right of Allah.

After this, Imam Ja'afar as-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* talked about the major sin of 'abandoning prayers.' As we know, prayers stand as a means of pronouncing of our permanent allegiance and loyalty to the One God, Allah. You, as a Muslim, profess that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger; and you do that only once in your life. The same applies to the duty of paying alms (to the needy), if you are financially capable; you also do that once a year. Further, you perform *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) once in your lifetime; and with regard to *Ramadan* fasting, you, as a Muslim, observe the fasting only one month of the year. It is worth mentioning that, if you are ill, you are exempted from fasting, and you may be relieved of this religious duty entirely if you suffer an ailment from which there is no hope of recovery. One may not fast either, if he is too old for it. Moreover, if you are poor, you do not pay the alms; you are exempt from it. Furthermore, you are exempt from performing pilgrimage if you are financially incapable.

Hence, here we have three pillars of Islam from which a Muslim is given exemption (once the necessary conditions are met). There remain two other pillars of Islam: professing that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger and prayers. It suffices for a Muslim to make the declaration of faith once in his entire life. What is then left of the pillars of Islam? It is prayers. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Prayers are the foundational pillar of Islam.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, abandoning prayers means rebellion against the aspect of showing servitude and loyalty to Allah *Glorified is He* as He ordained it five times a day

(1) Narrated by Abu Naimim Al-Fadl ibn Dikin based through 'Umar. This Hadith is hasan (good). It is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in (Shu'ab Al-'Iman). However, the phrasing was 'imad instead of 'amud—the Arabic word in the above Hadith (prophetic tradition) translated as pillar. But his relation is also through 'Umar, and it is considered weak.

and decreed performing it in group on Friday, every week. Why so? This is intended so that all servants of Allah see each other as true servants and His worshippers. Thus no one ought to worship Allah in secret, preventing others from seeing him. All of us prostrate to Allah and we have to pronounce our allegiance to Him. When we quit prayers, such declaration of allegiance to Allah ceases to exist.

It may seem strange that Allah *Glorified is He* ordained prayers in a sense that you have to go to Him five times a day, by means of commands and assignments, and that if you fail to go to Him (observing prayers), you will be sinning. But the fact is that He does not close His door; go to Him at any time, at any place, and you will find Him giving you attention. Nevertheless, you ought to stand in front of Allah fully comprehending of His supreme Majesty and Honour. We have said before that, if you need to meet a person of high authority in this world, you will always have to write a request beforehand; then you set an appointment, and one of the person's aides asks you about the subject you want to discuss with his superior. After all this rigorous arrangement—and you have eventually managed to meet that person—he may pause and end the meeting and discussion at any time. But Allah *the Almighty* does not treat us this way. You may go to Him at any time and stay in His presence for as long as you wish, and He will never end the meeting unless you end it. For this reason, they say:

‘It is enough glory for me that I am a servant to a Lord

Who entertain me (accept me in His presence) without any prefixed appointments

He is most Glorified in His sanctity

But I can meet Him whenever and wherever I like’

It is true that Allah *Glorified is He* commands a Muslim to meet Him (observing prayers) five times a day, but He never restricts His time of meeting with his servants, He leaves His door open for a servant to meet Him at any time. We have previously explained—and to Allah belongs the loftiest examples that we can think of—let us assume that a product is examined by its manufacturer five times a day; would such product have any defect? No.

Similarly, you are examined by your Creator and Manufacturer five times every day. Any ordinary product gets fixed by its manufacturer using a wire, a screw or a compass to adjust its components. But in your case, you are a creature fashioned by Allah *the Almighty* and your Lord is Unseen; thus, He fixes you in the way He thinks is most appropriate.

After all we have discussed about the major sins, there remains: dishonouring one's covenant and alienating his kinsfolk. Dishonouring one's covenant makes people lose trust and confidence in each other, and this makes doubt and mistrust widespread in the Muslim community, thus filling hearts with rancour and animosity. Promises may be enough to solve the problem of the needy. If a financially capable person tells someone who is incapable: 'I promise you', and then he honours that promise, the latter will trust him. But if a debtor promises to settle a debt with the creditor, and then fails to honour that promise, the other (the creditor) will not believe him anymore. However, if he honours his promise, and then keeps doing that, promising and honouring the promise again and again, he will become a trustworthy person, and everything the people have will be his. For this reason, people say: 'One who takes and gives (loses nothing); he ultimately possesses everything.'

Then, we turn to the second part of the major sin, the alienation of one's kinsfolk. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* derives the Arabic name for kinsfolk (*ar-rahim*) from His own Name in Arabic (*ar-Rahman*), meaning the Most Compassionate. Allah *Glorified is He* said in the Qudsi Hadith: 'I am the Compassionate. I have created the womb and assigned it a name derived from My Own Name. Whoever relates to it, I relate to him, and whoever alienates it, I alienate him'⁽¹⁾

We all know the story⁽²⁾ of the Prophet's companion, Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him*, when his aide-de-camp came to him and said: 'O Leader of the Faithful, there is someone at the door who says that he is your brother.' Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him* then surprisingly asked his butler: 'Which of my brothers? Do not you know my brothers? The butler responded: 'He says that he is your brother.' When the man walked into the room, Mu'awiyah

(1) Narrated by Ahmad and Al-Bukhari in (*Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*) and Abu Dawud, Al-Hakim based on a relation by 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf

(2) The story of the man who claimed to be the brother of Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him*

Allah be pleased with him asked him: Are you my brother? He said: 'Yes.' Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him* then said: 'Which of my brothers are you?' The man replied: 'I am your brother from Adam.' Mu'awiyah *Allah be pleased with him* then said 'This is a much severed bond of kinship of which I was not aware; indeed, I will be the first to honour and relate to it.'

These are the major sins that Imam Ja'afar As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* has mentioned. Each of them may cause the destruction of the entire society. Every major sin demolishes an aspect of society, and this something alien to the Islamic faith, which lays down a path that if we follow, we will all live in peace; and Islam caters for us to live in peace and prosperity. Thus, if you, Muslim, commits one of those major sins, you have to bear in mind that, in doing so, you are actually shaking one of the pillars of society, and that will definitely affect its state of security and peace. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If you avoid the great sins which you have been enjoined to shun...' (*an-Nisa'*: 31). If we examine the phrase '...which you have been enjoined to shun...' we will be able to understand the basis of all virtues; i.e., removing deficiency and making way for perfection. Accordingly, before you enact perfection through the commands, you have to preclude deficiencies through proscriptions. For this reason, they say that purifying should precede beautifying.

'If you avoid the great sins which you have been enjoined to shun, We shall efface your [minor] bad deeds...' (*an-Nisa'*: 31). Here, the Arabic word *kufir* (which means 'efface' in English) refers to the act of 'concealing and covering' because the Arabic origin of the word 'efface' mentioned in the verse from Quran means 'veil' or 'concealment.' We have said before that the phrase 'effacement of sins' means 'suspension and relief from punishment', whereas its opposite can be inferred from the Arabic word *Ihbat* which means 'depression' and leads to losing the reward, giving the connotation of a negative conduct that leads to a bad consequence. Allah says: '...and shall cause you to enter an abode of glory' (*an-Nisa'*: 31). This means that Allah is addressing His servants saying that He will not only exempt you from torture, but He will make you enter paradise which is qualified here as an 'abode of glory.' This can be further attested to by what Allah *Glorified is He* says in a different verse: 'For those who persevere in doing the good there is the ultimate good in store, and more [than that]...' (*Yunus*: 26).

Thus, we can understand from the previous verse that not only that Allah would save His believers from punishment (for keeping away from major sins), but He will also admit them into 'the abode of glory.' For you to comprehend what 'abode of glory' means, it is better to know that the nature of this abode of glory will be in par with the greatness and capability of the One Who admits people in there. So, imagine an abode of glory prepared by Allah *the Almighty*; how will it look like? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* quotes Allah *Glorified is He* in a Qudsi Hadith saying: 'I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard and what no heart has ever conceived. So recite if you wish: No person knows what is kept hidden from them of delights of the eye as a reward for what they used to do.' (*as-Sajda*: 17)⁽¹⁾

Then, this picture is transformed into a new shape in which, according to Allah's Will, there is a design to make balance among the members of the human species, and the main goal is to provide protection for them from any harm or danger. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to establish a balance and faith-based harmony between the two kinds of humans; as we know, humans are of two kinds: male and female, and the species are only divided into homogeneous individuals when they share common traits and characteristics; otherwise, they would not be able to interrelate. Hence, it is clear that the aspect of homogeneity is what creates the bond in a single species that comprises two kinds, but since the same species has been divided into two kinds, then each must have a mission. Males and females are the two kinds of the human species. The male and female kinds share common sexual needs; however, they differ in other needs respectively. Each kind is then divided into individual members. Individual members are not replicas; rather, they share features that are common to all members. In addition, every individual may have his own talent, leadership and adeptness in a certain field. This is how integration is accomplished among members of the human species.

Since the human species is divided into two kinds, men have their own special characteristics and so does women. Allah *Glorified is He* did not make males and females equal, not even in their body structure. It is true that their general

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

body structure is the same: head, trunk and legs. But Allah distinguishes each kind by certain characteristics: men have their own special shape and so do women. Therefore, to those who call for equality between men and women, we say that a woman has her own special structure and constitution just like the man has his own structure and special constitution. Thus, if you equate them, you will assign to women areas of specialty that belong to men, while men will not be able to share what naturally belongs to women. That is, the inherently female activities would not be completed, and nobody would perform them. Thus, you burden the woman with what she will not be able to endure; therefore, you will be wrongful because you would be causing her more suffering.

In the process, Allah *Glorified is He* sometimes creates a new species; and in other instances, He divides a single species into two kinds. Hence, He wants us to pay attention: each kind has its own mission, but it shares a common feature with the other kinds. But what is it that is common among males and females? Both of them are humans; each is required to have belief and faith, and neither should dominate the other as far as his or her creed is concerned. Both are equal in this regard; no one should impose a creed on the other. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* gave us an example of the personal differences between females and males with regard to primary matters related to faith. Further, this plays a different role in secondary matters related to rulings. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For those who are bent on denying the truth Allah has propounded a parable in [the stories of] Noah's wife and Lot's wife: they were wedded to two of Our righteous servants, and each one betrayed her husband; and neither of the two [husbands] will be of any avail to these two women before Allah when they are told [on Judgment Day], "Enter the fire with all those [other sinners] who enter it!"' (*at-Tahrim*: 10)

Both were Messengers of Allah. However, they could not persuade their wives to follow the path of monotheism. This strengthens the fact that every human being is granted a right to the freedom of belief and thought, and this right is fundamentally inalienable. Allah, The True Lord *Glorified is He* also says: 'And for those who have attained faith, Allah has propounded a parable in [the story of] Pharaoh's wife as she prayed, "O my Lord! Build for me a mansion in the paradise [that is] in nearness to You, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from all evildoing folk!"' (*at-Tahrim*: 11)

The Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god, could not force his wife to abandon her faith. Allah, The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* has said about her: '...she prayed, "O my Lord! Build for me a mansion in the paradise [that is] in nearness to You, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11).

Thus, being a male or female makes no difference in matters of faith since these matters involve reasoning and thinking. A woman may come up with a brilliant idea that a lot of men are not able to come up with. A good example is the wife of Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* Umm Salamah *Allah be pleased with her*, and her stance on the Treaty of Hudaibya. Some of the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were upset about the terms of the treaty which Prophet Muhammad wanted to conclude with the pagans of Mecca. Among those⁽¹⁾ Companions was 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* who said: 'How could we accept to be in an inferior position even though we have faith in Allah and embrace His religion?' But the Prophet's Companion, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* answered him: 'Watch your tongue 'Umar, do not forget that it is Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, you are addressing. At this point, the mind of Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* got filled up with a sense of discomfort by what he noticed—that his companions could not grasp the hidden meaning of his stance on the agreement, including 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* known for his fiery zeal and passion for his faith; he could not help giving vent to a strong agony in his heart—and the Prophet was very sure the Companions, out of their love for Islam, just did not want to stoop down to the pagans of Mecca. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went away —being troubled— and found Umm Salamah *Allah be pleased with her* and said to her that the companions, being too depressed for how the treaty played out, failed to carry out his commands: 'See how the companions behave; do you not see the people, I commend them and they do not follow my orders, even though they hear my words clearly and look me in the face?' She then replied: 'Muhammad, Messenger of Allah, do not blame them for they are concerned

(1) *The story of the deliberation between 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with both of them during the treaty of Hudaibya*

about a great thing: the toil you have incurred in the reconciliation matter and their return without a victory. Go out to them but do not say a single word to any of them until you slaughter a sheep and offer it as sacrifice to Allah, and then call upon your barber to cut your hair.'

Yes, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had already signed the Hudaibya peace treaty and the matter was over, but Umm Salamah's stance *Allah be pleased with her* was a reflection of the mercy of Allah on the companions who protested against the terms of the treaty endorsed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; in the sense that she, in a very intelligent manner, calmed down the situation. Then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* approached the Companions and clarified to them his stance, saying: 'You may enter Mecca and find there people you do not know they are Muslims because many of them were hiding their faith from the disbelievers; [which means that] a house of a disbeliever may possibly be sheltering a Muslim [and you do not know]. [So if you go there armed to the teeth and ready for war,] You may end up killing Muslims inadvertently, and then be stricken with shame and disgust by how the outcome of the situation, something you will definitely hate and not be able to cope with, as Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has said: '...And had it not been for the believing men and believing women [in Mecca], whom you might have unwittingly trampled underfoot, and on whose account you might have become guilty, without knowing it, of a grievous wrong – [had it not been for this, you would have been allowed to fight your way into the city: but you were forbidden to fight] so that [in time] Allah might admit to His grace whomever He wills. Had they [who deserve Our Mercy and they whom We have condemned] been clearly discernible [to you], We would indeed have imposed grievous suffering [at your hands] on such of them as were bent on denying the truth.' (*al-Fath*: 25)

The phrase 'been clearly discernible [to you]' on which the Arabic word *tazayalu* means if the believers (new Muslims) were recognizable and could be distinguished (from among the disbelievers in Mecca), it would have been much easier for the Muslims to punish the disbelievers severely. Hence, that is how Allah explained to the Prophet Muhammad's Companions the wisdom (and some of the hidden objectives) behind the Prophet's stance on the treaty

of Hudaybya, and then everybody was content. Now, back to the disposition of the Mother of Believers, Umm Salamah, on this matter, this is proof that Allah does not forbid or preclude that women may have reason and mature thinking. For this reason, we find that the Quran asserts in the story of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) what she thought about the man who was coming to shake the foundations of her kingdom, and whether or not he was seeking to be the ruler. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* has related in the Quran that she said:

‘When the Queen had read Solomon’s letter, she said: ‘O you nobles! A truly distinguished letter has been conveyed unto me. Behold, it is from Solomon, and it says, ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, and The Dispenser of Mercy. Do not put yourselves above me, and come to me in submission to Allah.’ She added: ‘O you nobles! Give me your opinion on the problem with which I am now faced; I would never make a [weighty] decision unless you are present with me.’ (*an-Naml*: 29-32) Now, what was the reply of her chieftains? They said: ‘No. This is your call.’ As the Quran has recounted their statement: They answered: ‘We are endowed with power and with mighty prowess in war – but the command is yours; consider, then, what you would command.’ (*an-Naml*: 33)

Men of war, as we know, always follow the chain of command when it comes to issue of waging wars. The final decision to engage in wars lies in the hands of heads of state, i.e. the commanders-in-chief (and high-ranking military commanders) who do not take the issue of war very lightly. No matter how powerful the nations are in regard to their military capabilities—soldiers and their commanders normally wait for a command to come from above their superiors— they are the sober politicians and statesmen who have to ponder over the ramifications and consequences of war. Therefore, in this context of the Queen of Sheba’s story, we hear the commanders of the army saying to Queen Bilqis: ‘...We are endowed with power and with mighty prowess in war – but the command is yours....’ (*an-Naml*: 33) So they left the whole matter (the final decision) to her, and (you know) she happened to be a woman! She deliberated over the issue and said: ‘I would try and examine him to see whether he is after taking over the throne or he is a man of religion.’ Then, she sent him a present. The Quran related to us what Prophet Sulaiman

(Solomon) *peace be upon him* said when he received the present: 'Do you people mean to add to my wealth? But that which Allah has given me is [so much] better than all that He has given you! Nay, it is [only such as] you that would rejoice in this gift of yours!' (*an-Naml*: 36)

The Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) then realized that Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* did not want to usurp her power and kingship; rather, he wanted to relay a message to her. Accordingly, she said: 'I will go to him and convert to Islam. Here you have to note the efficacy of the rhetoric of the statement of the Quran when it depicts the faith of a queen who said: '...I have surrendered myself, with Solomon, unto the Lord of all the worlds!' (*an-Naml*: 44)

This means that she had completely submitted to the will of Allah and joined Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) in being a servant of Allah. This is an incredible moment of faith at its best—submission to Allah in sincere servitude takes away grudges from hearts. Another important point is that the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) was a woman whom Allah *Glorified is He* blessed with sound mind and intelligence. When she went and found that her throne, left in her country, had been brought to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* by one of his aides blessed with knowledge of the book of Allah—not only transported there, but also completely installed—she was taken by surprise and confusion. They said to her: 'Is this how your throne is?'

'And so, as soon as she arrived, she was asked: "Is your throne like this?" (*an-Naml*: 42) She replied courteously and diplomatically saying: "It is as though it were the same....' (*an-Naml*: 42)

So despite the fact that she was a woman, Allah *Glorified is He* did not deprive her of having insightful thought. For this reason, we should not (indulge in any act of sexism and) claim that women do not have intellect (as if this blessing were confined only to men). The important thing for a woman is to know that she has certain limitations related to her gender. Thus, if she notices that she lacks something that a man has, she should not consider that a defect in her, for she has qualities that men lack; she is even physically different from men. For example, a man is naturally tough and strong, whereas the woman is, by nature, characterized by being soft, delicate and flexible; this is in addition to her being filled with immense passion and overflowing

tenderness. In contrast, a man is inflexible, decisive and resolute; accordingly, each gender is set for the accomplishment of a certain mission. Thus, no one should say he is inadequate in a certain aspect (and get depressed for that); no, he should rather know that he is blessed in other areas where many people are deficient and inadequate.

Religion, then, comes forth to clarify to the believers that men are forbidden to wear silk, whereas women are allowed to; the latter are also allowed to wear gold, which is also forbidden for men. What a great sign of being pampered (for women)! So, as we have already said, Allah *Glorified is He* forbade men from wearing silk and gold, but He allowed all of that for women. Moreover, Islam requires (as the main objective of marriage) for women to be a source of comfort for men. The man is naturally created to toil and cater for his family; that takes him around to work and make ends meet. Then, he comes back home and is met by his wife with tender loving care. The one who sharpens the sword is as important as the courageous fighter who uses it to strike; each has a function and a role that complements the other's function and role. The same holds in the case when a man enters his house to find his life fully organized due to his wife's exertion and effort; he feels comfortable and thanks her for sharing the burdens of life.

Allah (The True Lord) *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ۚ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ
مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ ۚ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ
فَضْلِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٣٢﴾

Do not covet what God has given to some of you more than others – men have the portion they have earned; and women the portion they have earned – you should rather ask God for some of His bounty: He has full knowledge of everything [32]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 32)

Consequently, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* created the universe and all the species it comprises; each genus encompasses two or more species, and each species includes individual members. Accordingly, if you know that a

genus comprises two species, you have to know that they share the qualities that define the genus and differ in the specific requirements of each species, which makes each one of them distinctive; otherwise, if they were identical, there would not be two species in the first place. The same holds true for individuals. Let us take matter, for instance; matter is a general material divided into different elements, and each of those elements has its respective function. For example, if we want to construct a building, the construction will require sand, cement, steel and tools. That is, all those items are ingredients necessary for building; however, each has its own function: cement has a function, plaster has a function, sand has a function, stones and pebbles have functions and none of them can replace the other (considering an ordinary construction). The human species comprises of two kinds: the male, represented by men, and the female, represented by women. They share same characteristics of the human species; however, (in their own individual form) they are different inasmuch as they represent different kinds. Thus, it would be difficult for you to substitute one kind for the other (it may not be a perfect result).

So, since we know that Allah *Glorified is He* has created two kinds for the human species, it would be absurd if you said that one kind must be identical to the other kind. This is also true for time. Time is the condition for the possibility of any event or occurrence; it means that every event and accident must occur in a certain time; further, every time period has certain events that befit it. For instance, daytime is meant for an event that naturally occurs in it. Similarly, night is the period of time suitable for particular actions, events, etc. For instance, the night is the time for rest and relaxation. By contrast, daytime is the period of time suitable for things related to work and action. If you try to reverse this order, you will be disrupting the nature of things and attempting to put together two opposites.

We have explained that Allah *Glorified is He* uses some issues we agree on (that is, common among people and with no ambiguity) to explain to us about something we disagree on. It is as if He is telling us that the solution for our disagreement lies in what you agree upon. There is no disagreement, for example, on the fact that night is the time for seeking tranquillity, comfort, respite and quietness, and that daytime, by contrast, is for action and movement. All

people do this. So Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* explains that time sets the condition and context for an activity because activities differ from each other. But does this mean that days and nights are opposites and antithetical poles or are they rather complementary?

They are indeed complementary; the reason is that the comfort one enjoys at night is intended to guarantee the correctness of the activity of the daytime. You sleep and rest to resume your activity and work anew. Thus, the night activity helps you to accomplish the daytime missions. If someone stays up all night, he will not be able to work the next day. Accordingly, what enables a person during the day? It is the rest he gets during the night. Thereby, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted*, has explained that any matter that people unanimously agree on, be it religious or not, is enough to help us solve the riddles of things we disagree on. For example, if you disagree about males and females and whether or not they should be perceived as equals with regard to work, activity and gender, we will respond: No, you should try to understand this (divine rule) through what we have said about (the law governing) time on which there is a general consent. Thus, take what you have agreed upon as evidence in support of—and for you to fully comprehend—what you disagree on. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* has given the example: ‘Consider the night as it veils [the earth]...’ (*al-Layl*: 1). When the night veils the earth with darkness, it brings about tranquillity and peace. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* has said: ‘And the day as it rises bright!’ (*al-Layl*: 2)

By contrast, when the sun rises, motion and activity start. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* brought forth an analogous—but different— pair of integrating opposites, and then He has said: ‘By (the mystery of) the creation of male and female; -Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse.’ (*al-Layl*: 3-4). This means that every species has a mission to undertake. Thus, we know that the human species comprises two kinds: males and females, and both share common characteristics and functions. Each of them shares the attribute of being humans who enjoy the right to dignity and the freedom of belief. Hence, no man should force a woman to embrace a particular creed. We have given the example of the wife of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* the wife of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* and the wife of the Pharaoh.

Thus, their shared attribute—between males and females—is the freedom of belief. No one should try to dominate the other. Also, each one enjoys the freedom of reasoning about different missions. We know how Umm Salamah *Allah be pleased with her* advised Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during the Treaty of Al-Hudaybya, and how she managed to save all Muslims (the Prophet's companions) from a horrible situation —with Allah, through her counsel, granting them relief from division and depression. We also learnt the story of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis), who was able to undertake an issue for which all men abnegated responsibility. Thus, women can reason and have their own thought. Accordingly, even before the emergence of Islam, there were women who had authentic opinion and possessed the wisdom of admonition especially with regard to missions peculiar to their nature and characteristics.

For instance, history⁽¹⁾ tells us about the king of Kinda. He heard about the beauty of a woman called Umm Iyas bint 'Awf ibn Mahl Ash-Shaybani and wanted to marry her. So, He summoned a woman from Kinda, called Isam, who was characterized by politeness, eloquence and reasonableness. He told her to go and find out all she could about the Bint 'Awf; then she was sent to engage the young lady. When she went to the mother of Umm Iyas, whose name was Umama bint Al-Harith, and notified her of the mission she came to accomplish, the mother called upon the daughter from her tent and said to her: 'This is your aunt. She came to discuss an affair pertaining to you, so do not hide from her anything she would like to examine, whether related to your physical appearance or your manners, and speak to her about whatever she asks you.' When Isam sat alone with the girl, she did as her mother instructed her. She revealed to Isam all her good characteristics; so the woman uttered her famous statement: 'When eyes get naked, deception evaporates.' This statement (in its original Arabic form) later became a famous adage, meaning that one gets plain truth, with no deception, whenever everything is revealed and can be discerned with naked eyes. Isam then returned to the king who asked her: 'What did you find about, 'Isam?' He was inquiring what news she brought from Um Iyas. She replied: 'The shaking process has yielded butter.' 'Shaking' in this context refers to what is commonly practiced in the countryside (famous in Arab culture) by shaking the milk inside

(1) *The story of a king with 'Isam, the matchmaker*

the bottle in order to separate the butter from the milk; and this expression in Arabic means that her journey came to fruition. He said to her: 'Tell me.' She replied: 'I will tell you honestly and truly.' and she described her from her hair to her feet in an accurate manner that enticed the king. He then sent for her father to engage her; and he married her.

On the wedding night, the wise mother advised her daughter about the field of her work, the field of her motherhood and femininity. The mother said to her daughter: 'if one would give up advice for the sake of politeness, I would not have advised you'—this means that, as a mother, she trusted the manners of her daughter and thought that she might be in no need of advice in this respect—but counselling serves as an aid for a person who has become oblivious (it is always a wake-up call for the unmindful) and a reminder for the reasonable. Then, the mother continued to advise her daughter: 'Tomorrow, you will go to a house that you do not know, and (will be living with) a companion with whom you have not been familiarized before. Be a slave to him, and he will be a slave to you. Learn from me ten attributes that would be a support and a wealth, and upon which you may depend.'

Let us reflect on the mother's advice; the lessons she has derived from her experience and her mission. The word of the mother continues: 'as for the first and second: your life with him should be based on listening, obeying and contentment. The third and fourth are: take care of the place upon which he casts his eyes and nose so that he may not lay his eye on any ugly thing from you, and does not smell except the sweetest scent when he approaches you. The fifth and sixth are: take care of his eating time and keep quiet while he is asleep; disturbing someone's sleep is always a cause for enragement, and excitement of hunger is inflammable. The seventh and eighth are: manage his money and wealth carefully, caring for his honour and children. The ninth and tenth are: do not to divulge his secrets or disobey his orders; if you divulge his secrets, you will not be safe of his revenge, and if you disobey him, you will embitter and enrage him. Finally, avoid being happy if your husband is sad, and being sad if he is happy.' Umm Iyas kept the advice in mind when she went to her husband. She bore boys and girls and lived happily with him as much as he lived happily with her.

This motherly advice reveals the ultimate reasonableness and wisdom, but regarding and concerning what? It concerns the field of the female's mission. Allah endows woman with a lot of gifts so that she would be reasonable and show her reasonableness in the mission to which she is destined. The reason is that the field of the man's activity requires decisiveness and toughness, but that of the woman requires kindness and tenderness. There are a lot of examples in our day-to-day life that attest the correctness of such claim. When a man walks into his house and wants to sleep, his child may run to him crying and shouting, and this may irritate the father (who is already exhausted and wants to rest) thus gets angry at the mother, and insults her and the child. He may also utter words like: 'keep him silent until I rest.' What happens in such situation is that the mother takes the child, and with just a gentle motherly soothing touch, she manages to keep him quiet; the child responds to her, and this should not be a surprise, since this is the mission of the mother. For this reason, we find that difficult historical events always indicate the proper status of man and woman respectively (in society).

For example, when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* left his wife Hagar *Allah be pleased with her* and his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* in an uncultivated valley, she asked him, 'How could you leave us in a place deprived of everything even of water? Did you come up with this judgment or did Allah *the Exalted* command you to bring us here?' He replied, 'Allah *the Exalted* has commanded me to come to this place.' She then said to him, 'Then, go as you will, for He would not abandon us.' This is the mission of the woman. Hajar *Allah be pleased with her* is with her child in a place deprived of the key element required for life, water. Therefore, if we reflect on her care and tenderness; what did she do? She ran between the two mountains of As-Safa and Al-Marwa and then ascended the mountain until she felt exhausted.

The one who sets out to perform pilgrimage, the minor or the major, and experiences running between the mountains of As-Safa and Al-Marwa for seven rounds, knows the utmost of what a woman can endure for the sake of her child, as was clear in Hajar's situation who went here and there searching for water for her son. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* has told her, 'You have run and exerted your effort, but I will give you your livelihood from where you

did not expect it. You have run between As-Safa and Al-Marwa, but water has sprung out under the feet of your son.' Therefore, she was right when she said, 'Allah will not abandon us.' If her running and searching had led her to find water, we would have thought that her effort was the real cause. However, you should exert your effort without thinking that only your exertion is the cause of outcomes; rather, you should believe that Allah brings about the real cause as He is the Provider of sustenance, the Most Exalted. This idea is manifested in the story of Hajar *Allah be pleased with her*.

Later, when Ibrahim's (Abraham's) decisiveness, resoluteness and prophecy were tried and examined by ordering him to slay his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* Hajar *Allah be pleased with Her* disappeared from the scene. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* saw in a dream that he was slaying his son, so what is the role of his mother in this case? She totally disappeared from the scene because this situation is not in line with her passions and tenderness. Thus, each gender has a specific mission and his or her success is to the extent to which he or she fulfils the mission. Hence, Allah *the Exalted* commands us not to covet what He has bestowed on some people more than on others (*an-Nisa'*: 32). Thus, when you see that a gender has a certain privilege and the other gender has a different privilege, you should not preoccupy yourself with coveting by saying, 'I want this or that.' Rather, you should ask Allah *the Exalted* to give you of His Bounty and Grace, as the order 'do not covet' is a prohibition of all coveting and craving for what Allah *the Exalted* has bestowed on some people more than others. That is why Allah *the Exalted* orders us to ask Him of His Bounty, and if you do so, there is a hope that He will give you all of what you want.

Some may see a problem here and they ask, 'How could Allah forbid us to covet what He has bestowed on some of us more than others even though the Bounty of Allah is bound to make some of us better than others? He has elevated people over each other by statuses. Not to mention that, we want to ask Allah so that He confers His Bounty on us since He has not commanded us to do so except to bestow His Grace on us.' We respond by saying, 'No, coveting is usually related to something impossible or not customary.' But asking and supplicating are always intended for something you may be able to

obtain. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* explains that we must not approach the sphere of coveting. For this reason, they set an example of coveting by the following verse of poetry:

I wish youth would come back for only one day

So, that I may tell it about what the old age has done

The poet covets and wishes to restore his youth for one day. Would this youth truly come back? No, it would not. Similarly, someone may say, 'I wish that the planets would come near to me so that I would organize it the way I like.' Could this happen? No. But the statement indicates that this thing is desired even if it is not customary or even possible. Thus, the object asked for should fall within the ambit of what is possible for you. Allah *the Exalted* explains that we should not covet what He has given to some and not to others. So long as Allah *the Exalted* has made some of us better than others, one should not ask Him for what He has given to others so that he would take it to himself and deprive the others of it. Rather, He should ask Allah *the Exalted* for something that would allow him to manifest the grace and bounty that Allah has bestowed on him. For this reason, we find that Allah *the Exalted* states in the verses pertinent to preference that He has made some people to excel others in the means of subsistence. (*an-Nahl*: 71)

What is *al-rizq* (provision)? Is it confined to money? No. Provision is all what is useful and beneficial. Hence, patience, knowledge, and courage are all considered forms of provision. The saying of Allah *the Exalted* that He has made some people to excel others makes us wonder, 'Who has Allah made to excel, and more than whom has Allah made some to excel?' Allah *the Exalted* only says, 'some of you', but He did not expand on it. This means that Allah has made some to excel, but He has not made others.

Another question is, 'Which kind of people has Allah made to excel, and more than whom has He made some to excel?' Every human being excels in one aspect, but someone excels him in another. Thus, one may attain perfection in one aspect and another may lack the least of it; however, the latter may have another hidden gift. This implies the integration of gifts which is the gear of the activity of the society.

Let us pay attention to the movement of gears in a machine. The positive protruding part in one gear always fits in the negative empty space in another gear and thus motion becomes possible. If we put two positive protruding gears opposite to each other, no motion will be possible. Therefore, each of them must have a distinct feature for integration to take place. An illustration of this, as I have already said, is night and day. Resting at night assists in working during the day. I have also said that a knight may be able to strike and kill using his sword. However, if this sword had not been sharpened and refined by an expert blacksmith, it would have never fulfilled its purpose. An expert in making swords, in his own right, cannot take part in battles. He may even be afraid of striking and fighting with the sword. Yet, he gets as much credit as the swordsman.

Each one of us has a mission to accomplish, and fate endows people with integrating talents rather than identical, conflicting ones. As long as talents complement each other, I should not envy the one who excelled in a certain respect because I need him. Similarly, he should not envy me if I exceeded him in a talent or a specific kind of work because he also needs me; we reciprocally need each other to excel. This endears the gifts and talents of the people to others. I love the gift that Allah *the Exalted* has endowed someone with and he reciprocally loves the gift which Allah *the Exalted* has endowed on me.

For example, when we find a man who is skilful at sewing and tailoring clothes, everyone feels happy about him. This tailor needs a skilful carpenter to make him a door for his shop. Thus, it is in the interest of both that each one has a praiseworthy skill. For this reason Allah *the Exalted* has referred to us by 'some' and 'others' because the whole is composed of some and others. One is often talented in certain aspects, but he can never do everything. However, through the inclusion of the others' talents, we all possess the talents of each other.

Allah *the Exalted* then declares that both men and women have a portion from what they have earned (*an-Nisa'*: 32). The success of the man and woman depends on the extent to which each of them is righteous and fit to undertake the mission for which he or she was created. Afterward, the reward and punishment that each receives will be according to their obligations.

Reward and punishment are commensurate with the effort that each creature exerts in fulfilling their mission in life.

The illustration of the difference between the mission of the man and the woman becomes clear when a man's wife falls sick or gets angry, while they have an infant; will he be able to suckle his infant? Of course, he will not. Each one of them has a mission. The reasonable person is the one who respects Allah's predestination concerning His creatures and respects the gifts that Allah bestows on people. As far as he is concerned, he should ask Allah *the Exalted* to give him of His Bounty, that is, of what Allah has made him to excel others so that Allah grants him His Blessings. When Allah *the Exalted* states that both men and woman have a portion of what they have earned, we notice that they are completely equally addressed.

Allah then commands us to ask him of His Bounty (*an-Nisa'*: 32). It is a sign of His Omniscience that He has distributed gifts among His creatures so that society integrates with each other instead of being reluctant, as this reluctance is bound to create division in the society whereas its integration is bound to engender harmony. The reason for the revelation of the verse in question is that women said, '*Jihad* was not prescribed upon us and our Lord allotted to us half of the share of men in inheritance.' Allah *the Exalted* has previously explained to the woman that she was allotted half the share of the man because she is in the custody of someone else and will not spend any of her income on herself, rather, it is the man who is responsible for supporting her financially and for taking care of her expenses. Accordingly, the matter is fair. Similarly, the men said, 'If Allah *the Exalted* has given us a bigger share in the inheritance and allotted to us double the share of the women, He may prefer us to women in the Hereafter and give us double of their reward.' Thus, the man can do one good deed and expect a doubled reward.

Reflect on the intelligence of the woman when she said, 'As long as Allah *the Exalted* has given us half of the men's share of the inheritance, why would not He impose only half of the punishment on us?' Allah *the Exalted* has clarified to them that commanding them not to covet what He has given some more than the others means that each of you should be content with what Allah *the Exalted* has allotted to him or her. Subsequently Allah *the Exalted* says:

وَلِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مَوْلَىٰ مِمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ عَقَدَتْ
 أَيْمَنُكُمْ فَأَتَوْهُمْ نَصِيْبُهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدًا ﴿٣٣﴾

**We have appointed heirs for everything that
 parents and close relatives leave behind, including
 those to whom you have pledged your hands [in
 marriage], so give them their share: God is witness
 to everything [33] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 33)**

Once you see the Arabic word *likul* (to everyone) with a double accent—as is in this verse—then bear in mind that it refers to something implied. The original phrasing is ‘every human being’ but the noun ‘human being’ was omitted and replaced with the accent. Similarly, the double accent in the Arabic word *hina'dhin* (while) which refers to the moment when the soul has reached the throat (*al-Waqi'a*: 83-84). The entire clause was omitted and replaced by the accent. Thus, the double accent substituted the omitted clause.

In this verse, the Arabic word *Mawali* (heir) is the plural of *mawla* (heirs). Before the revelation of the verses pertinent to inheritance, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had declared *Al-Muhajrun* (the emigrants) and *Al-Ansar* (Helpers) to be brothers. Thus, they used to inherit each other based on this brotherhood. There was something called the ‘heirs of support and advocacy’ which refers to two persons who trust each other and thus say to each other, ‘I am your brother and you are my brother, if you go to war, I will go to war with you, and if you declare peace, I will do so with you, and my blood is yours; you can thus inherit me and I can inherit you, and you can bail me out if I commit a crime, and I will bail you out if you commit a crime.’ Hence, it is a real brotherhood.

Based on this brotherhood, they were entitled to have a share of the inheritance in the deceased's wealth. Allah *the Exalted* explains that He has appointed the heirs- men and women who are entitled to inherit specific shares of what was left behind by the parents and near kin folk. This means that they are entitled to a share of this deceased's inheritance and the brothers of advocacy and support fall under this category, as well. Thus, beware of denying them their rights; you must give them the share that was allotted to them, which is a sixth.

However, did this ruling continue? No; it was abrogated when Allah has revealed a verse that confined the shares of inheritance to the close relatives (*al-Anfal*: 75). Allah *the Exalted* states that He appointed heirs for everything that the parents and the close relatives left behind which means that each of these heirs is entitled to a share. Thus, do not say, 'They are gone and so we will give them nothing' No, give them their shares based on what they agreed upon and pledged their oaths in accordance with Allah's Commandment, as He is a Witness to everything. Thus Allah *the Exalted* is a Witness to whether you follow His Commands.

After this verse Allah *the Exalted* speaks about an issue related to the preferring of some people to 'others.' Allah says:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَإِلَّا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ لَكُنَّ أَعْيُنًا عَلَى الْغُلَبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّيِئَةُ نَخِافُونَ شُورَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

Husbands should take good care of their wives, with [the bounties] God has given to some more than others and with what they spend out of their own money. Righteous wives are devout and guard what God would have them guard in their husbands' absence. If you fear high-handedness from your wives, remind them [of the teachings of God], then ignore them when you go to bed, then hit them. If they obey you, you have no right to act against them: God is most high and great [34] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 34)

The first thing that attracts our attention in this verse is that some commentators only applied it to the man and his wife, whereas the verse speaks about men and women in a general sense. Thus, the verse is not limited to the relation between a man and his wife. The father is bound to take full care of his daughters and so is the brother with respect to his sisters. Let us first understand what the meaning of Allah's statement (that men are in charge of women) is. Let us also see whether this verse gives women a higher

status and precedence or cause their tiredness. Allah *the Exalted* commands us to respect a cosmic matter. He is the Creator Who has perfected everything He created, and then explained an issue related to faith; namely, that men are in charge of women. If someone has a different opinion, he needs clarify his reasons for this disagreement.

Even women, who are intimidated by this verse, get depressed when they do not bear a male child. When you ask them: 'Why are you depressed?' They say, 'We want a son to protect us.' But how would you say something like this and at the same time object to this verse?

Let us understand the Arabic word *qawwam* which means taking full care of something. This kind of care that Allah *the Exalted* mentions here involves toil and exhaustion. When you say that someone *yaqum* (takes care of) other people, this means that this person never rests. Therefore, why do some people consider men taking full care of women as a kind of suppression? Why do they take not it to mean that men will take care of women's interests? The man is assigned to the task of taking care of women which means that he should do what rectifies the matter. We find that Allah *the Exalted* uses the word 'men' in a generic manner and so He does in the word 'women.' Allah *the Exalted* only speaks about one thing after saying that He has given to some more than others. Thus, what is the aspect of preference and distinction?

It is that the man who must toil and labour on earth to earn the livelihood of his family so that he could provide the woman under his care all the means necessary for a decent life. We can find an illustrative example in the story of Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Exalted* warned him and his wife from Satan who was called upon among the angels to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him*, but he refused. Therefore, we recognized the preceding antagonism between Satan and Adam *peace be upon him* and its reason, that is, Satan's arrogance that prevented him from prostration (*al-Isra'*: 61).

Allah *the Exalted* has explained to Adam *peace be upon him* that if he descends to earth, he should remember this antagonism. Know that Satan will not leave you alone and he will continue to entice and tempt you because he does not want to be the only disobedient. Rather, he wants to attract more disobedient followers from the species to whose father he refused to prostrate by tempting them as

much as he tried to tempt Adam *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Exalted* warned Adam and Eve not to let Satan drive them out of paradise (*Ta Ha*: 117).

Does Allah *the Exalted* say afterward that both will be miserable or only Adam will be miserable? Allah mentions that only Adam *peace be upon him* will be miserable (*Ta Ha*: 117). Thus, when Allah *the Exalted* mentions toil and labour on earth, He addresses men and not women. This indicates that taking full care of women requires toil, effort and labour. Therefore, this mission is for the man.

We notice that when Allah *the Exalted* assigns the man a certain aspect of excelling in this verse, He uses the word 'some' to indicate that as much as He has made the man to excel the woman for taking full care of her, He has made the woman to excel the man in another respect which is being the source of repose and tranquillity for her husband when he returns to their dwelling to find comfort by undertaking her mission.

The respect in which Allah has made the man to excel the woman is then mentioned when Allah says that it is due to what men spend out of their own money (*an-Nisa'*: 34). The property is always the fruit of work and labour. We call the man who labours to take care of the other party *qawwam*. Therefore, the woman should rejoice at this because Allah *the Exalted* has assigned toil and labour to the gender which is qualified for that. The mission of the woman, which is indeed a great one, is in line with her characterizing features including delicacy, tenderness, affection and kindness. Allah *the Exalted* did not give these qualities to the man because earning the livelihood does not require these characteristics. Rather, it requires strength, decisiveness and strictness. Thus, the Arabic word *qawwamun* means that men are taking full care of the matters related to women.

Hence Allah *the Exalted* explains to women that they should not think that this is confined to the relation between the husband and the wife, rather, they should keep in mind that it also includes taking full care of the daughters, sisters, and mothers. Thus, taking care of women does not mean domination because this mission involves toil and labour for the man. It is a difficult mission that the man must do his best to properly take full care of the women under his custody.

Allah says: 'That has made the men to excel women due to what they spend from their money.' (*an-Nisa'*: 34) Marriage is a gratification for both

the male and the female as they enjoy it and desire to preserve the kind through their posterity. Even though enjoyment and the desire for having posterity are common among both, their consequences are not suffered by both; rather, it is only suffered by the man. He must pay the dowry and take care of the living expenses. Even When the wife is rich, Islamic law does not obligate her to lend some money to her husband.

Thus, the duty of men to take full care of women is intended to give comfort to women and relieve them of toil and problems. Therefore, why would women be upset with it? The verse implies that taking full care of the woman is permanent because Allah *the Exalted* does not say *qaa'im*, which means that the man should undertake this mission for only one time; rather, He says *qawwam*, which means that he should continue to undertake this responsibility to the end of his life. As long as men toil and labour for the sake of the woman, she, in turn, must assume a parallel mission. That is, she must be a source of tranquillity for the man, a matter which involves preference, as well.

Allah *the Exalted* has put forward at the beginning of this verse a ruling to which all should adhere. It is the ruling of the Creator Who has perfected the creation of all His creatures. Allah *the Exalted* has explained an issue related to faith, that is, men should take care of women. Afterward, He has explained the respect in which this should be understood by saying that this is due to what he has given to some man more than some woman and due to what men spend out of their money. Allah then continues to talk about righteous women, describing them as devout ones who guard what Allah ordered them to guard in their husbands' absence (*an-Nisa'*: 34). The righteous woman is the one who adheres to the path ordained by her Creator to her and her gender. She will be a devout woman as long as she is righteous. The Arabic word *qunut* (devotion) means continuous obedience to Allah *the Exalted*. It is derived from the Arabic phrase *qunut al-fajr* when we stand for a longer period in prayer in devotion, to supplicate to Allah.

The devout woman is continuously submissive to Allah *the Exalted*. As long as she is completely submissive to Him *the Exalted*, she must adhere to His path and commands in His ruling regarding men's mission of taking full care of women. Allah's description of women as guarding what He orders

them to guard in their husbands' absence indicates the soundness of their chastity. When a woman's guardian and protector- whether he is a father, in the case of daughters; or a son, in the case of mothers; or a husband, in the case of wives- is absent, she must guard the sanctity of their intimate relation. For this reason, when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* specified the characteristics of the righteous woman, he said in a Hadith about the worldly life, 'The entire world is a form of gratification and the best of this gratification is the good woman.'⁽¹⁾

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has enacted a law concerning the character of the righteous woman when he said, 'The best of all women is the one who pleases her husband whenever he glances at her, obeys him whenever he commands her and she does not go against his wishes regarding herself nor her wealth.'⁽²⁾ What more can any man need? The phrase 'she delights her husband whenever he glances at her' should not be interpreted to mean only the physical beauty. No; it means that once you see her, you envision all aspects of goodness in her. You must not focus on the bad characteristics of you wife and ignore the good ones. The reason is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us from evaluating a woman based on only one of her characteristics or qualities because the woman should be evaluated in terms of the totality of her characteristics. He thus said, 'A woman may be married for four reasons: for her property, her status. her beauty and her religion, so try to get one who is religious, may your hand be besmeared with dust.'⁽³⁾ Therefore, what is required of us is not to only consider one aspect of beauty, but to consider all other aspects. Indeed, if you consider the aspect of physical beauty, which often concerns most people, you will find that it is the least important aspect related to the constitution of the woman because it only lasts for the period of the honey moon—as people say—and then fades away. Afterward, the other more important factors start to surface. Indeed, you will be misguiding yourself if you only focus on the physical beauty of the one you want to marry. You may also think that you want her to be an aristocratic

(1) *Muslim*

(2) *Ahmad*

(3) *Al-Bukhari*

lady. We advise you that this is a short-term character; what is more lasting is her honesty, sincerity and being economical. For this reason, all men who build their marriages based on the criterion of physical beauty fail in their marital relations because this factor has a short life and it soon fades away and its sparkle glows out. Afterward, the man's eye starts searching for the true aspects of beauty but never find them and so failure takes place. That is why you should consider all the aspects and beware of only considering one aspect. The best of these aspects is a woman's devotion to her religion. The same applies to the criterion of a woman's acceptance for a husband. The best of his aspects should be his devotion to his religion. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'When someone whose religion and character you are pleased with comes to you then marry (her to) him. If you do not do so, then there will be turmoil in the land and discord.'⁽¹⁾ When someone consulted Al-Hasan ibn Ali *Allah be pleased with them* about the person he should to choose as a husband for his daughter, he said, 'Marry her to someone who adheres firmly to religion, for if he likes her, he will honour her and if he hates her, he will not wrong her.'

Thus, religion guides us to consider the long-term aspects in life. After that, if a woman wants to be successful, she should excel in the mission assigned to her based on her kind. It is possible for her to expand the sphere of her mission at home if she has time. If she has children, she should learn sewing and tailoring so that she can tailor her and her children's clothes, to save money. She may also learn embroidery so that she would not pay money to someone to do it for her. She may also learn nursing skills so that if her child falls sick, she can nurse and take care of him. She should also seek knowledge so that she would not need to resort to private tutors who take money from the family's income. If she still has time, she should learn plumbing skills to save the fees of the plumber if the water tap breaks down. Alternatively, she may learn about electricity so that she may fix the light switch if it breaks down. While sitting at home, the woman can also undertake a lot of other tasks through which she can save a lot of the income to meet other needs she may

(1) *At-Tirmidhi*

not be able to afford. Thus, the woman would 'guard the intimacy' not through improvisation or voluntary conjectures. Rather, she would be so via adherence to the path that Allah *the Exalted* has set for her to guard such intimacy.

But what is the path that Allah has set for 'guarding intimacy'? It is that she must guard her honour and the property of her husband in his absence and look for the possible causes of problems and disputes and try to eliminate them. Thus, she should not go out of her house except for stringent needs or pressing necessity so that she would not be tempted by or tempt anyone. All of these are the preliminaries of 'guarding the intimacy.' Further, every woman should not mingle with crowds of people; otherwise, how can we ask her to guard the intimacy? Rather, every woman should always stick to what Allah *the Exalted* has explained in this regard. Accordingly, if she must go out, she should lower her gaze away from what Allah *the Exalted* has forbidden and be mindful of her chastity. (*an-Nur*: 31)

Thus, if the woman did not lower her gaze, an emotional attraction may occur. The reason is that every feeling that occurs inside the human being evolves in three stages: the stage of perception, the stage of inner affection and the stage of inclination, that is, the attempt to turn such an inclination into actual behaviour and action. Let us give an example, as always, by a rose. As you walk in a garden, you may see a rose and once you lay your eyes on it, this is called perception. If you admired this rose and liked it very much, this is called affection. If you then try to pick the rose, this is a process of inclination. How many stages do we have then? We have three stages: perception, affection and inclination.

When does Islamic law interfere? It always interferes in the process of inclination. It tells you that you have looked at the rose, but there was no objection, then you have liked and admired it and, Islamic law also did not say anything about this. But when you tried to reach out and pick it, the Islamic law told you, 'No; the rose is not yours.' Thus, you are free to perceive, free to find affection in yourself, but when you are inclined and want to pursue such an inclination, we must tell you, 'No; it is not yours. If you truly like it, go and plant a rose in your house or take the permission of its owner to pick it.'

Thus, Islamic legislation interferes to keep a feeling from turning into an inclination except in the case of women. The law interferes from the beginning of perception. The reason is that the One Who created us knows that if we perceive some type of beauty, we will look at it and it will cause an inclination and a desire. Once you have perception and desire, you cannot separate them from inclinations. As a man, you are chemically constituted so that if you see beauty and feel affection, you will feel a desire. Such a desire will not be calmed down unless you satisfy it. Thus, Islamic law shows that Allah *the Exalted* has Mercy upon you from the outset; that is why He has chosen to restrain you from the outset. All laws interfere and place restrictions on objects of desire at the stage when one starts to pursue the satisfaction of his desire, except in the case of the desire for women; Allah's law interferes as early as the stage of perception. For this reason Allah *the Exalted* commands both the man and the woman to lower their gaze. Why so? The reason is that if you perceive, you will find affection in your heart and, if this happens, you will be inclined. Such inclination and the pursuit to satisfy it is a kind of debauchery and infringement on the honour of other people. Further, if you are not inclined you will be suppressed. For all these reasons Allah *the Exalted* has decisively settled the matter from the outset and commanded the believing men and women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity. (*an-Nur*: 30-31)

Accordingly Allah *the Exalted* wants us to control our desires from the beginning. Why so? Because if I saw a rose and people tell me not to pick it as it is not mine, I would not suffer from any imbalance in my material. But when a man sees a beautiful woman and she touches his feelings, he will be inclined towards her because he has organs that are excited by such beauty. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* tells you, 'I am your Creator and I will interfere in the matter from its beginning.' His saying that women guard the intimacy, refers to the ones who do so through following the path that He has set for such preservation; namely, that the one should not expose himself to any perception that may cause an affection which may, in turn, lead to an inclination. For if you are inclined, you may slip into corruption; and if you are not, you will suffer a complex and so evil would always be incurred from such a practice. This is the meaning of guarding what Allah has ordained them to guard. It means that she should consider the path that has been laid down by

Allah *the Exalted* to respect the absence of her husband. Not per her own rules, but in accordance with the path that has been set by his and her Creator.

Allah *the Exalted* nurtures the sense of vigilance and attention in His servants as He explains the attitude towards women from whom one fears disobedience and ill-conduct. The disobedience has not happened; rather, there is fear that it may occur. Being attentive and vigilant, entails being observant from the very outset. Thus, you should not let the problem escalate until the disobedience is actualized. The Arabic word *nushuz* (woman's disobedience) is derived from the verb *nashaz*, which means to elevate to a higher position. The same word also means a high place. As long as Allah *the Exalted* has said that men shall take full care of women, the reference here is to the women who want to arrogantly rebel and be placed in a high status. For this reason, the word *nashaz* is used in the context of musical harmony; in this case, it refers to the sounds that deviate from the rules of music. People thus say this tone is *nashaz* meaning that it is not in harmony with the tone or tune that preceded it. A woman should be tranquil and humble; thus, if you sense that she is thinking about revolting and acting arrogantly, you should not let her ascend the hill of self-conceit. Rather, you should take an action once you start sensing the preludes of disobedience to prevent its occurrence. Allah has described woman's disobedience as something fearful and expected, even if it has not happened yet.

But, what would be an appropriate remedy? Allah *the Exalted* commands us to admonish them. This means that once you see her having such an intention, you should first admonish her. Admonition means gentle and delicate advice. People have said that advising gently would be better if you seize a moment when both of you are in good terms with each other. You should also advise your woman in the right situation so that such admonition and guidance would be acceptable. Thus, do not advise someone unless his heart is attached to you.

Let us assume that a son asked his father for something that his father did not bring. The mother afterward came to complain to the father about the behaviour of the son. The father then tries to fulfil the wish of his son and respond to his request. After that, he tells his son, 'Come here my son; Allah has helped me to obtain what you want.' When the son feels happy at getting what he wished, the father says to him, 'If I had remembered what your mother said about your

misbehaviour, I would not have brought you what you requested.' Even if the father criticises the son at this moment, the son may laugh. Why so? The reason is that the father has taught his son the lesson and imparted to him the piece of advice in a moment when his heart and passion are attached to him. But we do not often do so. One often approaches his son in times when there is an aversion between them and tries to advise him. Such advice will never work. If we want the advice to be fruitful, we must change ourselves first and seize the opportunity of the times when the one we are advising is emotionally attached to us to impart our admonition to him. Thus, admonition means advising gently and delicately. It is of gentleness and delicacy to choose the appropriate time for giving your admonition and to know that the best time for doing so is when there is a relative agreement between you and the one you want to advise. If the advice did not work and you still see that the matter is going in the direction of arrogance and disobedience, you should pay attention. A woman often tends to be flirtatious with men because she senses his interest in and inclination towards her. Further, the woman may patiently endure the man more than the man would do with her. The reason is that a man by nature cannot calm down unless he takes an action towards the cause of his anger. By contrast, women are provoked slowly. Thus, when the organs of a man are excited, he may not forebear patience or waiting. By contrast, a woman is neither excited nor provoked quickly. Therefore, when you see this disobedience, and she knows that you are a man who likes to see the results of feelings and wants to go on, give her a lesson in this respect and so abandon her in bed.

Just consider the precision of the Quran; you should neither abandon your wife alone in the house or even in your bedroom; rather, sleep on one side of the bed and leave her to sleep on the other side so that the anger and dispute between you may not be exposed to other people. You just leave her alone in bed because if you abandon her and all the members of the house know that you sleep in a separate room, or that you desert the house, you will provoke her stubbornness. But, when you leave her alone in bed, this will be something entirely between both of you. Afterward, she may experience an emotional condition and so overlook the whole thing. You may also go through any emotional situation that will lead you to forgive and forget about the dispute; further, both of you will wish to reconcile with the other.

Thus, if you follow Allah's teachings by forsaking her in bed, it will be as if you are telling her, 'If you will try to be disobedient, I can control myself.' Some may wonder, 'What does abandoning them in bed mean'? We say that if they share one bed, he should turn his back upon her on the condition that the matter would not be exposed. Thus, he should sleep in the same bed and in the same room so that no one would know anything about it. The reason is that if any disagreement between the husband and the wife stays between them, it will be resolved quite quickly. As soon as a man's yearning and desire for his wife flare up to an irresistible level, he could return to her and seek her reconciliation. She would also have similar feelings and the whole dispute gets resolved. The thing that destroys homes is the intervention of external parties. These elements or parties may make the man or the woman more adamant. For this reason, no man should reveal what happens between him and his wife to his parents or his brother; rather, disputes should always be confined to the man and the woman. There is indeed something between them that will make them forgive each other.

After the stage of admonishing the disobedient women comes beating. Scholars have said that beating should be conducted on the condition that it would not lead to any bleeding or bone-breaking. This means that it should be a light beating for the purpose of showing dissatisfaction. That is why the scholars say that the husband should beat his wife with a *miswak* (tooth brush). Allah *the Exalted* has taught us so, when He said to Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* when he took an oath to whip his wife a hundred whips. He commanded him to take a small bunch of grass and strike her with them so that he would not break his oath, (*Sad*: 44). The small bunch of grass consists of one hundred sticks. Thus, if he beats his wife with it, it would be as if he has beaten her one hundred times. When the woman finds that the beating is done with tenderness, she will obey of her own accord. At any rate, do not ever think that the One Who created us would ever decree any ruling that would be rejected by our instinctual passion. Allah's rulings are only rejected by the pride of our passions. The One Who has decreed and ordained these rulings knows that matters must be as such.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that as for those women whose ill-will you have reason to fear, you (O men!) shall admonish them, and then leave them alone in bed, and then beat them in a harmless manner. The meaning of

harmless here is that it should not lead to bleeding or breaking bones. Allah *Glorified is He* resumes His discourse by saying if they follow you in your obedience, do not be unfair to them.

Accordingly, beating must not be used to humiliate the woman; rather, it is a process of rectification and reformation. Further, you should bear in mind that you should only judge your wife based on her apparent behaviour. So, you shall never say: 'she obeys me, but her heart is not with me', and so plunge into the realm of the unknown. We tell you, 'You should not worry yourself with this because that which is judged in all circumstances is only what is apparent.' So, you should not concern yourself with the essences of things. Allah *Glorified is He* says if they follow you in your obedience which means that if you sense that the entire matter has ended and there is no longer any ill-will that you may fear, you must not harm your wives. If you thus seek to harm her after she obeyed you, beware that the One Who allowed you to take your wife through a single word—the pledge of marriage—has more power over you than you have over her. This is a menace from Allah *Glorified is He*.

The meaning of Allah's menace to us is that He explained that this is My creation and I am the One Who let you take her through the pledge 'Marry me... I marry you.' As long as you have maintained her by the authority of a word from Me, do not treat her condescendingly because I protect her right as much as I protect yours. No one of you is dearer to Me than the other; both of you are My creation and I want things to be settled. After this discourse addressed to the husbands, Allah *Glorified is He* brings forth a new verse by saying:

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَأَبْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا
 إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقُ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٣٥﴾

**If you [believers] fear that a couple may break up, appoint one arbiter from his family and one from hers. Then, if the couple want to put things right, God will bring about a reconciliation between them: He is all knowing, all aware [35]
 (The Quran, *an-Nisa*': 35)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And if you fear dissension between the two', means that the breach has not yet occurred. But, what is the 'dissension' intended

in this context? *Ash-Shiqaq* (dissention) is derived from *shaqa*. *Shaqa* means to separate something from something else. Thus, if you say, '*Shaqaqt* the log.', this means that you have separated it into two halves. Accordingly, dissention between couples indicates that they have been united through marriage and become one thing. Therefore, anything that may keep them apart would be a *shiqaq* (*dispute*) since through marriage one is united with his/her spouse. This is what Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And how could you take it while you have gone unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?' (*an-Nisa'*: 21) This means that the wife is interwoven with her husband and the husband is interwoven with his wife (*al-Baqara*: 187), a husband indeed shields his wife and she also shields him. Thus, if the matter goes beyond ability, Allah *Glorified is He* says that if you have reason to fear that dissention might occur between married couples, but who will fear such dissention? Would it be the guardian, the kinsfolk from either side? It is the people who are concerned with the matter.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that if you fear that dissention might occur between a married couple, appoint an arbiter from among his people and an arbiter from among her people; it is the people within the immediate environment and familial realm of the couple; thus, we should not let things escalate to the level of dissention. It is as if Islam and the Quran pay our attention to the fact that the relatives within the same family should heed the changing of psychological states and moods of the family whether it be mother, father, brother or even a relative so that things would not escalate to the level of dissention. The evidence is that Allah *Glorified is He* says that if you have reason to fear that dissention might occur between married couples, the dissention has not yet happened and the issue should not be left to escalate to the level of dissention. Allah *Glorified is He* says that if you fear such a dissention, appoint an arbiter from among the two sides. This statement is generally addressed to the guardian too; if he keeps his eyes vigilant and observant to supervise the relation between households; however, this is rather unviable considering the scope of the responsibilities of the guardian in the modern age. Thus, it is obvious that those who can undertake this task are the prominent figures of the family. All those who have distinction in the family should thus heed all that is happening in it and say we observe such and such things.

We can then appoint an arbiter from here and another from there and consider the issue that may lead to a dispute between the couple before the conflict erupts. The defence of each spouse's interest has thus been transferred from the couple to someone from the family of the husband and another from the family of the wife. Those arbiters, in turn, do not have a clear conception of the problem and the evidence in support of either side has not crystallized. Further, none of the arbiters have preconceived judgment. The judgment that is thereby passed by the family of the wife and that of the husband is not passed based on the bias and inclinations in their hearts, especially that the two are assigned the task of judging. They must agree on what they see so that if both saw that the only way out is divorce, then they should rule that the couple should get divorced. People may think that the arbiters are only intended to reconcile the two spouses so that if the latter did not like the former's verdict, the two spouses would continue in their dissention. No, we choose an arbiter from this side and another from that side to put an end to the problem.

What the two arbiters rule should thereby be executed because the matter has been left up to them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says that if the two arbiters want to set things right, Allah *the Exalted* may bring their reconciliation. It is as if the main mission is reconciliation and that the arbiters should embark on the matter with the intention of accomplishing reconciliation. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* did not then will the two couples to be reconciled through the intermediation of the arbiters, this may indicate that the two arbiters entered the situation with no intention to reconcile them.

Every arbiter should thus fear for himself and try to do his best to reconcile the couple because if he does not end the dispute, it will become a scandal for him. The One Who created everyone (the husband, the wife and the arbiter from the family of the husband and the arbiter from the family of the wife), says that if they both want to set things right, He may bring about their reconciliation. Thus, both arbiters should go with this intention and insist on reconciling between the two spouses because when Allah *Glorified is He*, talks about a global issue, everyone tries to act in accordance with His Discourse in this regard. Further, Allah *Glorified is He* may talk about general issues because

He is the All Knowing and the All Aware. For instance, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'And [that] indeed Our soldiers will be those who overcome.' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

Allah *Glorified is He* said so in order that each soldier ensures that he fights for the sake of Him *the Exalted* because if he is defeated, we will tell him you were not a proper soldier for Allah *Glorified is He*, and he would be afraid of this. Thus, the universal issue is put in a doctrinal scheme so that one would channel all his capacities for the sake of accomplishing the task. When Allah *the Exalted* says: 'If they both want to set things right, Allah *Glorified is He* may bring about their reconciliation', do not ever take pride in the decisiveness or the intelligence of the arbiters; all of these are causes. We thus continuously assert, 'Do not take pride in the knowledge of causes because everything was originated from the Owner of all causes.' Let us consider the precision and the wisdom of the statement of Allah *Glorified is He* 'may bring about their reconciliation.' He thus did not say if they both want to set things right, they may bring about reconciliation. Rather, He *the Almighty* reserved to Himself the virtue of reconciling between the spouses.

Allah *Glorified is He* appends the verse by His saying: 'He is indeed All Knowing All Aware', this means that He is All knowing and All aware of the state of the husband and the wife and the arbiter from the side of the wife and the arbiter from the side of the husband. They are encompassed by His knowledge. Each of them should thus make sure that their behaviour is appropriate because they are responsible for every action related to this case; our Lord is All knowing and All-aware. But, what is the difference between all knowing and all-aware? The difference is that knowledge may be imparted to you by someone else but awareness is always yours.

After Allah *Glorified is He* had talked about the preceding rulings concerning marriage and the unlawful things from which we have also deduced what is lawful, about those who are incapable of marriage and about wealth and warned us not to devour it unrightfully and about the relation between man and woman, He thus chose to direct us and pay our attention to His exalted path. He says:

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا وَالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَنًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنْبِ وَابْنِ
السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا ﴿٣٦﴾

Worship God; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents, to relatives, to orphans, to the needy, to neighbors near and far, to travelers in need, and to your slaves. God does not like arrogant, boastful people [36] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 36)

Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to worship Him alone and not to ascribe divinity, in any way, beside Him. This means that you should not address or tackle any of the issues in a way that is disobedient to Allah *Glorified is He* or at odds with the course He prescribed. Worshipping is the obedience of the worshiper to the worshiped. So, do not think that it refers only to the acts or rituals of worshipping we do like praying, fasting, paying obligatory alms to the poor and performing pilgrimage because these are the pillars of Islam. They are the pillars and foundations upon which Islam was based, but Islam is not exclusively composed of these pillars; rather, these pillars are the foundations upon which Islam was based. Similarly, the foundations that support the house do not constitute the entire house. Islam is a complex structure. Thus, to those who want to apply classificatory or technical terms of science to Islam in order to argue that worshipping in Islam solely consists in prayers and what pertain to them, giving obligatory alms to the poor, fasting and performing pilgrimage because they are described as such in the Islamic jurisprudence books, we say, 'This is just the term used to refer to them but whatever command revealed from Allah *Glorified is He* is an act of worship.' For this reason, some people say, 'We should worship Allah *Glorified is He* and quit working.' To those, we say worshipping is obeying the commands of the One Who is worshipped so, do not understand the statement in terms of rituals only. Rituals are just the continuous declaration of allegiance to Allah *Glorified is He*. They give an impulse that allows us to deal with the events of life. But rituals are not all forms of offering worshipping to Allah *Glorified is He*. Indeed, dealing with people is a form of worship; the true concept of worshipping comprises maintaining the earth. Allah *the Exalted* says to the believers to pause their

transactions at the time they hear the call for the Friday Prayer. (*al-Jumu'a*: 9) Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to quit commerce and hasten to prayers; it is not that He wants them to quit being idle and go to pray; rather, He wants them to quit their business activities. He mentioned 'worldly commerce' because it is a process that yields its immediate profit. When you cultivate a crop, you will have to wait for a long time to reap the fruits. But commerce yields its fruit immediately; you sell something and accrue profit immediately. Commerce—as we know—regulates all actions of life because commerce is mediation between a producer and a consumer. You sell a commodity that you acquired from a producer; the producer in turn always seeks a middleman to sell his product to the consumer. This consumer may be a producer in his own right; further, the producer may be in a different capacity than the consumer. Production and consumption are an exchange. Life could be explained in terms of selling and buying, and as long as there is selling there will be purchasing. This is a continuation of the cycle of life. The seller always wants to sell but the purchaser may not want to buy because the purchaser will spend money, whereas the seller will gain money. Allah *Glorified is He* thus explains: 'Give up this whole process that yields immediate profit and answer the call for the Friday prayer.' But what shall we do after the prayer? Allah *Glorified is He* says: '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)

This is also a command. If we obey the first one which is to proceed to the remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* thus we are also obliged to abide by the second order which is to disperse freely in the land and seek Allah's Bounty. Thus, all of this is a form of worship; Life is a form of worship. Prayer is a form of worship and so is fasting, but do not prayers need the necessities of life to support them? You must secure the basics of life to be able to pray. What are these basics of life? It is eating, drinking, housing and proper clothing. What is considered as a prerequisite of something obligatory, it is obligatory. Thus, the totality of life is a series of acts of worship. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* orders us to worship Him *the Exalted* since we have no deity other than Him. He brought us into being out of the earth, and made us to maintain thereon. (*Hud*: 61)

Thus, everything that leads to the thriving of the earth, constructing it and deducing the secrets of Allah *Glorified is He* in the existence, is deemed an act of worship to Him *the Exalted*. The reason is that you extract and obtain from the treasure of Him *the Exalted* that He has placed on earth what will attract people's attention to the universal truth that was propounded by faith.

Thus, do not ever think that worship is merely what is included under the sections of 'acts of worship' and 'transactions' in the books of Islamic Jurisprudence. All actions are forms of worship. The only difference is that worshipping does not directly manifest itself in other worldly actions and associations because you always work for your own benefit. But in prayer you dedicate from your time; therefore, we have called prayer 'worshipping' in the proper sense of the word because the other processes are performed by others who do not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* since he also goes out in life to cultivate and practice industry.

Why did they call these rituals 'acts of worship'? That is because they are performed by only the religious person. Other acts pertaining the inhabitancy of the universe and the pursuit of worldly interests are performed equally by the non-religious. Every command from Allah that we obey is an act of worship. This is the right concept of worship that we should all embrace, devote and channel all our intellectual and physical capacities that He created for us to shape the created matter, which is earth and its elements, to elevate existence to a level that would delight us, with which Allah would be content.

'Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him.' (*an-Nisa'*: 36) After He had put forward all the above mentioned, Allah directed our attention to an issue that we always need to heed in all our behaviour, which is to abide by the commands of Allah and associate nothing alongside Him. The reason is that ascribing associating partners alongside Allah harms man's case in existence. Thus, do not devote your thoughts to the materialistic side of your work rather than to Allah. Be sincere to Allah in everything you do.

Allah gives an example of the comfort enjoyed by the monotheist who truly unifies Allah and the toil incurred by the polytheist. He says: 'Allah presents an example: a slave owned by quarreling partners and another

belonging exclusively to one man - are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know.' (*az-Zumar*: 29)

The verse talks about a slave owned by a group, and the group has internal dispute. The slave does not know how to reconcile the conflicting commands that each gives to him. If he satisfies one, he may upset the other. He is thus a slave whose energy is divided, and whose attention is scattered. On the contrary, a slave owned by a single master only receives either a command or a prohibition from one master. Allah presents the case to his servant in an interrogative style; and He is All knowing of all things so that He makes the believer share with him the answer of, 'Would both be equal'? Here man examines it with his reason and would like to answer; so, what would he say? He will answer per his nature and the logic of Allah saying, 'No Lord, they are not equal.'

The believer himself has admitted the truth; Allah did not impose it upon you. Allah has posed it in a question form so that your answer would be decisive. If you, believing servant, think this way, you will live comfortably because your energy will be channelled towards following the commands and avoiding the prohibitions of Allah. At this point, you become a master in the universe, and none in the universe would be able to take away from you your servitude to the Creator. This is the comfort we procure because we follow the saying of Allah: 'And worship Allah [alone], and associate nothing with Him.' Associating others with Allah will cause one to suffer. Those who do so, seek the aid of whom they worship rather than Allah. The fact is that Allah abandons the polytheists as stated in the Qudsi Hadith in which Allah says: 'I am the Self-sufficient; I am thus the One least in need of partnership. Whoever does any deed wherein he associates others beside Me, I shall abandon him to his polytheism.'⁽¹⁾

Allah abandons the one who ascribes Divinity to anyone beside him. The one who does so is stripped of Allah's bounties because Allah is needless of any partner. This is how the polytheist lacks faith, and will live in toil. Allah *Glorified is He* followed His obedience with that of one's parents. He says: 'and do the good unto your parents.' Parents are the mother and the father; they are

(1) *Muslim and Ibn Majah*

the immediate cause of your existence. Since worshiping Allah is the cause of your existence, then your mother and father who are two causes for your existence should direct your attention to the first cause. You should also pay attention to the One Who brought about the lineage of your ancestors that ultimately goes back to the first human being, namely, Adam *peace be upon him*.

‘And do good unto your parents.’ Consider the status that Allah has assigned to the parents. The believer is the one addressed here so that he would worship Allah properly. Assignment of obligations upon the servant is a consequence of his existence. In other words, the statement [in the verse] can only be addressed to a legally competent individual, whose competence is a consequence of his existence. Your parents are the immediate cause of your existence. But if you pursued the chain of causes of your existence even further, how did your parents come to life? Obviously, their parents were the cause of their existence and so on, until you reach Allah. It is Allah Who commanded us to ‘Worship Him and associate nothing with Him.’ After this, Allah says: ‘And do the good unto your parents.’ The command ‘do good’ indicates that one should provide care for his parent in excess. We call this giving in excess the state of *’ihsan*.

‘And do the good unto your parents.’ When the True Lord coupled the mention of the parents with His worship — as He is One Deity with whom we are not to associate anything — He did not address the question as to whether or not the parents are believers because there is another verse where He says: ‘But if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them but accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness and follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do.’ (*Luqman*: 15)

It is true you should not obey them in this regard, yet it is incumbent upon you to respect them because they are the direct cause of your existence even if this cause is against the One Who created it and brought it into existence. Allah *exalted be His Power* ‘Accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness.’ But goodness is done to both the one whom one likes and the one whom one does not like. Accordingly, do not let your heart get attached to your parents if they are polytheists. Only make sure to bear them good

company in this life with kindness. For this reason, Allah says: 'Accompany them in [this] world with appropriate kindness.' This means that you should look after their worldly interests by way of kindness. You can thus be kind and do good to the one whom you like as much as you can do so to the one whom you do not like.

Allah says: 'And do the good unto your parents', and He repeats it in several verses. He told us before in the chapter of *al-Baqarah*: 'And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], "Do not worship except Allah; and be good to your parents."' (*al-Baqara*: 83).

Then the verse we are discussing comes: 'And worship Allah [alone], and do not associate anything with Him. And do the good unto your parents.' In another similar instance: 'Say: "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything in worship with Him; and be good and dutiful to your parents."' (*al-An'am*: 151). Also In another similar instance, He says, 'And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) In the chapter of *al-'Ankabut*, Allah also says: 'And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8)

But if your parents endeavour to make you associate others alongside Me that you do not know, do not obey them. Accordingly, if the parents are polytheists, we still must treat them kindly. But as we said, you may do the good to those whom you like as much as you may do it to those whom you do not like. What is forbidden, in this situation, is affection. For this reason, Allah says: 'You will not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, making friendship with those who oppose Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad).' (*al-Mujadala*: 22)

There is no contradiction or semi-contradiction between the verse under study and the one just quoted from the chapter of *al-Mujadalah*. There are verses where Allah coupled His worship with being good towards one's parents. There are two other verses which independently address treating parents well. This is in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15) And the

saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8)

The word 'goodness' in all the verses means to do more than what Allah has assigned to you, out of the belief that He sees you even though you do not see Him. The word involves pleasure of the servant with the obligations and even going beyond them. When one wants to do more than he is assigned to do, he may pray ten times a day instead of five, fast other months besides *Ramadan* or fast Monday and Thursday of every week. Instead of giving out only 2.5% of his wealth for *zakat* to the poor, he may give 10%; and perform pilgrimage twice in their lifetime instead of once. The point is therefore doing more than what Allah has enacted upon you. If you do so, Allah will admit you into the state of *al-ihsan*. You usually do so because you have tasted the sweetness of performing the enactments of Allah, and realized the grace of worshipping Allah in as much as He has endowed you with piety and other bounties, as per His saying: 'So be ever-conscious of Allah; and Allah teaches you.' (*al-Baqara*: 282)

You basically knew that Allah deserves from you to do more than what he has assigned you to do. For this reason, a good man said in one of his supplications, 'Allah, I am afraid that You would not reward me for obeying You because I have started to desire it.' This means that worshipping Allah has become a self-desire for him. He is thus afraid that he may lose the sweetness of being assigned and the toil it involves. He says, 'O Lord, I have loved worshipping You, and we are supposed to avoid the lusts of ourselves but it has become a lust; so, what should I do'?

This man has entered the state of *al-ihsan*, and his self has become tranquil and even his desires have become in accordance with what Allah has commanded and is content with.

For this reason, we should observe that when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* talks about the pious, He says: 'Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs. Accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before those doers of good.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16) Why are they considered 'doers of good'? The True Lord responds: 'They used to sleep but little of the night.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17)

But did Allah enact upon me the assignment not to sleep except for a short period of the night? One prays the night prayers at the beginning of the night; one may then sleep afterwards. This is the assignment. But if prayers are endeared to the heart of the believer, faith increased in his heart and limbs, and he enjoys being close to Allah, the True Lord never turns this servant away. He rather receives and admits him into the state of *al-ihsan*: 'Indeed, they were before those doers of good. They used to sleep but little of the night. And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 16-18)

Our Lord did not enact such self-obligations upon the doers of good. He only obligated five prayers. We know the story of the Arab Bedouin who said to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Do I have to do anything else apart from praying?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* answered, 'No, unless you volunteer to do something else.' He then mentioned to him giving *zakat* to the poor. The man then asked, 'Do I have to do anything else?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* responded, 'No unless you volunteer to do something else.' The man turned away and left while saying, 'I swear to Allah, I will not do anything than this.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He would succeed were he true to what he pledged.'⁽¹⁾

In this manner, the Arab Bedouin entered within the status of the successful. Allah admits whoever does more than what is enacted into the status of *ihsan*: 'They used to sleep but little of the night.' And in the hours before dawn, they would ask forgiveness. And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-19)

We also notice the precision of style. The True Lord did not say that the deprived are entitled to a rightful share of the fortune of the doers of good; why? The reason is that the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave the doer of good the freedom to give out more than the legal proportion of the *zakat* that he is bound to give to the needy and the deprived. When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about a requirement of faith He says: 'And those in whose wealth there is a known right. For the petitioner and the deprived.' (*al-Ma'arej*: 24-25)

(1) *Muslim*

Thus, whoever wants to give out more than what is required, elevates from the state of faith and enters the status of *'ihsan* (doing beyond the obligatory). It is as if Allah is telling you in the verse under study: Do not only do what is required and incumbent on you with your parents. Rather care for, obey and show mercy and leniency towards them as much as you can. Elevate yourself to the status of *ihsan*. In another verse, Allah guides us after He has introduced us to the status of *ihsan*. He describes that same status with something else, namely, beauty: 'And We have enjoined upon man goodness to parents.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8).

What is the opposite of goodness? It is ugliness. The True Lord had introduced us to the status of goodness one time and the status of *ihsan* another time. There are several points that we should heed. First, we notice that parents, in most cases, raise their children. The exception is when a child becomes an orphan and others raise him. For this reason, one should notice the cause of bringing up after existence. Since your parents are the cause of your existence, you are required to give them their rights and even more, so you can enjoy being in the status of *ihsan*. Yet, He reasoned this in another verse: 'And say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.'" (*al-Isra*': 24)

Raising children was the reason Allah used for the child to pray and obey them. But if other than your biological parents raise you, are you obliged to treat them as your parents? The True Lord says: 'as they brought me up.' If my parents are entitled to this right, so would anyone who brings me up even if they were not my biological parents. Allah mentioned parents when asking the child to take the status of *ihsan*. 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.' We thus notice that He sometimes does not mention the issue of bringing up so that we know that the parents are the cause of our existence. In another instance, He pays our attention that whoever is responsible for raising someone is entitled to the same rights as the biological parents. There is also another issue. When the True Lord advises us to obey and do the good to our parents, He refers to mother-exclusive rationale, without including the father: 'And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him

forth with hardship, and the bearing of him and the weaning of him is thirty months.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15).

Allah has listed here the reasons related to the mother without the father. This is the speech of the Lord, as the mother's role started from the moment the child is an embryo. She takes care of herself, behaves cautiously and pre-occupies herself with her child from the time he is an embryo. She tries to meet all his needs before he acquires reason and thought. The child's father may be away and never get to know his child before he grows up; and he, namely the father, starts preparing him for the struggles of life. During pregnancy, the mother takes care of her baby's needs before the latter even has a reason to recognize what she does for him. By contrast, by the time a child acquires reason, he recognizes the role of his father who lives, accompanies and takes care of him and whenever he needs anything, the mother tells him, 'ask your father and he will get it for you.' The child thus gets used to asking his father for all his needs. Over time, he forgets the role of his mother, and how she carried him during pregnancy, how she suckled him, nurtured and looked after him before he starts to understand anything. Of whose role, must we be reminded then? It is the mother's role. One recognizes the role of the father and the reasons for honouring him since he was a child because he is the one who delivers all his needs. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'And We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents. His mother bears him with hardship and she brings him forth with hardship, and the bearing of him, and the weaning of him is thirty months.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15)

The child is not aware of the pregnancy period. When he starts acquiring consciousness of the world around him, he realizes that his father is the one who delivers all his needs, and as long as his father is the one who seems to oversee taking care of his needs. All of this makes him aware of his father's role, whereas the mother's role slips through the cracks. For this reason, Allah reminds us of this less obvious rationale about the mother's role and skipped the father's due to his more obvious role.

In the narration by Abu Hurayrah *Allah be pleased with him*, he said said, 'A man came to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, "Who is the one who most deserves my best company? The Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “Your mother.” The man then asked, “Who is next”? The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “Your mother.” The man then asked, “Who is next”? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, “Your mother.” The man asked, “Who is next”? The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied: ‘Your father.’”⁽¹⁾

If you think about it, you will find it obvious. Fatherhood is also connected to manhood, and manhood is a struggle and an unstoppable pursuit. Motherhood, by contrast, is sheltering and affection. A mother is thereby not required to go out, seek and deal with other people to meet her needs. Your father, on the contrary, goes out to work, which is an honour for him. However, for a woman to work is hard to swallow. The True Lord *Glorified is He* thus says: ‘And do good unto your parents’ (*an-Nisa*: 36), and ‘We have enjoined on man goodness to parents’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 8). Doing the good unto one’s parents is reiterated three times, coupled with the worship of Allah without associating partners to Him. In addition, it is mentioned alone in two verses. It should be noted here that the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘But if they (both) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not.’ (*Luqman*: 15)

However, this is not in conflict with treating them nicely and delivering their needs. We notice that the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* has not mentioned asking for mercy for them, as they are upon disbelief and polytheism; as opposed to: ‘And say, “My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.”’ (*al-Isra*: 24) Even though the parents raise the body of the child, they do not cultivate his heart and faith. For this reason, they do not deserve his prayer for mercy upon them. Irrespective of this, the True Lord wished for the child to bear his parents in this life even if they are disbelievers.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted* wants to spread kindness in the entire universe. For this purpose, He starts with those who are most akin; starting with family down to the neighbour. He says: ‘And do the good unto your parents, and near of kin.’ (*an-Nisa*: 36) Accordingly, there are multiple levels of kindness. If everyone does the good unto his parents, none will be

(1) *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

humiliated or disgraced in his old age. Therefore, Allah expands the limits of kindness to include the relatives. He mentioned the parents and followed them with the 'near of kin.' But who are the akin? It is everyone who has a relation to the person. This is the second level.

If every affluent treated his parents-the first level- kindly, and extended it to the relatives which is the second level, mutual kindness will overlap throughout the kin; and eventually no one will stand in need, as they will be looking after each other.

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the orphans. The orphan—as we know—is the one who lost his father before reaching puberty. He misses the father's affection of childhood. But after he grows up and becomes a man, he is no longer considered an orphan. He has become independent. Further, the one whose mother dies is not called an orphan. Conversely, orphaned animals are those who lost their mother, not the father; even though an animal's infancy is short, in which the mother takes full care of the infant animal. In short, the animal orphan is the animal who lost the mother, while a human orphan is one who lost a father.

Humans have the longest childhood period among animals because they are being raised for a superior mission than that of an animal. We said before that when you plant certain crops like radishes, for instance, it ripens quite fast, and you may eat it after fifteen days. But when you plant a palm or a mango tree, it takes several years until it bears its fruits. The length of childhood depends on the mission assigned to the being in question; if it has an important mission, its childhood will be longer.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants you to expand the cycle of kindness. Do not limit yourself to the parents or kin only. Extend kindness to orphans because an orphan sees his friends enjoying the care of their fathers. Had the True Lord *Glorified is He* left the orphan uncared for, he will grow with a heart full of bitterness against society. The orphan may also revolt against Allah and wonder, 'Why do I not have a father just as my friends who enjoy the care of their fathers'? But if he finds, within an atmosphere of faith, multiple fathers after losing his biological father, he will not spite the fact that Allah caused his father to die.

Those who are afraid of dying and leaving behind weak offspring, should make sure to do good unto orphans. Indeed, if every one of us sees that orphans are nurtured and looked after in a community based on belief and faith, they would not be pre-occupied with anxiety, dying and leaving behind a weak child. They would rather feel trust in society. This way one will accept the fate of Allah with contentment, without any worries. This indeed is an issue that pre-occupies a lot of people. We thus say to every financially capable person, 'If you live in a community of believers wherein the orphan feels emotionally secured under the care of multiple fathers who share Islamic faith, the orphan will grow up free of all bitterness and animosity.' For this reason, the True Lord says: 'And let those (executors and guardians) have the same fear in their minds as they would have for their own, if they had left weak offspring behind. So, let them fear Allah and speak right words.' (*an-Nisa'*: 9)

Indeed, if you see that a faith-oriented society has provided care for the orphans left behind by others, you will be confident it will take care of your orphans as well. Hence, whether death comes or not, you should not worry yourself about it. But if one sees that an orphan is left unattended; he will be completely pre-occupied with securing the worldly means for his child. We tell this father: serve your son by putting what you save in the hands of Allah because the One Who created is more trustworthy than the one who is created. On the same lines, we related the story of Mu'awiyah and 'Amr ibn Al-'As earlier, when they were sitting together—sometime before they died—talking when 'Amr ibn Al-'As asked Mu'awiyah, 'What do you still have of the worldly pleasures?' Mu'awiyah replied, 'As for food, I have become bored of the best of it; and as for garments, I have become bored of its softest kinds. My sole pleasure of this world is to have a sip of cold water on hot day under the shade of a tree.'

These are words that inspire humans with some ambition. After Mu'awiyah had become the Caliph and leader of the believers, and every one seeks his accord and satisfaction, he said, 'My share of the worldly pleasures comes down to a sip of cold water under the shade of a tree on a hot summer day.' This is found among a lot of people. It is as if all worldly aspirations have come down to what anyone could have: a sip of cold water. Afterwards Mu'awiyah asked, 'What about you 'Amr? What do you still find gratifying

among worldly pleasures?' 'Amr replied, 'I still have land abundant with animals, and a well that overflows with water to irrigate the land. I would like to keep it for the rest of my life, and pass to my children upon my death.' There was a servant attending them named, Wirdan to whom the leader of the believers wanted to be courteous. He asked him, 'What about you, Wirdan? What do you still enjoy of worldly pleasures?' Now, consider the reply of the servant, to know that faith does not make a difference between a master and a slave. Wirdan replied, 'My share of worldly pleasure, O leader of the believers, is to do a favour to some noble person who would not repay it to me during my lifetime, and would continue to bear it for my children.'

He wants to explain to us that nothing is lost. As much as you extend your hands with aid and assistance to others, others will do the same for you. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave us that same thing. He said, 'I and the guardian of the orphan are like this in heaven;' "and he pointed with two his adjacent fingers.""⁽¹⁾ What higher status can one ask for? Should not all of us search for an orphan to look after so that we would enjoy the company of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in heaven? This status was indeed the aim of all Companions.

A man from the *Ansar* came to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while looking sad. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him, 'What is wrong with you?' The man replied, 'Prophet of Allah, it is something that I have been thinking about.' So, the Prophet asked, 'What is it?' The man then replied, 'We frequent you, gaze at your face and sit with you, and soon you will return to Allah, and join the rest of the prophets, and we will not be able to reach you.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not respond. However, Gabriel *peace be upon him* then came to him with the following verse, 'And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - they will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favour of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.' (*an-Nisa'*: 69) The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* then summoned the man and relayed to him the good news.⁽²⁾

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

(2) *Taken from Ibn Kathir's translation of The Quran*

The True Lord says to these people, 'Do not be sad! If you love the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and rejoice in his company in the worldly life, do not worry about enjoying his company in heaven; Allah will resurrect you with him in heaven. One will accompany whom he loves. For this reason, I say to every Muslim; look for an orphan to look after in order that you may gain this high status of faith and its elevated counterpart in the hereafter. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I and the guardian of the orphan are like this in heaven, "and he pointed with his middle and index fingers together and then separated them."'(1)

Tell me if you may; how would the state of society be if we dealt with orphans in the light of these instructions? Solidarity will prevail in society.

The True Lord subsequently says: 'and the needy.' We know that the needy and the poor have been defined by the jurists to be the ones in need. But does this mean that the needy and the poor are those who do not have their basic needs; or is it the poor who have nothing or have less than necessary? For instance, he may have ten pounds while he needs twenty to subsist. The word *faqir* (poor) is derived from *fiqar* which is used to refer to the disease that causes the back and waist to be broken. The word *faqir* is thus quite indicative of the state of the poor. *Miskin* (needy) is also quite an expressive word; it is derived from *al-maskana* which means free of all pride, and implies being vanquished and defeated. The word itself is thus indicative of its implication. The word *jar* (deviate) is one who lives nearby, but in what sense may we call the one who lives next to me a *jar*? The reason is that the one living beside you has been assigned this special place in the world. He thus left a wide range of places and came to this specific spot and became your neighbour. This means that, out of many alternatives, he chose to live beside you. Thus, the neighbour is called *jar* to imply that he left all places in the world and came to live beside you.

Allah *Glorified is He* advised us to take care of our neighbour as much as He advised us to take care of our kin, the orphan and the needy. The neighbour has several rights upon us. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There are three kinds of neighbours; a neighbour

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

entitled to only one right. This is the lowest kind of neighbour. There is also a neighbour who is entitled to two rights and another who is entitled to three rights. As for the one who is entitled to only one right, he is the neighbour who associates partners alongside Allah and does not have any blood relation to you; he is thus only entitled to the right of neighbourhood. As for the one who is entitled to two rights, he is the Muslim neighbour who is entitled to both the right of Islam and the right of neighbourhood. As for the one who is entitled to three rights, he is the Muslim neighbour who is also a relative. He is thus entitled to the right of Islam, the right of neighbourhood and the right of kinship.’⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said concerning the right of the neighbour, ‘Gabriel keeps on admonishing me to take care of the neighbour to the extent that I thought he would be one of the heirs.’⁽²⁾ But what are the boundaries of defining the neighbour? The neighbour is the one whose door is closest to you within forty cubits away from your door. Scholars also said everyone who lives in the forty houses next to you is your neighbour.

Afterward the True Lord says: ‘and the neighbour from among your own people.’ Allah mentions the one who is entitled to both the right of kinship and the right of neighbourhood. He then said: ‘and the neighbour who is a stranger.’ This means the one distant to you. He then said: ‘and the friend by your side.’ This refers to the one who constantly accompanies you. Scholars said that this refers to the wife or the travel companion because travel companions are always together. He may also be the one who follows you in the hope that he may take something from the bounties of Allah that have been bestowed upon you whether in the form of money, knowledge or a craft that he would like to learn from you. He is thus the one who accompanies you. The servant also accompanies you. These connotations expand the cycle of kindness to others. Furthermore, if you think about them, you will realize how they overlap.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him*: ‘Abu Dharr, if you cook soup, increase its water so that you may serve your neighbours a portion of it.’⁽³⁾

(1) [Al-Bazzar and Abu Ash-Sheikh]

(2) [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

(3) [Muslim]

In this respect, what is important is to always be in contact with your neighbour, especially if this neighbour is of your kin. A lot of neighbours may share affection and good relations. However, there may be a neighbour whose name you may not know. This is the neighbour who is a stranger. 'And the friend by your side, and the way farer.' He is typical of someone you know nothing about except that he is related to such and such a city. The word 'wayfarer' means that we do not know anything about him at all. Thus, once you see him, you say he is wayfarer travelling on the road; this implies that you cannot relate him to anything except the road or the way that brought him to you. You cannot relate him to a known father or mother let alone a clan. You know nothing about him.

'And those whom your right hands possess.' We have talked previously about those in this category. We said, Islam came not to legalize slavery but to abolish it and drain its sources that used to exist before its advent. Only one source remains; lawful war. But why did it not rule out this source as well? The reason is that a lawful war involves taking captives from both sides. The only way to release them is through exchange of captives. This comes down to equal treatment that the modern world has finally settled on under the rubric of 'captive exchange protocols.' Islam forbids us to call them slaves. Rather, he or she should be called a boy or girl. Thus, even titles were organized and disciplined by Allah so that servitude be reserved only to Him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* brought about Islam when slavery was present. Even though slavery at that time had more than twenty sources, it was organized in accordance with one criterion: the will of the master. Islam thus came to abolish slavery; and the first step in this abolition is blocking its sources. Further, instead of leaving slavery to be organized and governed only by the will of the master and his desire, Islam established multiple grounds for dealing with it. Accordingly, if we have eliminated all the sources to only one, we have diversified the governing criteria. You may thus atone for a sin that you have committed by freeing a slave. Alternatively, if you have made a false oath to the effect that you will divorce your wife, you may atone for it by freeing a slave. This is the wish of the one who wants to abolish slavery. Moreover, Islam guides the one who owns a slave, but does not have the means to free this slave, and the boy or girl was still under his ownership, the master

should treat them well if they are still slaves. Feed him of the same food you eat, and give him clothes of the same kind you wear, and do not overburden him otherwise help him. However, it is rather difficult to find someone who eats of the same food of which his master eats and wears the same clothes as he does, and when his master assigns him a task that he cannot undertake on his own, his master aids him. Is this not the best recipe of kindness?

After this the True Lord *Glorified is He* seals this verse with a statement that totally crushes the pride any doer of good things may have. Beware lest the bounty you bestow or the exertion you make should cause you to be proud or self-conceited. Your self-conceit and arrogance would be false. Further, if you look down on others because of the means you have in your life, you may know that these means will eventually change. 'Change' here means that it will fade away and perish. Thus, the one who wants to take pride and be self-conceited should do so because of something inherent in him and that he essentially has. For this reason, pride is only possible for Allah, but constantly changing humans cannot claim it to themselves. We see strong people becoming weak, rich people becoming poor and knowledgeable people becoming ignorant: 'So that he knows nothing after having known.' (*al-Hajj*: 5)

No creature ought to have pride. Those who want to take pride and look down on others should do so owing to something that they have in themselves. In other words, they should do so based on something that cannot be taken away from them. But all creatures are in a constant change and human existence is always subject to fluctuation. Therefore, leave pride to the one who can rightfully claim it. Never think that when we told you to do so and be good unto your kin, orphans and the needy that it is an invitation for you to be proud. Pride spoils good deeds because they were given to you by Allah. You should rather be modest because the one who is self-conceited is the one who does not recognize any one greater than himself.

Find someone who takes pride in having a million pounds but shows off before someone who possesses more money; what would he do? He would be shy and belittled. One would not become arrogant unless he finds all people present smaller in rank compared to him. But if he continues to look at Allah, he would know that pride only belongs to Allah. When one acts arrogantly, he

does so because he does not have Allah in his mind otherwise he would be ashamed. If you bore Him in mind, you would be too bashful to feel any arrogance. Allah is absent from the mind of the arrogant person. For this reason, the True Lord says at the end of this verse: 'Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful.' But what does it mean to be full self-conceited, and what does boastful mean?

The root of the word *mukhtal* (self-conceit) means moving with pride. For this reason, we call the horse in Arabic *khayl* because it walks boastfully. When someone rides it, it also walks boastfully. Self-conceit is a visual movement whereas acting in a boastful manner is an audible movement. The True Lord forbids us to walk proudly and snobbishly. He also forbids us to walk in a swayed manner. One should not consider himself the source of bounty so that the saying of Allah: 'Turning away haughtily that he may lead (others) astray from the way of Allah; for him is disgrace in this world, and on the day of resurrection We will make him taste the punishment of burning.' (*al-Hajj*: 9-10)

As for pride, it occurs when one verbally boasts about what he did as if he was the source of giving to all humans. Both self-conceit and boastfulness are forbidden. The Muslim should refrain from visual movement and verbal pride; but why did the True Lord mention this here? He mentioned it so that no servant of Allah would think that he is doing the good of his own initiative; rather, the good he does is from what Allah has endowed him with.

In addition, you should not exploit those to whom you did good things as slaves. If you do so, remember the mastery of the One Who bestowed you with your entire livelihood. If you do so, you would commit to respect Allah and keep away from self-conceit and boastfulness due to what you gave to others.

The True Lord says: 'Verily, Allah does not like such as are proud and boastful.'

After the True Lord says: 'And do the good unto your parents.' He then said: 'and near of kin, and unto orphans.' Allah then talked about effort exertion, generosity and forgiveness. Afterwards Allah speaks of the opposite case:

الَّذِينَ يَبْخُلُونَ وَيَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ وَيَكْتُمُونَ مَا
 ءَاتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿٣٧﴾

who are miserly and order other people to be the same, hiding the bounty God has given them. We have prepared a humiliating torment for such ungrateful people [37] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 37)

What does it mean to be miserly? It means the difficulty of giving. A miser always finds a great difficulty whenever he takes a sum of his own money to give to others, and sometime he is reluctant to give it. But the generous one is always at ease and willing to do this; he is always comfortable doing favours. In short, miserliness means finding difficulty in giving. This attitude extends even to things that neither harms him to give nor benefit him to retain, simply because he does not want to give. This is a trait of the self because he withheld to give himself anything before anyone; and since he is as such, would you expect him to give others?

A poet depicts a miser named 'Isa and whom he wants to insult for being a miser. He thus portrays him to be a miser not only towards other people but also towards himself, even concerning things that will not harm him to give away or benefit him to retain. As long as he behaves like this towards himself, it would not be unexpected that he acts like this towards others:

'Isa is being a miser towards himself
 even though he is not immortal

Indeed, if he could breathe through one nostril, he would do so to satiate his miserly attitude.

He is miser to the extent that he thinks to breathe through one nostril to avoid breathing through both.

Another poet brings forwards an image that clarifies how the one who is being ungenerous denies himself comfortable and humane life. He says:

If your house, cousin of Muhammad, is full of needles that you do not need; and Yousef comes to you to borrow one to sew his garment; you would not lend him any.

The poet here says that if Yousef (Joseph) *peace be upon him* goes to this miser and asks him for a needle to sew his garment that was torn by Zuleikha, this miser would not lend him one even if he has a house full of needles.

Therefore, a miser is the one who does not like giving others. He even finds it burdensome and difficult to give something that will neither benefit him if he keeps it and nor does it harm him if he gives it away. The True Lord thus says about such a person: 'And let not those who [out of miserliness] withhold what Allah has given them of His bounty ever think that it is better for them. Rather, it is worse for them. Their necks will be encircled by what they withheld on the Day of Resurrection. And to Allah belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] acquainted.' (*Al-Imran*: 180)

Allah will tie the neck of the miser with a ring made of the things he found difficulty giving away. Had he given some of them away, the ring around his neck would have been lighter on Judgment Day. But the more he withholds, the heavier the ring will be. The True Lord also speaks about those who amass gold and silver: 'O you who have believed, indeed many of the scholars and the monks devour the wealth of people unjustly and avert [them] from the way of Allah. And those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah - give them tidings of a painful punishment. The Day when it will be heated in the fire of Hell and seared therewith will be their foreheads, their flanks, and their backs, [it will be said], "This is what you hoarded for yourselves, so taste what you used to hoard."' (*at-Tawba*: 34-35)

If misers were to amass huge quantities of silver and gold, these quantities will be used to ablaze the fire burning them in the hereafter. Thus, one should relieve himself of the torment and pain of burning. The misers do not only keep this ethical deficiency to themselves; they want others to become like them as if they fell in love with being ungenerous. It ails them to see generous people. A miser will tell you do not spend because he suffers when he sees a generous person, and wants all people to be just like him so that no one would be better than him.

He knows that generosity is better because he wants all people to be the same as him. Miserliness is to withhold that which you have been endowed

from the one who has not been endowed. But is it only about money? No, it exists in virtually every skill you have, while others do not. Whenever you withheld to benefit people with it, you have become a miser yourself.

Miserliness subsumes the one who would not help the incapacitated and the one who does not share his knowledge with others. Further, failing to maintain patience in the face of the fool is also considered miserliness. Another instance: there may be a teacher who has ten students learning from him a craft. However, he may not want to share his knowledge with them; he would then be a miser as well.

‘Those who are miserly and enjoin miserliness on other men’ is a verse that encompasses all tangible and intangible aspects of miserliness. We can use this understanding to apply it to a superior meaning. The people of the Book knew the truth about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as much as they knew their children. However, when he came to them confirming what they knew was the truth, they disbelieved the message of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They hid away their recognition of his character and their recognition of the knowledge that he brought even though he is the most honest. This is the ultimate expression of miserliness. They continued to command people to be misers.

You knew that the *Ansar* were generous when the *Muhajirun* went to them and they shared with them their money and wealth. The *Ansar* even agreed to give them the bounty about which Allah has implanted a special love and jealousy, women; whom even if one hates, one would not be willing to give them to anyone else. *The Ansar* divorced some of their women (i.e. those who married more than one) so the *Muhajirun* can marry them.

Indeed, there were several men who were married to more than one woman, and who willingly divorced the second wife to marry her to one of the *Muhajirun*. The True Lord *the Glorified* nourished the generosity of the *Ansar* to the extent that one of them would go to a *Muhajir* and tell him, ‘Look at both of my wives and choose whomever you like, and I will divorce the one you choose and marry her to you immediately.’

Is there a more exalted and higher form of generosity than this? If you have a bounty from Allah and you are a believer, you would want to extend the grace of the bounty to others. Thus, if you have an elegant car, would you want to give it away?! However, you may be reluctant to do this with a woman. Nonetheless, this exalted form of generosity was manifested by the *Ansar*. They said to the *Muhajirun*, 'You are immigrants and you have left behind your families.' This was an elevation caused by the steadfast faith of the *Ansar*.

The *Muhajirun* were strong and energetic youth whom Quraysh had denied them their wives. Each of the *Ansar* thus said to himself: why I would not divorce one of my wives so that my immigrant brother could marry her to release his suppressed passions? At least, if I do so, I would be keeping him from casting his eyes on something prohibited by Allah. But the Jews, polytheists, and hypocrites urged them not to give anything to those who came with the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Noble Quran says the following about this situation: 'They are the ones who say, "Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disband." And to Allah belongs the depositories of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites do not understand.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7)

They thought badly about those who believed in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. They thought that if they did not support them, they would revert on their faith. They forgot that the *Muhajirun* had left their wealth and country for the sake of Allah. Would the one who did so shun his belief in Allah if he finds nothing? Of course, he would not! The reason is that he left everything for the sake of Allah. For instance, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, an affluent young man in Quraysh, who used to put on the finest perfumes and whose mother used to flood him with wealth, started to wear the skin of a goat when he went to Medina. When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw him, he said to his Companions, 'Look what faith has done to your friend.'

Thus, when hypocrites, like 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, said to the *Ansar*, spend on those who are with the Prophet Muhammad so that they would disband. He thought that the immigrants were willing, after all the sacrifices they made, to sell their faith for a bite. It is as if he and his fellow hypocrites forgot

that the one who sells his faith for a bite is the one who believes in false principles. However, the one who embraces faith in a true principle always finds a sweet taste in his soul due to this belief. He further knows well that the Lord has prepared a great reward for him.

A believer would thus never change his faith or compromise it. `Ali ibn Abu Taleb said, 'One day, as I was walking into the mosque, I found Mus`ab ibn `Umayr dressed in a garment stitched with a piece of sheep fur, who previously used to be the richest and most luxuriously living young man in Mecca. When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw how he became after embracing Islam and recalled the affluence in which Mus`ab used to relish before embracing Islam in comparison with his current austere state, he cried in pity for him and said, "Which is better; your current state or your state if someone attends you and serves you bread and meat? We replied, We would be better off that day, for if we have enough livelihood, we would be able to devote ourselves to prayers and worship." So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "No, your state today is better than your state in that day."⁽¹⁾

We have previously said that you ought to remember that the sweetness of faith and belief prompts the believer to sacrifice everything for the cause of exalting his faith. But those who adhere to false principles and values do not admit others into it unless they pay a price in advance. In other words, they buy them. Thus, if you ever see people being paid or bribed to embrace or support a certain principle or doctrine, you must know that this principle or doctrine is false. If this principle or doctrine was original, one would have expended all his fortune for its sake; one would even sacrifice his own life for its sake.

Among the wonders of Islam is that when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wrote the covenant for himself at `Aqaba. The *Ansar* asked him, 'If we fulfilled this covenant, what is our gain?' It is as if they were asking; you have taken your share, so what about us?

Consider the Prophet Muhammad's exalted faith in Allah and his absolute certainty that faith, in itself, is a prize. So, did he relay to them the good news that they would rule over the earth? Did he tell those who were weak and

(1) *At-Tirmidhi*

helpless at that time that they would be empowered by Allah? No, he rather told them that 'your prize is paradise.' Had he told them that your prize is the mastery over the world, this would have required deliberation. It is true that they took over the world, yet some of them died before this happened. So, how could Prophet Muhammad's prophecy be true in such a case? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke to them about a guaranteed thing; the thing that the believer could find once he dies. He told them, 'you would have paradise.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to a group of his Companions, 'I bid that you, and pledge to me that you would never believe in any god but Allah, and that you would not commit adultery, kill your children, promote a lie amongst yourselves or disobey me in any good deed. Whoever of you continues to be true to this covenant will be rewarded by Allah; whoever adheres partly to it and is then punished for it in the worldly life, such punishment would be an atonement for him; and whoever adheres partly to it and Allah conceals the reality of his belief, his fate will be left to Allah to either punish or forgive him if He wills.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not encourage them by promising superiority, wealth or domination in the world. Rather, he motivated them by the ultimate, matchless and doubtless reward of Allah: Paradise. It was on this basis that they pledged allegiance to him, and that is why the *Ansar* (the Helpers [Muslims from Medina]) were especially dear to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In the Battle of Hunayn, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* distributed the battle spoils among the *Muhajirun* (the Immigrants [Meccan Muslims]), but nothing was left for the *Ansar*, which was rather hard on their hearts. To soothe them, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Are you not contented, O *Ansar*, that others will go back to their homes with sheep and camels and you will go back with the Messenger of Allah? By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, if it had not been for the immigration (that He was one of the *Muhajirun*), I would have counted myself as one of the *Ansar*! If all people took a path and the *Ansar* chose another, I would go with the *Ansar*! May Allah have mercy on the *Ansar*, their children and their grandchildren?'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had barely finished his speech when the beards of the *Ansar* became wet with tears, and they replied, 'We are content with the Messenger of Allah as our share!' How firm and sublime their faith was! The hypocrites told the *Ansar*, as Allah quotes them in the Quran: 'Give nothing to those who follow God's Messenger, until they abandon him.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). However, those who believed in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never abandoned him. They immigrated with him to Medina, leaving behind wealth and family. They were not after any transient gains; they were more than content with the comfort and joy they were promised in the Afterlife. They knew through their faith that all the pleasures of this worldly life would come to an end by death or loss. They aspired and strove for eternal bliss that will never come to an end.

Allah *the Exalted* then says: '... and conceal whatever Allah has bestowed upon them out of His Bounty...' (*an-Nisa'*: 37) An act of concealment means trying to keep from people a thing that should naturally manifest itself. It is as if wealth and knowledge were struggling to manifest themselves, to be delivered to everyone, but those who possess them deliberately block their way to the light. A sound disposition dictates whatever material or nonmaterial blessings Allah grants a person, out of His Bounty, should not be withheld from people, but should reach out to help others, for every blessing of Allah is essentially intended to be in the service of His servants. Concealment in this case is an act of transgression, for it means keeping those blessings of Allah from performing their role of serving humankind. This transgression also goes against the nature that Allah has created in those concealed blessings. They too, are servants of Allah created for a mission; so when they are forcefully prevented from fulfilling that mission, frustration prevents them from functioning in the best manner. Even inanimate things feel frustrated: 'So the heaven and the earth did not weep for them, nor were they respited.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 29)

The sky and earth have their own way of weeping. Such weeping is not by way of shedding tears; it is rather, in a manner that only Allah knows the reality of. The words of Allah: '... and conceal whatever Allah has bestowed upon them out of His Bounty...' (*an-Nisa'*: 37), therefore mean that whatever Allah gives you out of His Grace is not exclusively yours. You have not

attained it due to any power inherent in you, but Allah has bestowed His favours on to you out of His Bounty, so you may employ them to benefit His servants. Look at the universe around you and you will find it in a constant flux of change. Have you not ever come across or heard of an able man who later became disabled or a rich man who became poor? We witness such fluctuations in the world every day, so we should learn this lesson. Now, you are wealthy enough to give, but one day you may be the one in need. Through the good you do for others now; you are saving yourself when days turn around and you are in a need.

Moreover, you will save yourself from torment in the Hereafter: '[Nor] those who are stingy, and bid others to be stingy, and conceal whatever Allah has bestowed upon them out of His Bounty; and so We have readied a shameful suffering for all who deny the truth.' (*an-Nisa'*: 37) Look what stinginess brings on to those who insist on it. Allah describes them as 'deniers of truth' in the sense that they deny His favours on them and show ungratefulness through concealment of these favours. Let them receive their recompense in full, then: '... and so We have readied a shameful suffering for all who deny the truth.' (*an-Nisa'*: 37) Their punishment has already been prepared: Hell. Fire is already in a state of completion and preparedness to receive its dwellers just as paradise is. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Paradise was shown to me, and if I had stretched out my hand, I would have picked some of its fruits.'⁽¹⁾

The promised reward is already prepared, and who prepared it? It is Allah, the All-Powerful and Almighty Creator, and He has prepared that reward in accordance with His Limitless Power. Someone may arrogantly argue that he can bear torment, as a poet once said, addressing his own self,

Stick to patience so those rejoicing at your misfortune will be surprised!

Show them that you will never be broken by life's suffering and plights!

This does not apply to torment in the Hereafter. Allah Who has prepared it, describes it as 'shameful suffering.' It is not like any shame or any suffering we may ever face in this life. When it comes to the unseen Afterlife,

(1) *An-Nisa'i, Ahmad and Al-Muttaqi Al Hindi from the book Kanz Al-'Ummal*

words do not denote the same degree of the quality. The scope and nature of things in the Hereafter are totally unpredictable.

After talking about the stingy, Allah mentions another category of people about spending:

وَالَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ رِشَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَنْ يَكُنِ الشَّيْطَانُ لَهُ قَرِينًا فَسَاءَ قَرِينًا ﴿٣٨﴾

[Nor does He like those] who spend their wealth to show off, who do not believe in Him or the Last Day. Whoever has Satan as his companion has an evil companion! [38] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 38)

Unlike the miserly, this noble verse is addressed to a category of people who do spend generously, but they miss the purpose for such spending. Instead of directing his intention to pleasing Allah, he spends his money, or better say, 'wastes his money', to earn people's recognition and praise. Those who know the truth about the Grace and Bounty of Allah say, when you give, choose Him who will reward you most generously for your giving. When you give a thing to someone, your reward will be in line with his capacity; it may be just a word of praise. When your reward is from Allah however, how great do you think it will be? Doubtless, reward from Allah is matchless.

It befits a person of sound judgment then to be careful who he gives his money to. We have a great example in the Companion 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, *Allah be pleased with him*. Merchants competed to buy his new merchandise so they would re-sell it and make profit. 'Uthman told them, 'I have received for it more than what you offer me... I have sold it to Allah.' He gave his merchandise to charity for the cause of Allah; he knew He is the One Who will best appreciate it and reward for it. Let whoever spends his money to gain people's praise know that he thus throws away his wealth for a trivial price. What good can people ever do you? They may even envy you for what you have and wish they could take it away from you. Why do you show off your deeds for their sake then? This is a profitless deal and all what you spend will be effaced. Allah says: 'Behold, Allah has bought of the believers their lives and their possessions, promising them Paradise in return...' (*at-Tawba*: 111).

As long as Allah is the One Who buys them, the price must be high; the price is eternal comfort and joy that will never change or come to an end. In paradise, all pleasures are ever abundant and ever ready for a believer to enjoy; no wish a believer will entertain but that will come true in the blink of an eye. What loss and what weakness of judgment it is then to sacrifice such matchless, abundant reward for a profitless bargain with people whose praise can do more harm than good, if any good at all! Only those who have not tasted the sweetness of trading with Allah would do this. In another verse of the Quran, Allah says about them: '... like someone who spends his wealth only to be seen by people, not believing in Allah and the Last Day. Such a person is like a *safwan* (rock) with earth on it: heavy rain falls and leaves it completely bare...' (*al-Baqara*: 264)

The Arabic word *safwan* refers to a white, shiny, smooth stone with pores that dust can fill. Being so smooth, even a few droplets of water can remove the dust off it. He who gives to charity to be praised by people will gain no reward in the end; whatever he spends will be effaced, just as water removes dust off a smooth rock and leaves its surface empty; they too will be left in the end with no reward. No one would do so if faith was firmly rooted in their hearts. When one is offered a high price for his commodity, why should he sell it for less?! Is it plausible to bring loss on to oneself?! To throw away the wealth Allah has given you for other than Him, contradicts true faith and no fruits will be reaped from such a losing business. Therefore, be careful as to why and to whom you give charity. If it is for the cause of Allah, prepare for an ample reward. Direct your intention to Him *the Almighty* and do not boast about what you give. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has told about seven categories of people whom Allah will protect in His Shade on Judgment Day, when there is no shade except His. One of these categories is '... a man who gives charity and conceals it so much that his left hand would not know what his right hand has given!'⁽¹⁾

A righteous servant of Allah knows that giving confers on him a kind of superiority most felt by those he gives, so he would be anxious to hide his charity from people not to hurt their feelings and make them feel humiliated,

(1) *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

as well as inferior. Still, Allah knows secrecy is not always possible and He does not want to limit the scope of giving, so He tells us: 'If you do deeds of charity openly, it is well; but if you bestow it upon the needy in secret, it will be even better for you, and it will atone for some of your bad deeds. And Allah is aware of all that you do.' (*al-Baqara*: 271)

There is no harm in giving to charity openly if the giver intends by so doing to offer an example for other people to follow. What is important is for him to purify his heart of all pride at the moment of giving and guard himself against false piety. In all cases, Allah would never deprive the needy of what a giver may be willing to spend, even if he does so just to show off. Rather, Allah deprives the insincere giver of reward, so he alone is the loser, yet society would benefit from his spending.

A Muslim who believes in Allah and that He is the Ultimate Giver should not spend except for His cause and to win His Good Pleasure. By giving to charity only to show off, he thus follows in the steps of the disbelievers, '...not believing in Allah and the Last Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 38). If they believed in Judgment Day or thought of the eternal reward, they would direct their intentions only to pleasing Allah. If you truly appreciate the blessings Allah has bestowed on you, then you should spend them in the way that makes them fruitful to yourself and others. Begrudging money, or spending it only to win people's praise or admiration, is a waste of this blessing Allah has given you. By contrast, spending money for the cause of Allah means reaping abundant fruits both in this life (since Allah will bless one's money) and in the Hereafter, by the reward for generosity extending there eternally.

The stingy are the enemies of their own wealth because they fail to make it fruitful. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'On Judgment Day, Almighty Allah will descend to resolve the cases of His servants, while every nation is humbled to their knees. Those who will be brought forth first are the ones who memorized the Quran, the next are who were martyred, and the third are those who had lots of money. Allah will ask the reciter of the Quran: "Did I not teach you what I revealed to My Messenger?" The reciter of the Quran will respond, "Yes, O Allah." Allah will ask him, "What did you do to express gratitude for that knowledge?" He would say, "I have recited it in

salat (prayer) during the night and day.” Allah will say, “You are lying”, and the angels will also say, “You are lying.” Allah will say, “You recited the Quran so it would be said, “He is an able reciter [of the Quran]”, and so was it said.” Then, the man who possesses wealth will be brought forth and asked....⁽¹⁾ Allah makes him spend his money for the service and benefit of those in need then make him lament his spending on the Day of Judgment when he finds his deeds obliterated and no reward is prepared for him.

A miserly person continues throughout his life to pile heaps of money, thinking he is achieving happiness in this way. In fact, he is only depriving himself and saving for an heir who would gain them effortlessly. An Egyptian proverb says, ‘Money of the miserly goes to squanderers.’ So, Allah punishes him in both lives. Indeed, no one can deceive the Almighty Creator. Allah has granted him a blessing that he begrudges others, so Allah makes this money a punishment to him and allows others to benefit from it despite his miserliness. He will only pay for it in the end. If he spent his money in the manner Allah ordains, Allah would bless it and reward him with ample compensation: ‘...and whatever it be that you spend on others, He [always] replaces it...’ (*Saba’*: 39) However, since he acts at variance with what Allah likes, he is denied the fruits of this money in both lives, and it will all be left for the heirs to enjoy it. Further, when the miserly withhold their money from those in need, they thus only make room for the generous who want to give and help others.

How is that? Let us assume that a generous person, who never shunned anyone who sought his help, experienced a decrease in his income that he cannot even provide sufficiently for himself. Suppose he had two acres of land and wanted to sell one of them to ease the asperities of the needy who were used to pin hope on him. Who would want to buy that acre but a miserly who amasses wealth? In this manner, the miserly person facilitated spending for the generous one, by thus providing the latter with money in the course of his piling lands and riches! Let no one think that he can deceive the One Who has created him and the entire universe and given him that wealth. This case bears subtle resemblance to that of a sinner who repents; perhaps he would think he had enjoyed that sin and indulged himself in the pleasure he craved

(1) *Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn-Khuzayma*

and then it would come to nothing. It is true that repentance means Allah will forgive him, but his sins would spur him to struggle in doing good deeds to make amends for his former disobedience. Allah says: '...for, verily, good deeds drive away evil deeds....' (*Hud*: 114)

Your past sins, even though forgiven, would continue to prick your conscience and drive you to spare no effort in doing good deeds to make up for the past. Allah thus makes those sins a means that pushes one to be of service to others through doing good to them. Similarly, Allah uses the stingy to pave way for the generous and thus be of service to others despite themselves. Allah concludes the verse by summing up the reason that pushes the stingy to persist in their attitude: '...Whoever has Satan as his companion has an evil companion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 38) Several reasons may drive one to be stingy, but they can only be concluded in one word: Satan. He is the one who prevents you from following the right path. He is present in all that makes disobedience tempting, in every desire you crave and every instance when you have been heedless of the right path. He is the bad companion who makes every atrocious sin dazzling and every unlawful pleasure luring. Still, devils are not only jinn, but there are devils among human beings as well. Your own self may play the role of the devil when it tempts you into deviating from the right path to quench a desire. The self that entices you to think only of transient pleasures and forget about the reward Allah has prepared for the righteous is the devil in disguise. So, it is Satan who insinuates them to act in a stingy manner and command others to do the same. They have taken Satan as a *qarin* (companion). Another derivative of the same root is *qirn* (opponent) which suggests that a sinner has for his companionship, the very one he should fight as an opponent.

A third derivative is the word *qarn* (century). It is taken from the same root that denotes companionship since it refers to a period when generations are connected with each other, which conveys the same meaning of 'companionship' or 'closeness.' So, Satan is the constant companion of him who yields to his temptations. Allah says: '... Whoever has Satan as his companion has an evil companion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 38) An evil companion he is indeed, who neither advises one to do good nor cautions him to avoid evil doing.

One may love his companions who share unlawful pleasures with him in this worldly life, but how would such people feel toward each other in the

Afterlife? Allah answers us in the Quran: 'On that Day, friends will become each other's enemies, except for the righteous.' (*az-Zukhruf*:67)

The righteous help each other in being obedient to Allah, so each of them in the Afterlife will tell his companion, 'You have been my sincere companion who advised me to be obedient to Allah and reminded me whenever I was heedless of my duty to Him.' Thus, love between them will increase. By contrast, those who were involved together in evil-doing will curse one another, and the first that will be cursed on Judgment Day is Satan. He too will disown those he dragged into sinning. Thus will Satan argue against those whom he tempted and misguided, as Allah foretells us: 'And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So, do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid; nor can you be called to my aid. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment."' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

The Arabic word *sultan* means a compelling power that compels those who are subjected to it. As for the human being, his physical form only can be made to submit by such a power, but as for his beliefs, they can only be governed and defeated by strong evidence. Material power, however great, can only subjugate the physical form, but not the heart of the human being. With a whip in your hand, you may force a person to prostrate himself to you. You have only subdued this person's body, but not his heart. The latter may only be influenced by potent proofs and the power of persuasion, which is also a kind of *sultan* (compelling power).

There are thus two kinds of dominating powers: a power that subdues the physical form and a power that subjugates the heart through logic. The former makes one submit against his will, whereas the power of logic and persuasion makes one yield and act of his own accord. Satan will say to his followers: you who made me your companion, you are foolish, for I did not have any power over you, neither material power to force you to commit sins, nor any logical arguments to persuade you to commit sins. You were only heedless of the right path, so I just insinuated you to deviate, and you obeyed me. I did not have any

power to exercise over your bodies or minds. '...I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me...' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

They were the architects of their own destruction, so Satan will tell them on Judgment Day, as Allah foretells us in the Quran: '... I cannot be called to your aid; nor can you be called to my aid.' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

What does this verse convey? It depicts a hard situation, a real predicament that one cannot handle by any means. Desperate for help, he resorts to others for help and cries out for someone to respond with quickness and give him a helping hand. Satan says to those he misguided in the worldly life, 'No matter how desperately you cry out for help, I will never save you, nor will you ever be able to save me.' Each party will then realize their offence; each will realize how helpless, how devoid of power they are. Almighty Allah says: 'And We have made every man's actions to cling to his neck, and We will bring forth to him, on the Day of Resurrection, a book which he will find wide open.' (*al-Isra'*: 13)

Whoever chooses Satan as a companion has indeed chosen a bad companion. Satan has vowed before Allah that he will tempt all humankind into deviation except those who are truly devout to Him *the Almighty*. Whoever obeys Satan is therefore disobedient to Allah.

Ponder again the words of Allah: '[Nor does He like those] who spend their wealth to show off, who do not believe in Him or the Last Day. Whoever has Satan as his companion has an evil companion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 38). This verse discusses a type of spending that Allah will not accept. When one gives to charity only to earn admiration and praise, his money benefits others but not himself. He thus throws away his money, so he neither benefits from it in this life, nor will that money yield any fruits with his Lord in the Hereafter.

Allah directs our attention to the fact that such deviation is attributed to the impediments of one's faith that require to be resisted for one to be able to be adherent in every single deed to the path of his Lord. Such impediments manifest themselves in human desire that makes transient pleasures dazzling, human heedlessness that tempts one into forsaking the commands of Allah, thinking it a little thing, and the devil who insinuates one to obey his whims. The Arabic word *shaitan* does not only refer to Satan and his soldiers-(sinners from

among the jinn) but also to all those who rebel against the ordinance of Allah from among humans, as Allah says: 'And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the *shaitans* [devils] from among men and jinn, some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive (them)...' (*al-An'am*: 112). Now, how can one tell whether insinuation emanates from his own self or from the devil? To know the answer, look at the sin you crave: is it a sin that you feel inclined to do every now and then, or is it that when you fail to attain an unlawful pleasure, you just pursue another? The difference lies here.

One would covet a certain thing Allah has forbidden; the desire to do that one thing would persist and no other desires would interfere. In such a case, desire stems from your own self. By contrast, if, upon realizing that you cannot attain a certain unlawful pleasure and you just start thinking of another, know then that you are insinuated by the devil. He does not care what sin you commit; he just tries to drag you into error any way he can. If he fails to tempt you into committing a specific sin, he immediately tries another sin toward which he may find a weakness in you.

This way, one can identify the source of insinuation and know whether the impediment emanates from his own self or from the devil. If a certain desire persists so much that you cannot stop craving it however you can, know the temptation originates from your own self. The devil, on the other hand, does not care whether you commit this sin or that sin; rather, he wants you to be disobedient to Allah, whatever the sins you commit may be.

We know Satan has old harboured animosity against humankind. He refused to prostrate himself to Adam *peace be upon him* believing he is better than him. Allah warned Adam against him and Adam *peace be upon him* must have communicated this warning to his offspring and told them that Satan is their enemy. Still, when heedlessness overcomes the heart, it makes room for the devil to penetrate it and lead it astray. Satan would not bother to tempt someone who is already swayed by his own self. Rather, he comes to the obedient to spoil their devotion. Allah quotes him in the Quran as saying: '...I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path.' (*al-A'raf*: 16). You will not find Satan in a bar, but he will wait for you at the door of the mosque to spoil the worship you intend to observe. This is the meaning of, '...I will

surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 16) Some would say non-Muslim minorities in any Muslim country live (at least apparently) in peace and harmony, whereas hatred and fights are rife among the Muslim majority. This is true. Satan has guaranteed that those have already strayed far from the straight path by committing the grave sin of disbelief, so he is in no need to misguide them any further. As for Muslims, he knows they are the adherents of the true religion, so he focuses on them to distract them from the straight path. Satan lies in wait on the straight path of Allah since he wants to tempt those who adhere to righteousness. He does not concern himself with those already swayed by their own selves especially those who disbelieve in Allah since they have already committed a sin far greater than what Satan could possibly wish to tempt them into!

So, what is it that makes one decrease his money by spending it on the poor and get nothing in the end but vanity gratified?! The reason is that they have made Satan their companion. Even though giving charity is a good deed in itself, Satan would not let them enjoy the reward for it. He would interfere to spoil that act of worship. Such is the worst companion a human being may ever have; that is why Allah says: ‘...Whoever has Satan as his companion has an evil companion.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 38) Evil indeed is a companion who dissuades you from the right path, and lets you throw away your money by spending it for other than Allah and lets transient praise and admiration be your only reward. What a meagre recompense!

In the next verse Allah says:

وَمَاذَا عَلَيْهِمْ لَوْ ءَامَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَانْفَقُوا
مِمَّا رَزَقَهُمُ اللّٰهُ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ بِهِمْ عَلِيْمًا

**What harm would it do them to believe in God
and the Last Day, and give charitably from the
sustenance God has given them? God knows
them well [39] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 39)**

By this interrogation, ‘What harm would it do them to believe in Allah...’, Allah does not mean to inquire of them about the trouble or harm they may

possibly incur if they embrace faith and spend their money for His cause. Rather, Allah uses the interrogative form to condemn them and rebuke them for their ignorance and mindlessness of what is best for them.

Such a manner of reproach is common in language. We would say to an idle student who has failed in his exams, 'What harm would it do you if you studied'? Such an interrogative expression is used rhetorically when the stated failure or deficiency results from negligence on the part of the one addressed by the reproach. In the above example, the failing student would have passed had he studied. However, it may not be used when the imperfection is out of the person's control. We would not tell someone who is rather short, a quality that is not up to him to change, 'What harm would it do you if you were tall'? This is a completely nonsensical proposition!

Therefore, this rhetorical question can only be addressed to him who has within his voluntary power, the capacity to correct the stated blameworthy conduct. We say this to refute the allegation of the *Jabriya*, a school of theology that claims man has no power or choice and all his actions are predetermined. They claim that a disbeliever, having no free will of his own, is therefore bound to continue his life as a disbeliever. However, Allah says: 'What harm would it do them to believe in Allah and the Last Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 39). This verse confirms that man has the choice and free will to believe or disbelieve, but then he will be held accountable for his actions; this demolishes the extreme ideas of the *Jabriya*. The human being is not brought to this life to mechanically to do a series of predetermined actions regarding which he has no choice or free will. He is not a feather swayed by the blowing wind, or as a poet once said:

He threw him in the sea, both his hands shackled,
and strictly warned of being wet or drowned!

We say to all who make such allegations, 'You have attributed an injustice to Allah *the Exalted* above what you ascribe to Him! Allah would not enjoin on humankind to believe in Him unless He endowed them with the capacity to choose. This is a mistaken understanding of the issue of fate and predestination. The fact that Allah has foreordained everything from eternity does not mean He cancels the will of man and strips him of the power to choose. Rather, it

means His Omnipotent Knowledge encompasses all the choices His servants would make. He is our Creator; He knows fully what we would harbour in our hearts and what choices we would make and, based on this Knowledge, He has predetermined our final destinies. Predestination is only a manifestation of the all-encompassing Knowledge of Allah, and not any form of compulsion exercised over His servants.

The Attributes of Allah fall under two categories; one concerned with revelation and the other with action. Knowledge falls under the first, while Might is an example of the second category. Let me give you an illustrating example. A college dean may ask one of the teachers to run an exam to assess students and give a prize to the best. The teacher may reply that there is no need for an exam and he just names the best student since, by experience, the teacher can classify the students in order of excellence. The dean, however, would insist on holding the exam. The results would come out, and the expectations of the teacher would turn out to be true.

This poses the question: when the winning student, already named by his teacher beforehand, was answering the questions, was there anyone who compelled him to write the correct answers so he would win the prize? No. What do we understand then from his teachers foretelling of the result? Simply, the teacher foresaw that result based on his knowledge. He passed his judgment because he had prior knowledge of this student. This example is only by way of clarification, for Allah is far Exalted above all comparison. Allah has granted people the power of choice between alternatives. However, He has known beforehand what choices His servants would make. Thus, predestination is a manifestation of His Omnipotent Knowledge and it does not mean Allah has imposed on us by His Might everything we do in our lives. Might is an Attribute denoting action and effect, but the Attribute of Knowledge does neither influence nor impose anything. Accordingly, the decision to embrace or forsake faith is attributed to man, and therefore Allah says reproachfully: 'What harm would it do them to believe in Allah and the Last Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 39) On the other hand, Allah describes another group of His servants, saying: 'Who know that they will meet their Lord and that it is to Him they will return.' (*al-Baqara*: 46)

Even though they have not seen Allah, they believe that the day will come when they meet Him, and this is enough to urge them to do good deeds for His cause. What if they saw Allah, then? This reminds me of Abul-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri. He was accused of denying resurrection, but I believe he may be acquitted of this charge. It is true that at the beginning of his life he said,

'Days destroy us like fragments of glass

and what power can bring us again together?'

People claimed that his words, 'and what power can bring us again together?' mean he denied the Ability of Allah to resurrect us anew. However, this same verse could be construed to mean that we cannot be resurrected in this lifetime. Indeed, we do not see anyone who had died coming back to this life. Furthermore, he later said,

'The astronomer and physician both claim that bodies cannot be resurrected.

If you are right, I have nothing to lose; otherwise, the losers are they!'

He was hushing those who were trying to instil doubt in the minds of people. Assume that he believed that there is no resurrection. We say to him, if resurrection takes place, the one who denied it will be the loser, but if there comes no resurrection, the one who believed in resurrection would not be harmed and would not lose anything. So, a believer will lose nothing any way, and the one who is bound to lose is the one who denies resurrection.

Thus, indeed, 'What harm would it do them to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and give charitably from the sustenance Allah has given them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 39). The one who gives to charity for the cause of Allah, thus invests his money with Him until he reaps the fruits on Judgment Day. Contrarily, when he does so to gain the praise of people, he only benefits those he gives his money to and he himself reaps no fruits for his charity. This is throwing away their money in this life and losing the reward in the Hereafter. Allah closes the verse by saying: '...Allah knows them well.' (*an-Nisa'*: 39) The Knowledge of Allah is all-encompassing; He *the Almighty* is the Creator Who knows all hidden secrets. In the following verse Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِنْ تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضْعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٠﴾

He does not wrong anyone by as much as the weight of a speck of dust: He doubles any good deed and gives a tremendous reward of His own [40] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 40)

Wronging or injustice consists in the desire to appropriate and enjoy the fruits of the efforts of someone else. When you are said to have wronged someone, this means that you have effortlessly taken something to which he was rightfully entitled and which he earned through his efforts and labour. But what is said about one who wrongs someone else for the interest of a third party? He does not even benefit from such an act of wronging while someone else does. This is even more evil than the first kind. It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayrah *Allah be pleased with him* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Hurry to do good deeds before there come trials like pieces of a dark night, amid which a person would be a believer in the morning and become a disbeliever by night, or a believer at night and become a disbeliever the following morning! He would forsake faith for a transient pleasure of this world.'⁽¹⁾

Such is a person who would wrong someone else for the sake of another person, so he does not even gain anything himself by the injustice he has committed. Thus, wronging is intended for enjoying the fruits of someone else's effort, or making someone else enjoy the fruits of the effort and toil of another. Allah is the All-Powerful, Almighty Creator and Lord of all things. What if He wanted to wrong someone- *the Exalted* above injustice? What would then be the scope of injustice?

Oppression is proportional to the power of the oppressor. Therefore, if Allah the All-Powerful uses His Power to wrong someone, His would be intolerable. Now, why would Allah wrong anyone?! What would He want to take from a creature He has made and already given everything? Allah is the Self-Sufficient and does not need to take anything from someone to give it to another. All people are equal before Him. He never had a female companion

(1) [Muslim, Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi]

nor did He ever have a son, so all humans are equal before Him and He has guaranteed sustenance for all. Why then would He wrong any of His servants?! Logically, it is impossible to ascribe to Allah that He may want or need to wrong any of His creatures. Allah does not let any single good deed go unrewarded for, nor does He exaggerate punishment for a bad deed. He is far Exalted above doing both. Allah is the Generous Creator Who bestows His favours and blessings on people. To Him belong the treasures of the heavens and earth, so, it goes without saying that He does not need to benefit from the effects of His own bounties on His creatures. Allah states that He would never do the least act of injustice to His servants, saying: ‘...Your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.’ (*Fussilat*: 46)

The Arabic word *zhallam* (unjust) is a derivative that denotes recurrence of injustice, so one who is *zhallam* is one who is used to committing injustices. He has not committed a single act of injustice, but has repeated it so many times. It is a word that conveys exaggeration, either by committing each single act in an overdone manner, or by excessively repeating that act. So, we may use the intensive form *zhallam* to either refer to a single act of injustice that has been committed in an exaggerated way, or to refer to excessive repetition of injustices by the same doer. Therefore, Allah says about Himself: “...your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.’ (*Fussilat*: 46) If Allah were to wrong His creatures, the injustice would be proportionate to His Might, so it would be immense. Were He unjust, His injustice would encompass all His creatures, but Allah says: ‘surely Allah does not do injustice to the weight of an atom....’ (*an-Nisa*’: 40) If His servant commits one sin, it is written as one sin in his records, yet a good deed is multiplied. Now, what is the ‘weight’ of a thing? Weight is the amount of force exercised by gravity on a thing. If you let something light fall from a high point, it will fall slowly. By contrast, if you let something heavy fall from the same height, it will fall fast since the force on it due to gravity is stronger. Imagine then what the weight of an atom is.

First, what is an atom? Some say an atom is as small as the head of a small ant which cannot be seen with the naked eye, or it is like the ant itself. When Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* was asked about the meaning of an ‘atom’ in the context of the above mentioned verse, he took a handful of earth

from the ground and blew it. When the dust was dispensed in the air, Ibn Abbas said: 'Each speck of dust is an atom.' Look at the air; we cannot see the atoms swimming in it. However, look at any spot penetrated by a beam of light and you will immediately notice the specks of dust floating in the air. You may only see these specks in sunlight even though they are always there and we inhale them along with the air we breathe. What then kept us from seeing these specks? They are just too minute for the eyes to see. An atom is one such a speck.

Everything is weighed even if it is as tiny as an atom that we do not see except through a penetrating beam of light. Allah says: 'surely Allah does not do injustice to the weight of an atom...' (*an-Nisa'*: 40) The word 'atom' here is meant to represent the tiniest possible weight. An atom is not the smallest unit of the material world, for anything that can be enlarged can also be split. Allah revealed this verse at a time when people did not have any tools to measure or split an atom. Later, science succeeded in achieving that breakthrough. After the First World War, Germany manufactured cylinders that broke down atoms, or 'the indivisible particles' as ancient philosophers called it, for they thought there was nothing smaller than it. They did not realize that anything that has matter can become smaller just as it can become larger. Any mass can be split to smaller parts only if we have the tools required to do that.

When satellites were launched and a picture of New York City was taken, that picture came out quite small. Sufficiently magnified, the picture showed the license plate numbers of the cars that appeared in it. How did they do so? The small picture included more minute details that could not be seen with the naked eye. When these details were magnified, everything became clear, even the license plate numbers of the cars in the picture. Likewise, a concentrated light beam can reveal the specks of the dust that you cannot see otherwise.

A light beam sent by *the Almighty* Creator has shown atoms of dust clearly in the air, so how would an atom be hidden from Him? No atom can be hidden away from the Knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He*. He has created the light and the atom and all that is on earth and nothing can ever be hidden from Him.

I believe the atomic fission machine was at first very much like the traditional sugarcane squeezer we know. It was based on two cylindrical iron

rods. An atom was placed in between, and the space separating the two rods was narrow enough so that an atom would be split as it passed through. The narrower that space was, the more effectively the fission process was conducted. The two rods were right adjacent to each other and operating in opposite directions, with a quite narrow space between them. German scientists tried to decrease that space further to do atomic fission and they succeeded. The outcome was something smaller than an atom. Some wrongly believe the Quran to be inaccurate because of verses like the abovementioned. It implies that the atom is the smallest constituent of matter even though that has scientifically been proven to be wrong. To them we respond, 'The misconception is the outcome of looking at some verses while ignoring others.' The Quran was revealed as a miracle to address various communities during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* until Judgment Day. Therefore, it includes what can forever satiate the minds of people belonging to all times and places. The Quran is a timeless miracle that will continue to quench pursuers of the truth until the end of time. Numerous discoveries have been made that accord with what the Noble Quran tells, and much is yet to be found out to prove its grandeur and magnificence. Allah has revealed in the Quran profound truths in a manner able to be comprehended by people at all times.

Discovering the secrets of the universe does not add new commands to what Allah has already ordained. Rather, they only afford us a better understanding of the Noble Quran, like fission of the atom, for example. The commands of Allah are clear; whoever obeys them is rewarded and whoever violates them is punished. In this respect, all people are treated the same, ever since the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* until Judgment Day. Allah has made His commands equally clear for people of all times and places.

With every generation, new breakthroughs in science are made, and the more we discover in the universe, the more we see and appreciate the miracles of the Quran. Still, such discoveries do not have any effect on the juristic rulings of Islam. The ordinance of Allah is clear irrespective of scientific discoveries. For example, if we did not know that the earth rotates around itself, would that prevent us from continuing to live on it? No. Humankind has always lived here regardless of that discovery, even though scientific breakthroughs

do contribute to our well-being. When Allah sent down the Quran, He addressed the minds that received it in the manner they could comprehend. As the scope of the human mind is widened through scientific discoveries, it still finds in the Quran what satisfies it and copes with the time. The scientific allusions the Quran contains do not encompass all scientific discoveries and marvels of the universe. It is meant to present signs that address minds and hearts to believe in the Almighty Creator; still, even though it does not mention them all, the Quran does not oppose the facts of the universe that we learn more about every day.

So, when science proved that an atom is not the smallest constituent of matter, some sceptics said that in several verses the Quran uses the expression 'an atom's weight' which suggests that nothing is smaller than the atom. However, it has been scientifically proven that the atom can be split to smaller parts. This faulty understanding has resulted from the fact that they have considered some verses of the Quran and neglected others. It is true the atom was split into a nucleus, electrons, neutrons etc., but the words of Allah revealed over fourteen centuries ago had to be comprehensible to the minds that did not know then that the atom would be split into smaller parts: 'Surely Allah does not do injustice to the weight of an atom....' (*an-Nisa'*: 40) Still, Allah says in another verse of the Quran: 'And you are not (engaged) in any affair, nor do you recite concerning it any portion of the Quran, nor do you do any work but We are witnesses over you when you enter it, and there does not lie concealed from your Lord the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven, nor anything less than that nor greater, but it is in a clear book.' (*Yunus*: 61)

Therefore, the Quran acknowledges that there can be something 'less than' the atom. So, let people split the atom into its smaller constituents and later split those constituents into even smaller parts. No contradiction will emerge; the Quran already expresses all those stages in the aforementioned verse by mentioning the weight of an atom as well as 'anything less than that.' The Quran outstrips the innovativeness of our minds. Its context affords sufficient allusions to fission and fusion of the atom. Since Allah says: '...nor anything less than that nor greater...' (*Yunus*: 61), some would wonder: so long as the smallest thing in the universe cannot escape the Knowledge of Allah, what is the need then for mentioning things that are 'greater'? Logically, that too cannot escape the Knowledge of Allah.

Let me give an example to explain this. Something may not be encompassed by one's perception either for its minuteness that makes it unnoticeable by the naked eye or its hugeness that makes it too for the eye to encompass all its dimensions. When a giant mountain is two or three kilometres away, you would not perceive it because it is too big to be encompassed by your vision. For Allah, nothing is too small for Him to notice or too large to encompass. Hence comes the significance of the assertion: '... nor anything less than that nor greater...' (*Yunus*: 61). In another verse, Allah says: 'He knows all that goes into the earth and all that comes out of it; He knows all that comes down from the heavens and all that goes up to them. He is the Merciful, the Forgiving.' (*Saba*': 2)

Ponder the precision of the Quran in replying to those who deny Judgment Day even though it is a universal issue that deals with humankind at all times. Allah says: 'But those who disbelieve say, "The Hour will not come to us." Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come to you. Allah is the Knower of the unseen." Not absent from Him is an atom's weight within the heavens or within the earth or [what is] smaller than that or greater, except that it is in a clear book.' (*Saba*': 3)

Why do they deny arrival of the Last Hour? Their denial is expressive of a wish that there will be no resurrection, for they have done nothing to prepare for the Hour. Those who do not work for that Day wish the issue of the last hour would be false; otherwise, they know they will be recompensed for their wrongdoing. They have done things for which they are afraid of being held accountable. Their deeds are the cause of their denial, so Allah addresses both their claim and the motive behind it. Every statement has a motive. The motive behind their denial of Judgment Day is their overstepping the limits set by Allah. They have not done any good deeds to show obedience to Him, so it would be best for them if the Hour never came; they do not want to be punished for their transgression. Since Allah has eternally known all that, He responds to their claim as well as the intellectual motive behind it. He explains to them that He is the All-Knower of all things and none of their deeds escapes His Knowledge.

Allah then says: '... and if it is a good deed He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.' (*an-Nisa*': 40) If one does an atom's weight of good, or anything less than that, Allah multiplies it and grants His servant

ample reward for it. Since Allah does not mention bad deeds, this indicates that only a good deed is multiplied, but a bad deed is counted only as one. Allah speaks about multiplying good deeds in several verses: 'Those who spend their wealth in God's cause are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. Allah gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes....' (*al-Baqara*: 261)

Out of His Grace, a good deed is multiplied many folds and the reward for it is far greater than its scope whereas a bad deed is recorded with Allah as only one deed. The Creator of this system gives as much as He wants to whoever He wills. An employer would shower privileges on an employee who is diligent and sincere at work; how about the Lord of the worlds *Glorified is He*? He grants matchless rewards to those of His servants who are devout to Him, as He says: '...and if it is a good deed He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward.' (*an-Nisa'*: 40) This is the favour of Allah He bestows on those who believe and do good. He does not just offer them a reward proportionate to their devoutness, but also an excess in reward out of His Bounty. This is only for the devout, so if one does not do good as Allah commands, no reward will be given him, let alone an excess in reward.

Allah draws parables for people to understand the meanings He intends to convey. Whatever Allah says is true, but He gives us familiar examples from our world to let us have a clearer image of the truth presented. Let us discuss the parable set in the verse we are dealing with. Suppose you planted a seed in a piece of land; it would yield seven ears each bearing a hundred grains. How much then do you think the Creator of the seed, land and all things gives? He gives limitlessly.

The prepositional phrase 'from Himself' is a promise of immense bounties from Allah in whose Hand are the treasures of the heavens and earth. In this worldly life, the gain attained is proportional to the effort made. By that parable, Allah wants us to understand; If a thing that He created; namely, the land and the seed, yield seven hundred folds the effort and labour invested in them, even if the investor is a disbeliever; Allah does not begrudge him His Bounty. What matchless, endless reward then will the One Who has created everything grant to the believer? Allah puts forward illustrative examples to

make remote meanings accessible to the mind that would otherwise have difficulty understanding them. Each one of us is made up of a body and soul. What happens when the soul is taken from the body? The body rots and decomposes into its primary elements, and all aspects of life vanish.

The soul is the cause of motion. Once the soul is united with the body, every system of the body starts to carry out its assigned function in the growth process. But when the soul is withdrawn from the body, the life of the body comes to an end. The soul governs and moves the body; it does not have colour and nobody sees or smells it. So how can we perceive it?

What proves that the soul exists? We say that the soul is the essence that enters your body and imparts motion to it. You do not see or sense it. Its nature is unknown to you, yet its existence is felt through endless miraculous manifestations. No wonder then that we believe in Allah; we do not see Him, but we see signs of His Majesty and Mercy everywhere. He is not limited by the laws of time and place, and: 'No human vision can encompass Him....' (*al-An'am*: 103) If a creature of Allah; namely, the soul, is so extraordinary that it cannot be comprehended by the mind or encompassed by the eyes, why wonder then that the Creator Himself is beyond our imagination or perception? Allah is too great to be encompassed by our limited senses.

Allah *Almighty is He* says: '...will bestow out of His grace a mighty reward....' (*an-Nisa'*: 40) Reflecting upon the phrase '...out of His grace...' as we are aware that there is a difference between man-made laws and Divine enactment decrees directly revealed to us by Allah. When He says: '...out of His grace...' He means that intermediaries are of out of question here. We know the story of Musa (Moses) when he went to meet the good and knowledgeable servant of Allah. Allah described the servant as follows: '...We had taught knowledge from Ourselves.' (*al-Kahf*: 65) This means that the good and knowledgeable servant was educated by none but by Allah directly. The evidence is that the one who came to learn from him; Musa (Moses), already had learnt and supported him in matters, yet Musa (Moses) started to argue some issues that go at odds with conventional laws and customs. Therefore, the word '...out of His grace...' means that such knowledge goes beyond the limitation of the conventional means and codes.

Allah respects the value of your work and calls his endowment to you a reward; He gives you more than the reward due to you out of His grace; after He gives to you what is appropriate with your effort. This reward is described as 'mighty' since it is proportionate to The Bestower, rather than the bestowed. Allah then says:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٤١﴾

What will they do when We bring a witness from each community, with you [Muhammad] as a witness against these people? [41] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 41)

Once you hear the interrogative word *kayf* (how, the interrogative word in the above verse), then know that it introduces something peculiar. We may for instance say, 'You have insulted the sultan; so how would you behave if you were confronted with him'? It is as if the confrontation is only a hypothetical matter that transcends all imagination. Every exclamatory and peculiar matter that causes wonder is introduced or qualified by using the interrogative word *kayf* (how). A good example is the saying of Allah: 'How can you refuse to acknowledge God...' (*al-Baqara*: 28)?

This is an exclamation of the disaster and calamity of disbelieving in Allah. Tell us, how could anyone possibly have committed this sin? It is indeed a peculiar matter. We wonder: how would the disbeliever fare on Judgment Day? What would be the state of those sinners on Judgment Day?' How, then, will the sinners fare on Judgment Day, when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community....' (*an-Nisa'*: 41)

Shahid (witness) is the one who attests to the truth; we know that Allah tells us: '...for there never was any community, but a warner has lived and passed away in its midst.' (*Fatir*: 24) The warner in this context is a witness to the fact that the Book has been revealed to this *ummah* (followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is a witness to the fact that he had conveyed the message of Allah to his *ummah*; or else to whom does 'them' in Allah's saying: '...and bring you [O Prophet] as a witness against them' (*an-Nisa'*: 41) refer? Let us consider Allah's saying: 'How, then, will the sinners fare on Judgment

Day when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 41)? It is Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is the one who conveyed the guidance of Allah to his followers. But how would the situation look like if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, ‘I have delivered to them the methodology and they have no excuse since I apprised them of all of its details’? And ‘...bring thee [O Prophet]...’ means bringing you Muhammad as a witness on what these people did. But does ‘them’ in ‘...witness against them’ refer to the witnesses who are the Messengers or does the pronoun refer to the disbelievers in Allah? Does this mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* would be a witness against what those messengers did in as much as he is a witness against his followers? Both interpretations are plausible; why? The reason is that Allah revealed His Book as a miracle to prove that the messengers conveyed their messages to their nations. By mentioning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* in the miraculous Quran which contains the Divine Methodology, there is an implicit notification that he *peace and blessing be upon him* would witness that the messengers of Allah delivered their messages to their people. The evidence is that our Lord conveyed this to me, in His Book that is both a miracle and a methodology to be followed. Our messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* would be, as well a witness against those disbelievers from amongst the community to which he was sent. This meaning is thereby as valid as the other one. There is not a correct meaning that rules out another equally correct one in the Book of Allah; here lies the greatness of the Quran. The greatness of the Quran consists in giving illuminations like the bezels of diamonds. Diamonds are expensive and rare because they are rigid and can be used for cutting. Further each atom in the diamond has radiance; other elements may have a single radiance but each atom of a diamond has radiance. For this reason, they say that it shines and glows since all its atoms radiate.

Allah *Almighty is He* illustrates that those disbelievers would be doomed on the Day of Judgment. As the messengers, would attest to the conveyance of the message of Allah. Allah made this message clear to the messengers and their followers on the one side and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*, and his followers on the other. We, as followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace*

and blessing be upon him assumingly would be witnesses likewise ‘...so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143)

However, this is a privilege granted to no one except the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. They are the ones which Allah entrusted with the Methodology till the Day of Judgment. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is the seal of the prophets; he would be followed by none. Allah says: ‘...so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143) In accordance with this verse we have been entrusted to be a continuation for this message.

It has been related that ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* asked him once, ‘Recite the Quran for me.’ so I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, how should I recite for you to whom it has originally been revealed?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, ‘Yes, but I like to hear others reciting it.’ So, I recited the chapter of *an-Nisa'* until I reached the verse, ‘How, then, will the sinners fare on Judgment Day, when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community, and bring you [O Prophet] as a witness against them?’ (*an-Nisa'*: 41) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* then said, ‘Enough’, and he started to shed tears.⁽¹⁾

How solemn! The witness was taken by the solemnity of this verse, so how would be the state of those against whom he will testify? The witness who is going to testify cried because of this verse. You should know why he did so since you know very well that the heart of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* abounds in mercy towards his followers. For this reason, we said that the concern and care on the part of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* about the well-being of his followers was the main reason underlying Allah’s choice of him to oversee his followers. After Allah, has learnt about that Prophet Muhammad's fervent concern about his followers, He *Almighty is He* said: ‘Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers?’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 3)

(1) *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was very concerned about his followers although the Allah explained to him; you are only obliged to deliver the message to your people and not to make them guided by it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* knows this very well. His concern for and mercy upon his followers made him want them to believe. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was worried about testifying against his followers among those against whom he will testify on Judgment Day. When Allah *the Almighty* noticed how His messenger was concerned about his followers, He told him; if you desire, I can entrust you with the whole responsibility of your followers.

Consider the greatness of Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* and his understanding of and courtesy towards the Creator. He said: No Allah, you are more merciful towards them than I would ever be. It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is asking Allah, ‘Are you entrusting me with the whole responsibility while I am only their brother and you are our Lord? How would I be more merciful towards them?’ It was expected that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* would say: yes, let me oversee my followers, but he *peace and blessing be upon him* said, ‘Lord you are more merciful towards them than anyone would ever be.’ But how was Allah’s reply to him? Allah *the Almighty* said: ‘I would not fail you concerning them ever.’ Allah knows the mercy of Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* the master of all humans, towards his people.

It has been related that `Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al- 'As said, ‘The Prophet Muhammad recited the words of Allah: “for, verily, O my Lord, these [false objects of worship] have led many people astray! Hence, [only] he who follows me [in this my faith] is truly of me....” (*Ibrahim*: 36) He then recited the saying of Isa (Jesus), “If you cause them to suffer – verily, they are Your servants; and if You forgive them – verily, You alone are Almighty, truly Wise!” (*al-Ma’ida*: 118). At this point the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* raised his hand and said, “Allah! my followers, my followers!”, and he started crying. So, Allah said: “Gabriel go to Muhammad, and know that your God knows best, and ask him what has made him cry?” Gabriel then went to Prophet Muhammad and asked him so he told him the

reason. So, Allah said: "Gabriel, go to Muhammad and tell him we will make you content regarding your followers and will never displease you."⁽¹⁾ 'How, then, will the sinners fare on Judgment Day, when We shall bring forward...' (*an-Nisa'*: 41). This means what the state of those sinning liars would be. '...We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community...' (*an-Nisa'*: 41) means that this messenger has performed his role and delivered the message of Allah about the purpose He has set for His creation. '...and bring you [O Prophet] as witness against them?' (*an-Nisa'*: 41) Then, Allah says:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَعَصَوُا الرَّسُولَ لَوْ تُسَوَّىٰ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضُ وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللَّهَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٤٢﴾

On that day, those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Prophet will wish that the earth could swallow them up: they will not be able to hide anything from God [42] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 42)

Once you come across the phrase '...on that Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 42), especially if there is a double accent on its last syllable, then know that it replaces something that has been omitted. What is omitted here is more than a sentence. The meaning would thus be, 'On that day we will bring forth a witness from amongst every nation and you will be a witness against them.' On that day: 'Those who were bent on denying the truth and paid no heed to the Apostle will, on that Day, wish that the earth would swallow them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 42). The reason is that they were surprised by the truth of something that they had denied before. They did not think that the divine narrative was true. They thought that the discourse of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* were just empty words. So, what would they do when they are confronted with the Day of Judgment? They would wish that the earth would swallow them. But what is the meaning of the 'the earth swallowing them'? It means that they would be levelled to the ground; as you usually mean when you say that you have run over someone. This usually means that you have run over him in a way that levelled him to the ground. '...but they shall not be able to conceal from God anything that has happened.' (*an-Nisa'*: 42) How would they conceal anything from Him if Allah has already said in another verse?' [But]

(1) *Muslim*

He will say: "Away with you into this [dishonour]! And speak no more unto Me!" (al-Mu'minun: 108)

Allah has said so about them because the matter has stages: in one instance, they talk and in another they lie. For instance, they lie when they say: 'Then their excuse would be nothing but that they would say, "By Allah, our Lord, we were not polytheists."' (al-An'am: 23) They will also say about the idols that they worshipped: '...We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah....' (az-Zumar: 3)

Thus, Allah's saying '...But they shall not be able to conceal from God anything that has happened' (an-Nisa': 42) is evidence that the articulation of words is too forceful to be suppressed; no one can thus conceal it. Concealing means precluding something from actualizing its natural tendency to manifest and reveal itself. Each of them, on the Day of Judgment, cannot conceal anything from Allah because the vocalization is spontaneous; it is no longer governed only by the speech organs, as is the case in the worldly life. They will rather find that they have put forward acknowledgments of their sins with their tongues and other organs. Articulation of words would no longer be confined to the movement of the tongue; rather, the tongue, skin, hands and all other organs will testify against their transgressions.

The whole matter is not under the control of any single person; why? The reason is that there is a term known as the sovereignty rule; it means designating a superior power over an inferior power. To make the matter clearer; suppose there is an army battalion led by a certain commander. The laws state that the commander is in charge and must be obeyed by the soldiers; they are not entitled to violate the martial's commands. In any mission, should the commander issue a command that resulted in their defeat, the soldiers must report it to a higher authority. They are not held accountable and the commander is the only one to be questioned, for they are only following his orders.

I am giving this example to put forward a clearer depiction of the situation of standing before Allah *the Almighty* as He created man and made his organs subject to his will which is in turn governed by his passions and subjective choices. The will of the obedient is prone to obedience to commands and avoidance of prohibitions. On the contrary, the will of the sinner consists in

not obeying the command or avoiding the prohibitions. If one wanted to drink wine; his legs help him to walk to a bar; his tongue orders the bartender to serve him the wine and he reaches out with his hands to pick the glass and drink. All the organs operating are subject to his subjective will, they are created for this. Afterwards when the organs return to Allah who created and set them in this manner they would tell Him, 'Our Lord he used us to do so and so', why? The reason is that the sovereignty rule of man on the Day of Judgement will be suspended for Allah is the Supreme Sovereign. Allah says: '...To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing!' (*Ghafir*: 16)

No one would have any will in the Hereafter. Since the function of the subjective will of man is suspended, the hand will talk and confess saying, 'O Allah! he (man) used me to do so and so and I was forced by this man subjective sovereignty granted by You Lord to him, to have control over me; I have no freedom of choice; once he wills anything, I have to obey; when he wants to beat someone, I cannot refrain from obeying.' Similarly, the tongue will also confess everything about the affronts and approbations that he paid to others. Thus, all actions spring out from the sovereignty of man's subjective will over the objects exemplified in organs that Allah had made subservient to you. But once these organs return to the One Who granted the sovereignty to the will, no one will have any will but Allah. It is as if when the organs act contrary to the rulings of Allah, as they are subservient to the passion of the one who sins, they would be acting unwillingly and grudgingly. In other words, they would be grudgingly following the orders of their owner. Thus, once the control of man's will is taken away, the organs start confessing what has happened. Allah says: 'And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?", and they will reply, "Allah, who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us [as well]..."' (*Fussilat*: 21). 'Those who were bent on denying the truth and paid no heed to the Apostle will on that Day wish that the earth would swallow them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 42) The reason is that the disbeliever would say, 'Oh, I wish that I were dust!' (*an-Naba'*: 40) After that Allah says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْرَبُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنْتُمْ سُكَرَى حَتَّى تَعْلَمُوا مَا تَقُولُونَ وَلَا
 جُنْبًا إِلَّا عَابِرِي سَبِيلٍ حَتَّى تَغْتَسِلُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مَرْضَى أَوْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ
 مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا
 فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا غَفُورًا ﴿٤٣﴾

You who believe, do not come anywhere near the prayer if you are intoxicated, not until you know what you are saying; nor if you are in a state of major ritual impurity – though you may pass through the mosque – not until you have bathed; if you are ill, on a journey, have relieved yourselves, or had intercourse, and cannot find water, then find some clean sand and wipe your faces and hands with it. God is always ready to pardon and forgive [43] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 43)

Here Allah *the Almighty* moves from stating the commands to the acts of worship. He also warns us against associating partners with Him or engaging in charitable acts for the sake of eliciting people's praise and approval; and that He does not do wrong to anyone and that we will all be summoned before him on the day when there will be no shade but His. Afterwards He *Almighty is He* wanted us to be linked with him through acts of worship in so much as they make you declare your submission to Him by praying five times a day, for He motivates you to be wholeheartedly and passionately dedicated to His worship.

Allah says: '...Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43), and did not say, 'Do not pray while you are in a state of drunkenness.' This means that you should not even approach prayers or set out to perform them but rather avoid them. This indicates that all intoxicants should be stopped. What is the meaning of '...Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...'? (*an-Nisa'*: 43) The order that they ought not to approach prayers while they are intoxicated implies that the ordinance of the prohibition of intoxicants at that time was not enacted. It was gradual; for Islam was called for in an interval witnessing the break of series of the messengers sent; in other words, people at that time had not been confronted with the divine command for a prolonged lapse of time. Yet when the ordinances are related to the tenants of the creed, they are decisively addressed, i.e. the belief in the unity of Allah

and not associating partners with Him. However, issues related to customs and habits have been revealed fractionally so that they are not to be forced or prevented in an abrupt manner, as change can be affected by time

Allah is Merciful enough to reveal His enactment regarding matters of habit in stages. This is one of the stages: ‘...Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 43). In Islam, prayer is defined as the sayings and acts that start with saying, ‘Allah is the Greatest’ and ends with the greeting of ‘peace and mercy be upon you’; linguistically all this refers to all acts of praying and supplicating to Allah.

Sukara (intoxicated) is the plural of *sakran*. *Sakran* is the one who drinks what obscures his mind. The word is derived from *as-sakr* (barrier used to block rivers). When water floods, people construct dams; this dam keeps water from pouring in. The same holds for intoxicants. Whenever you consume them, you impede your reason and the regular flow of your consciousness. From this sense, the meaning of ‘...Do not approach prayer, while you are intoxicated...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 43) has been derived. What is meant is that prayers take you to the presence of Allah five times a day. But intoxication and whatever intoxicants precipitate in the blood deter you from praying even during the day, due to these residues. He thus pushed them to stop a habit.

If they succeeded in accustoming themselves to give up this habit during the day and until night fall, each one of them will perform the night prayers, drink and then go to bed. Thus, enduring the entire day without drinking is one of the stages. Allah allocated the process of quitting drinking in terms of stages to make it easy enough for one’s self to accept it. When He started to talk about intoxicants, He says: ‘And We grant you nourishment from the fruits of date-palms and vines; from it you derive intoxicants as well as wholesome sustenance; in this, behold, there is a message indeed for people who use their reason!’ (*an-Nahl*: 67)

It should be noted that ‘intoxicants’ were mentioned before the ‘wholesome sustenance’; it thus includes intoxicants and sustenance. It is as if when they used to eat date-palms and vines, this was sustenance that Allah described as wholesome. But they also used to make wine from grapes. Therefore, Allah mentioned the intoxicants first because this is what they usually made from

grapes; however, he did not describe it as good or wholesome. Rather, He said: ‘...from it you derive intoxicants...’ (*an-Nahl*: 67) and restricted the qualification of wholesome only to the sustenance.

By Allah, should we not, upon hearing ‘...intoxicants as well as wholesome sustenance...’ (*an-Nahl*: 67) understand that being an intoxicant implies that it is not good or wholesome? We should infer the opposite of wholesome and good namely bad and unwholesome. It is as if he said, ‘from the fruits of grapes and date-palms you derive an intoxicating drink, i.e. an unwholesome drink, and at the same time a good and wholesome sustenance.’ Due to your interest in the intoxicant Allah has it. After this, what happens? When Allah introduces a ruling, the prelude to it often assumes the form of a warning. The warning is not, yet, a legal enactment; it rather demonstrates a truth to you and you then have the freedom to choose. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘They will ask you about intoxicants and gambling. Say, "In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man; but the evil which they cause is greater than the benefit which they bring"...’ (*al-Baqara*: 219).

Allah has just explained the issue and you are free to voluntarily choose. So, He has said: ‘...Say, "In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 219). But the great evil ensuing from them outweighs the benefit. Yet did he tell us what to do or how we should behave? No, he did not. The reason is that he wants to endear the minds to the rationale of not consuming intoxicants and abiding by the ruling. He wants each one of us to grasp the ruling and its necessity on his own. Allah says: ‘...Say: "In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 219). As long as the evil outstrips the benefit what alternative would be greater? We usually identify the greater alternative when we compare it to the others, among which we are choosing to determine which of them is less evil than the other and which is better.

When Allah says: ‘...Say: "In both there is great evil as well as some benefit for man..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 219), we must realize that this is just a warning. As long as it is a warning and it enjoins good, then one should follow it and trust the advice of Allah. But there is no binding enactment decreed at this point; there were still people who were drinking while others were not. After this,

the following incident took place; an intoxicated man wanted to pray and read the chapter of *al-Kafirun* from the Quran. Because that man's reason and consciousness were swayed by the intoxicants he mistakenly recited, 'Say: O disbelievers! I worship that which you worship', instead of 'Say: O disbelievers! I worship not that which you worship.' (*al-Kafirun*: 1-2) It became clear how drunkenness could lead to unacceptable extremes. Thus, the ruling was revealed. We do not interfere with your personal affairs whether you are drunk or not. However, your drunkenness should not lead you to avow your disbelief in Allah while you are praying. Accordingly, do not approach the prayers while you are intoxicated. This is a prohibition, an order and an assignment. 'O you who believe! Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). If we cannot pray while we are intoxicated, we must abstain from drinking for some time. This abstaining accustoms one to quit. Subsequently, an incident happened when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked to give his ruling about intoxication. Prophet Muhammad's companions asked him to clarify the ruling of drinking alcohol. They said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Clarify to us the ruling of Islam regarding intoxicants and alcohol. Allah then revealed His saying: 'O you who believe, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, sacrificing on stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it, that you may be successful.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90)

Therefore, His saying: 'O you who believe! Do not approach prayer while you are in a state of drunkenness...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43), was an eloquent introductory stage towards forbidding intoxicants and alcohol. He thus prohibited it for some time; this time is the period in which one meets his Lord i.e. prayers. He explained to you: drink it away from me; but when you come to me you must have total consciousness and reason. '... but wait until you know what you are saying...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). It is as if this statement has imparted to us an implicit ruling. The one who drinks is not conscious of what he is saying; this is one aspect of the issue. If one does not know what one is saying about ordinary matters one may rave. But when it comes to worshipping and reading the Quran it is unacceptable for one to be in such a state. When one declines to this extreme state, our Lord interferes to say: 'O you who believe! Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43).

Allah thus decreed another ruling: ‘...nor while you are in a state of major ritual impurity, until you have bathed (except if you are travelling).’ ‘O you who believe, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying, or while you are in a state of major ritual impurity, until you have bathed (except if you are travelling). And if you are ill or on a journey, or one of you comes from a place of relieving himself or you have cohabited with women and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]. Indeed, Allah is ever pardoning and forgiving.’ (*an-Nisa*: 43)

The state of major ritual impurity is well known; it results from intercourse between a male and a female. The ravishment and gratification ensuing from this intercourse makes one distracted a bit from worship; therefore, sexual pleasure is called the epitome of all gratifications and pleasures because it induces the body to tremble because it consumes all its nutrients and distracts one’s thought from his Creator. For this reason, it has been said that it is the light of your eyes and the mind of your legs; so, either do it excessively or cut back on it. This means that I give you this power and you are free to use it as you wish. We wash to restore the energy of the human psyche. No one should be concerned about these matters if they are done in accordance with lawful restrictions. So, we should follow the commands of our Lord and wash ourselves whether we understand the wisdom underlying the order ‘...nor while you are in a state of major ritual impurity, until you have bathed (except if you are travelling)...’ (*an-Nisa*: 43). If what is meant by prayers in this context is the daily prayers, this means that you should not attempt to pray while you are intoxicated, or when you are stained with the effects of sexual intercourse. Allah did not say, ‘Do not pray.’ The mosque is the place of prayers. His saying ‘...Do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated...’ (*an-Nisa*: 43) means do not attempt to pray. Attempting may mean even going to the mosque; it is as if He is saying: do not go unless the mosque is the only means to reach water—needed for washing.

‘...And if you are ill, or are on a journey...’ (*an-Nisa*: 43) means if you have an excuse that prevents you from using water. ‘...or one of you comes from a place of relieving himself...’ (*an-Nisa*: 43). *Al-gha`it*—the Arabic word here translated as ‘want of nature’, means a low land. At that time people

used to satisfy their wants of nature in low lands; the word thus became a sign of this activity. However, we may refer to this activity using different expressions. One may say that he is going to the 'water circle'; others may wonder where the W. C. is. This is a way of inexplicitly inquiring about something repulsive and repugnant. For this reason, we may even say in informal Egyptian Arabic, 'I am going to do as other people do.' This means that it is not strange that I am going to go to the restroom; for, everyone does this.

Allah *Almighty is He* says: '...or one of you comes from a place of relieving himself or you have cohabited with women and find no water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]....' (*an-Nisa'*: 43) It is due to the mercy of Allah towards the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and due to the kindness of Allah that the enactment was phrased in a way endearing to the human being. But it is a decree; so, do not say for instance, 'I perform my ablution to clean myself' because we will wonder, 'How come you just perform ablution for the sake of cleanliness and then when you fail to find water you bring dust and earth and put it on your face?' So, do not tell me that I am performing ablution merely for cleanliness purposes. It is rather making prayers admissible in accordance with the enactments of Allah. He told me, perform your ablution and if you do not find water then use dust and pass it lightly over your face and hands. Yes; the matter is a command from Allah whether you understand the rationale behind it or not. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I have been given five things that no other prophet before me has been given. Allah has supported me to the extent that He caused my enemies to fear me even when I was one month's journey away from them, the entire earth has been made a clean mosque for me so that whenever prayers are due any one of my followers may pray, I have been permitted to enjoy the spoils of the war though they were not previously allowed to any prophet, I was also granted the right to intercede and I was not sent to any specific people but to all mankind.'⁽¹⁾ '...then seek clean earth...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43) means that you must make sure that it is pure and clean. '...wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). The issue involves uncleanness and taking resort to

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Muslim and An-Nisa`i*

pure dust. '...wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43) does not mean that it is a substitute for ablution. In performing ablution, I must rinse my mouth with water and clean my nose by sniffing some water into it. I also must wash my face, my hands and pass water on my forehead and into my ears. I am here talking about the pillars and the traditions adopted after the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this verse Allah explains that if you are using pure dust and earth you can clean both minor and major impurities. Thus, it is enough to pass it over your face and your hands. '...wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43) some have wondered whether this ought to be done by striking the earth once or twice. We say Allah says: '...wipe over your faces and your hands [with it]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). Some scholars said one strike, while others said two strikes; this is all intended for facilitation and making things easier. This facilitation is consistent with the word 'forgiveness.' Allah says: Indeed, Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving (*an-Nisa'*: 43). But why did Allah mention the absolution of sins? The reason is that He forgave and spared us the effort of toiling in search for water and licensed us to attain cleanness by passing dust. Afterwards Allah says:

لَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشَرُّونَ
الضَّلَالَةَ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَن تَضِلُّوا السَّبِيلَ

**[Prophet], have you not considered how those who
were given a share of the Scripture purchase
misguidance and want you [believers], too, to lose
the right path? [44] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 44)**

When Allah wants to assert a cosmological truth as a prelude to a question related to creed that guards the system of the universe, he immediately addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: '[O Prophet], have you not considered...?' The insight here is usually associated with visual perception. The function of the eye relates to the events to which it is exposed; the visual thing is always associated with its evidence, whereas the evidence of the truth of the audible is taken from the fact of the one who utters it and such a fact is a questionable issue. However, what is seen is self-

evident. For this reason, people have said, with the act of seeing, there is no room for asking 'where.' This means that if you see something, do not ask where it is; likewise hearing about news is not like witnessing it. So, the news that you hear is never as trustworthy as what you witness with your own eyes. Thus, witnessing is self-evident. It should not thereby be said, prove that such a person is wearing a white gown if you have already seen this person.

Accordingly, when Allah wants to assert the truth of a matter He says: '[O Prophet], have you not considered...'? When you claim that someone is corrupt before a third person, this person may or may not believe you. But when you see someone gambling or consuming an intoxicant, and you tell the same person with whom you talked before, 'Have you not considered the evidence against the person I told you about'? This is evidence that you have seen that person doing such and such. But when Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: '[O Prophet], have you not considered...?', we should wonder whether Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is witnessing the matter at stake or not. If so, then the question is intended as Allah once told him: 'Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?' (*al-'Alaq*: 9-10)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did witness this person. But is 'Have you seen' intended in the actual literal sense, or not? Why would Allah use the interrogative form even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw the one who 'forbade' people from praying? Why did He not simply say: 'You have seen the one who forbids a slave when he prays'? No, Allah wanted to affirm that piece of news in stages. Therefore, in some instances the piece of news may be audible and in others it may be visual. In other instances, Allah does not say: 'you have seen'; rather, He inquires: 'have you seen' because He wants to elicit an answer from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this manner, the answer will be initiated by the addressee rather than the addresser. This is the most forceful form of expression and ascertainment. When Allah addresses his prophet with His saying: 'Have you not considered' we investigate whether this event was witnessed by the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself, then the vision is actualised. However, when the event in question did not take place at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Allah addresses

him using the same interrogative form as in the following case: 'Have you [O Prophet] not seen how your Lord dealt with the army of the Elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1) The event of the 'Elephant' took place in the same year that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born. When Allah *Almighty is He* asks his prophet: 'Have you not seen...' (*al-Fil*: 1) about an incident he did not witness, He means, 'Have not you heard or learnt about it'? Why did Allah *Almighty is He* not simply say 'Have you learnt or known about such and such incident' instead of, 'Have you not seen...' (*al-Fil*: 1)? We can infer that that when Allah addresses his messenger regarding a command, He meant to emphasise to him that, 'Be aware Prophet Muhammad, that when I inform you of something, you must have faith in Me more than your own eyes.' Hence when He says, '...Have you not seen...' (*al-Fil*: 1), this implies that you have been informed by the Truth. His informing is unequalled to any of His creations because the credibility of the created is questioned, yet that of the Creator is nothing but absolute truth. Your eyes may fail you as you may not be totally aware of the whole truth; however, when Allah briefs you on a certain thing, you are certain that it is the comprehensive truth. Allah's revelation is more trustworthy than you witnessing something. When Allah says: 'Have you seen the man who forbids [Our] servant to pray?' (*al-'Alaq*: 9-10), this was like the case we just discussed above. However, when Allah says, 'Have you [O Prophet] not seen how your Lord dealt with the army of the Elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1), it is as if you are seeing them now. So, 'Have you not seen...?' (*al-Fil*: 1), in this context, implies that it is as if you are witnessing the scene in front of you.

In conclusion, the methods of ascertaining a claim, whether it is a piece of news or a relation, are as follows: it is based on the testimony of the created which is questionable, let alone that the vision of the created may be minor to comprehend the entire scene, or alternatively, it may be based on the narrative and statement of the Creator whose knowledge is absolute and encompasses everything. Accordingly, that which is proven and ascertained by the Creator should be the most plausible and trustworthy of all.

'[O Prophet] Have you not considered those to whom a portion of the Book...', (*an-Nisa*': 44). This verse was revealed while there were several

Jews living around Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He *peace and blessings be upon him* had seen that they were granted a share of the Scripture; they were people of the Book. Nonetheless they bartered what Allah had granted them with misguidance and refrained from saying the truth. This matter was thereby witnessed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Allah *the Almighty* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He made him the seal of all prophets and concluded with him the lineage of prophethood. This means that prophethood had a certain course. In every age, a prophet was sent in proportion to the pervasive worldview at that historical moment. The basis of communication between beings in life is commensurate with the ailments and diseases in the society. But Allah pre-eternally knows that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would come in an age and that his message and the path he set would suffice to encompass and regulate all issues and matters from his time until Judgment Day. Allah knows that all communicational barriers and impediments of territorial boundaries would dissolve; so, an event may happen in the far east and you may hear about it in the far west and vice versa. An illness may break out in the United States and after a day or two it spreads to another country.

The factor of distance has been overcome with the emergence of modern means of communication that turned the world into one village. In olden times, social ailments were regional; confined or whatever was problematic in a certain community would not reach other ones. For this reason, Allah used to send a messenger to every community and human gathering to treat its ailments and remedy its problems. Since the world came together through means of communication, one messenger must be sent to all mankind as human problems would be the same. In the present time whenever an incident takes place anywhere, it reverberates everywhere.

Accordingly, the message of Allah must be universal. Since the message is united, no further messenger is needed to complete it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came as a seal. For this reason, Allah pledged every messenger to herald the coming of a messenger who would be the seal of all prophets and messengers to assure them of the creditability of the final prophet, of whose arrival they had been promised. Thus, they would say, 'Our messengers told us about him.' For this reason, Allah says: 'And when Allah

made a covenant through the prophets: Certainly, what I have given you of Book and wisdom- then a messenger comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 81). After this Allah says: ‘He said, “Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)?” They said, “We do affirm.” He said, “Then bear witness, and I (too) am a bearer of witness with you.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 81)

All messengers attest to the verity and truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Messenger of Allah, likewise confirmed the verity of the religions revealed to other messengers. The religion he called for, i.e. Islam, is the umbrella that encompasses all the previous religions of all other prophets because they share with him the same methodology that he was sent to reveal to the people. As for those who had been guided to believe in Allah via the call of the previous messengers and heard about the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, they may be dissuaded from following him based on their own dogmatic bigotry. Therefore, Allah pre-emptively informed and emphasised the coming of the final prophet: a messenger will be sent by Allah as a seal of all prophets. Beware that whenever he is sent, you should immediately believe in him. They had sufficient evidences and notifications in their books. Allah granted them a share of the scripture. Consider also the precision of the performance of the Quran: ‘[O Prophet] Have you not considered those to whom a portion of the Book?...’ (*an-Nisa*: 44) This statement came forth excusing them in case they miss something of the Scripture. The reason is that Allah will mention in another verse: ‘...And they have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind...’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 13).

If they have forgotten they are exempt from blame. But those who have sufficient knowledge among those who have been given a share of the Scripture should have had their ears attentive to the sealing voice of truth. This was known to them beforehand. For this reason, our Lord tells us: ‘...And bear in mind that, not a long time ago, they used to pray for victory over those who were bent on denying the truth...’ (*al-Baqara*: 89). They used to say to the idol worshippers among the Arabs, ‘We are waiting for the final prophet whom Allah would send to outrace you to believe in him. If we believe in him and you do not, we will use him to kill you as the people of ‘Ad and Iram.’ They thus

adhered to their beliefs in what was revealed to them from the Heavens. If that is the case, could you tell me why they disbelieved in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even though they were known as the people of the Book? The disbelievers of Quraysh did not say, 'We are from the People of the Book.' They were at a lapse of break in the series of messengers sent. Accordingly, it was expected that the people of the Book would rush to believe in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once he came because they had threatened the Arabs against the consequences of not following him. Allah had granted them a lofty status, but their malice precluded them from benefiting from it. Allah says: 'And if they, who are bent on denying the truth, say unto you O Prophet, "They say, you have not been sent." Say, "Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you; all knowledge of the Scripture comes from Him..."' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43).

Allah has graciously made you witnesses to the truth and actuality of the message. But He is also a witness as much as you are. This is a great status and honour. But they did not heed this status and honour, and were adamant in their stubbornness: '...whenever there came unto them something which they recognized as the truth, they would deny it...' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

However, we notice that when Allah reveals a matter pertaining to creed and faith and it is denied by one who opposes it or a disbeliever, this person may think that he is doing some harm to Allah. We tell him, 'No. You are just motivated by a malicious desire in yourself. Allah will bolster the final religion and you will, in turn, be nothing but ignorant throughout the whole situation. So, do not think that you can impede the will of Allah when you disbelieve in Him and the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah made you proclaim your denial to the polytheists of Quraysh. So, consider what this word will do in order that you know what your denial has contributed to faith. You think that you have opposed faith and belief; on the contrary, you have rather supported it while being totally oblivious and sinful.'

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came and declared the message relayed to him by his Lord, the disbelieving idol-worshipping Arabs said, 'This is the prophet about whom the Jews warned and foretold us, so let us rush to have faith in him before they outrace us.'

Did they or did they not serve the cause of faith? Certainly, they did. So, no disobedient person should think that he can extinguish the light of Allah (i.e. guidance as Allah will consummate his light even if the disbelievers do not like it). A good illustration of this point is what happened when our Lord changed the *qibla* (direction of prayer). He then explained: Muhammad you are passionate and eager to orient yourself towards the *Ka'ba* in Mecca. But I have directed you towards Jerusalem for a specific purpose. Now I will re-orient your prayers towards Mecca and you must bear in mind that when I do this, some of the weak-minded—the Jews—would say: ‘...What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have previously observed...’ (*al-Baqara*: 142). They wondered about the reason that made Muslims change the direction of their prayers. If the direction of the prayers of Ibrahim (Abraham) was already the *Ka'ba* in Mecca, why did they not orient themselves towards it from the beginning? They will say this; the Quran was revealed asserting it and people will continue to recite it. It is due to their lame, feeble and narrow mindedness that they said the same thing when the direction of the prayers was changed. They did not heed what Allah had said before: ‘The weak-minded among the people will say, "What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have previously observed..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 142). Despite their intelligence, they said such things. This indicates that disbelieving in Allah is nothing but darkness, which the disbeliever blunders in and finds no way out of himself. Allah *the Almighty* has made their infidelity a means for establishing faith. If they had been truly intelligent and insightful they would, once the Quran relates: ‘The weak-minded among the people will say, ‘What has turned them away from the direction of prayer which they have previously observed...’ (*al-Baqara*: 142), they should have said the Quran foretold that we would say such and such. So, let us not say that to discredit the Quran, yet they were incapable of doing so. Thus, the disbeliever is always in a narrow state of mind. They thought that, in their disbelief, they would eradicate the faith in Allah. But they did not because Allah made disbelief a means for faith. The *Sunnah* of the Prophet says, ‘Allah would support this religion even with an immoral man.’⁽¹⁾

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

Allah explains that those people were granted a share of the Scripture and it was expected that they would be the first to believe in Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah. But they did not believe; this was the first stage of fallacy. But they did not suffice themselves with this share of evil. They were pursuing misguidance not only for themselves, but they also wanted to lead others astray. This is the second stage of fallacy. Once one is misguided, he is to shoulder the responsibility of his own faults, yet the venture lies in his incessant attempt to insinuate and misguide others as well. The hazard here is fortified as the gravity of his disbelief is doubled. You have gone astray, but why do you want to lead me astray as well? The reason is that the one who went astray or the deviant who does not adhere to the righteous path quite knows it, although the difficulty lies in his inability to get himself to adhere to this path. Accordingly, he feels belittled when he wonders why the other believes, whereas I could not.

The misguided painstakingly endeavours to lead others astray so as not to be notoriously singled out. The deviant feels obnoxiously horrid before the righteous and they enviously attempt to pull them to the same mire. They will say, 'Why is he upright? We must drag him towards recklessness. For this reason, the upright have to be very attentive and cautious because the devils among the humans will not let them be obedient without nuisance. They will rather laboriously attempt to sway them because they cannot bear getting themselves to obey the commands of Allah and it hurts them to find other people capable of disciplining themselves, and are guided to the righteous path. For this reason, they say, 'Let us all stumble together so that no one would feel better off than the other. Let us all be dishonest to be disavowed from being stigmatized and disgraced.' The traitor is vehemently agitated by dealing with the honest as if he has been stabbed with a dagger in his heart. He attempts to discredit, just like himself. This is the meaning of '...They buy error...' (*an-Nisa'*: 44).

Allah tells them, you are free to barter faith for error and you would be held accountable for your misdeeds in the hell fire. But why do you then want to misguide people and lead them astray? The obedient should be rather heedful of this matter; when someone ridicules them for being obedient to Allah, they must be attentive when Allah *Almighty is He* says: 'Indeed, those

who committed crimes used to laugh at those who believed. And when they passed by them, they winked at one another.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-30) This is what happens when some of the prodigals and deviants see someone going to the mosque to pray. They tell him, 'Take us on your wings.' They ridicule him and make fun of him because when they see him eager to be obedient to Allah, while they are incapable of being that submissive to Allah, they shamefully develop low self-esteem. For this reason, they want everyone to be as disobedient as they are. This is the shame that we witness these days. When these disobedient and deviant meet their people they victoriously feel rejoiced succeeding to annoy the believers. They say we have met a believer and we made fun of him. Allah continues: 'And when they returned to their people, they would return jesting; and when they saw them, they would say, "Indeed, they are truly lost."' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31-32)

Allah explains that those mockers accuse the religiously-committed of being astray. So, do not ever despair because of their mischievousness. Do not be defeated before those malicious people because you will openly take your revenge upon them. After Allah orders their torture and humiliation to those deviants on the Day of Judgment He will say: 'Have the disbelievers not been rewarded, this Day, for what they used to do?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36) Allah's interrogatives pose the question so that He may elicit the answer from us. The question is, 'Have We been capable of commensurately recompensing them for what they did to you'? So, ridicule and laugh at them as much as they did to you in the worldly life.

In the verse, Allah says: '[O Prophet] Have you not considered those to whom a portion of the Book?...?' (*an-Nisa*': 43) This characterization refers to the Jews. '...to whom a portion of the Book has been given...' (*an-Nisa*': 43); it implies that they did not embrace the wholeness of the book Allah revealed to them. The evidence is that they had forgotten some of what they were told and reminded of. '...They buy error and desire that you should go astray from the way.' (*an-Nisa*': 43) Once you come across the word 'buy' you should know that there is a kind of bargain: a commodity and a price paid in exchange for it. They purchase error but by what? What will they pay for it? Allah in another verse says: 'For it is they who have taken error in exchange for guidance...'

(*al-Baqara*: 16). This means that they paid guidance as a price and accepted error as a commodity in exchange. In any barter, we yield what we pay or give in exchange for what we purchase. So, when we buy a commodity for a pound, the pound is lost after it was in our possession. When Allah says: '...they who have taken error in exchange for guidance...' (*al-Baqara*: 16), one wonders what the nature of the guidance is. If they had any that they gave away in exchange for error, certainly, they did have the instinctive guidance; the intuitional disposition; the internal guidance compass.

Your subconscious is needless of waiting for a messenger to guide you to Allah; rather, it needs a messenger to inform it of the will and ordinances of Allah. Belief in Allah is purely instinctive. When one consciously realizes that things in the universe are subservient to him in a steady and regular manner, the sun rises every day, the air blows and the land yields crops when you cultivate it, one immediately wonders if all this was due to his efforts or if any other human being could claim that he had the power to make all these beings subservient to you. To the contrary, we are thrown in the world amongst other beings and not the other way around.

When one is born, and sees these bounties around him, would he not believe that this is an endowment from his Creator? When one is born, one is astounded and captivated by the existence of all these bounties. Similarly, when Adam *peace be upon him* was created, he was overwhelmed by the bounties he found; human beings hence came about, while these bounties were already there. Given that he came into being after all of this was created, should one, by Allah, not pause and ponder about the ultimate creator? He had to think about who created these bounties for him. We have previously given the example of the one who exhausted all means of survival while being cast adrift in the desert. He could find neither water nor food. Desperate as he was, this man fell asleep. He then woke up to find a table that abounded with the most exquisite dishes of food; Should he not pause and ask himself who set this banquet? You were then brought about into a universe that abounds with numerous bounties. No one told you: I created these things; further, your father and grandfather never laid that claim. So, you should be attentive to the fact that there is a Creator.

Had those who exchanged guidance for error, have any guidance to exchange for that error? Yes, they had the guidance furnished to them by their natural disposition. For this reason, when the Companion `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was asked, 'Did you know your Lord through Muhammad or did you know Muhammad through your Lord?' He replied, 'Had I known Muhammad through my Lord, I would not have needed a messenger.' But it is also inappropriate to say to someone that you have known your Lord through Muhammad. For this reason, Ali *may Allah be pleased with him*, said 'I have known my Lord through my Lord and Muhammad came to inform me of what my Lord's Ordinance.' Accordingly, His saying: '...they who have taken error in exchange for guidance...' (*al-Baqara*: 16) refers to those who sold out the guidance of their natural disposition and bought error in exchange. Allah says: '[O Prophet] Have you not considered those to whom a portion of the Book has been given? They buy error and desire...' (*an-Nisa*': 44). Allah did not mention guidance in this context because natural instinct had already been distorted in these people's hearts to the extent that they could not even offer it as a price for error '...and desire that you should go astray from the way.' (*an-Nisa*': 44)

Wanting or willing involves preferring a choice to another. Here is an example. You may have two pairs of socks in front of you; you may thus choose whichever of them. But if there was only one pair you would not have much choice. The will prefers one alternative to the other. What is the meaning of '...go astray from the way'? (*an-Nisa*': 44) Loss of the way could be interpreted in different ways. However, the point of these possible interpretations is that there is a command from Allah that you did not heed. So, did this happen because you were oblivious to it, or did you deliberately abandon it? The forgetful one is excused. But there may be another who knows the command but he deliberately abandoned it. Thus, error may refer to oblivion as in the saying: '...So that if one of them should make a mistake, the other could remind her....' (*al-Baqara*: 282)

Here the error consists in forgetting and being oblivious. By contrast some may err because they do not know the righteous path, but yearn for it as Allah says: 'And He found you lost, and guided you.' (*ad-Duha*: 7) This means that things are intricate and have a lot of ramifications. So, one may

see this or that aspect of it. Allah explained to you; do not exhaust yourself because I will lead you to the righteous path. Thus, error has multiple senses and the point of these senses is that they do not lead you to a purpose. When Allah addresses an abstract issue connected with faith and creed He uses terms that people often employ to refer to stellar matters. For this reason, we wonder: what is the 'way'? The way for us, is the road. All of us, even if we were not believers, know that the road is made to lead you to a goal. But you must know the goal and destination first. Subsequently, you may pave and tread the road towards it. There is thereby a difference between motive and actuality.

Before we pave the road, we must know where it leads to, a destination should be determined first, and then the way that leads to it. When we discover the shortest way to the desired destination, we pave it so that it would not exhaust people. Thus, the path is the way leading to a destination or a goal. Therefore, Allah clarifies that that path leading to faith is straight and short, as it is well-known that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. We should know the goal before we know the path that leads to it. The problem with people in the worldly life is that they live in it while being unaware of their final ends. They only know their partial ends. The student knows that he needs to study to get a job, get married and establish a family. Merchants trade to reach a certain goal. But all these are temporary and secondary ends. The intelligent person is the one who does not seek these finite and short-term ends; rather, he should seek the final and long-term end because one may live for fifty years, another for sixty years and a third for only one year. Therefore, people should consider the end of all creatures. The problem with people is that they work for the worldly life, i.e. the short-term, finite, and transient ends, even though the word *ad-dunya* (worldly life) means that which is trivial and less important. So long as there is something called *ad-dunya*, there is something that is called *al-'ulyah* (more important and sublime).

People get exhausted because they consistently work for worldly ends. However, every human being should consider the sublime end which will be shared, and inevitably reached by all people. If we manage to identify this sublime end, we will save ourselves from short-sightedness and absorption in finite and transient ends. For instance, a person may send their son to learn

from kindergarten to the primary stage, then to the preparatory stage, then secondary stage and then college. Afterwards the son specializes in a field, and at around the age of twenty, he graduates and gets employed to start supporting himself by means of his efforts and labours. The father works for the sake of achieving this goal and reaching this end, but sometimes the son fails to get employed, or he may also cause troubles to his father and may drop out of his education. In this case, the son will miss the goal; people should seek the end which will not be missed, as they benefit from the means that Allah has harnessed for them during their life. Therefore, they should follow His Commands.

In the world, people benefit from the means which Allah has created, but in the Afterlife, they will be with Allah himself. During their lives, people utilize and live on the means, which have been harnessed by Allah, but in the Hereafter, they will live close to the One Who has harnessed these means. Irrespective of whichever high-tech means, a person may have in this world, he will never attain the luxury of the Hereafter during the worldly life. A person may lead a luxurious life in the world, as he may press a button in a room and have a cup of coffee or food served to him, but this luxury will never reach the level in the Hereafter in which a person will attain what anything that may come across their mind. Therefore, the Hereafter is the best and most sublime end. In this world, people utilize the means of living which Allah has granted us, but in the Hereafter, we will live in the Company of Allah. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that He has given the believer and the disbeliever the means to survive in the world. When a disbeliever plants the land, it yields crops; and when he contemplates the universe around him, its secrets unfold for him. The reason is that Allah has created the means for whoever wants to make use of them, be him a believer or a disbeliever. However, the One Who makes these means available is sought only by the believer, but the disbeliever has faith only in the means that lead him to his goals which Allah has not held back from him: '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)

Everyone should consider whether he is more concerned with the means of living which Allah has provided, or with the One Who has provided these

means. As for the transient and short-term ends of the worldly life, they may vanish before one can reach them, losing all efforts in vein. Therefore, Allah has concealed the time of death and its causes in order for Him to examine the human being. Some people achieve all what they aim for, and then their entire endeavour in life ends with death; in such a case they take nothing from the world because he did not believe in the One Who provides all the means of living. Even if a person has attained all worldly pleasures, he will eventually die. This means that either a person will part away from the worldly bounties or these bounties will part away from them, but in the Hereafter, the bounties are permanent. Therefore, it is the real aim that should be sought by the rational. Worldly pleasures are commensurate with the means a person has used, but pleasures in the Hereafter fit the One Who provides all means. Allah's Giving and Actions cannot be matched. The reasonable person is the one who considers their final end. In conclusion, the path would be devoid of its meaning if the desired end has not been set.

In addition, people toil and live in asperity in the world because they do consider only the short-term and transient ends. Therefore, the worldly life is called *ad-dunya* which means the most inferior. This name also implies that the worldly life is temporal and bound to perish in contrast with the Hereafter, which is eternal and lasting. Accordingly, a person should determine his end and goal before he determines the path he will take. There is a difference between reality and motive; the later refers to determination of the goal. For instance, the student studies diligently to succeed and to enjoy a good share in this life. He should keep this goal in his mind before embarking on the education process. When he imagines success and how it is enjoyable, he starts studying, and then he reaches his goal: success. There are two types of goals: a motivating goal and an actual goal; the motivating goal precedes the determination of the path that will be taken, and the actual goal comes after determining the path. Who determines the goal?

The goal and purpose of anything is determined by the person who had made it. People determine their worldly transient ends, but the sublime ends are determined by Allah. As long as Allah *Glorified is He* determines the sublime ends because He is the Creator, people ask Him to guide them to these ends. Therefore, faith is a must for the person who wants to live in the company of

Allah. The way is to follow the path of Allah: 'This is My path, leading straight, so follow it, and do not follow other ways: they will lead you away from it....' (*al-An'am*: 153)

This means that the ways people choose will not lead to Allah because they have determined them in accordance with their transient ends, but He has determined His Path based on the purposes He has set. So, whoever wants to draw closer to Allah should take His Path. The words 'path' and 'way' refer to perceptible objects which are used by Allah to depict abstract meanings related to faith and creed. Allah *Glorified is He* uses definite examples to clarify abstract meanings. When there is a crossroad and a person wants to reach a destination, his deviation even by a few millimetres upon setting out on the road distances him from his destinations. The more he walks, the more his journey will be extended, and it is more likely for this person to get lost. This point may be illustrated using the following example: All people ride trains which run on straight railways. If the course of a train needs to be redirected, the train will not be raised and placed on a new railway; rather, a railway switch that may not exceed two millimetres is used and placed very close to the original railway. This is considered the task of the switchman. Upon doing so, the train changes its course to reach the desired destination.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* got our attention to this fact in the Hadith which was narrated by Hudhayfah *Allah be pleased with him* as he said, 'Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* related to us two prophetic narrations, one of which I have seen fulfilled and I am waiting for the fulfillment of the other. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us that the virtue of honesty descended in the roots of men's hearts (from Allah) and then they learned it from the Quran and *Sunnah* (the Prophet's traditions). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* further told us how honesty will be taken away, saying, "Man will go to sleep during which honesty will be taken away from his heart and only its trace will remain in his heart like the trace of a dark spot. Then he will go to sleep during which honesty will decrease further still so that its trace will resemble the trace of a blister; as when an ember is dropped on one's foot which would make it swell, and one would see it swollen but there would be nothing inside. People would be

carrying out their trade, but hardly will there be a trustworthy person. It will be said, "in such-and-such tribe there is an honest man." No doubt, there came upon me a time when I did not mind dealing (bargaining) with anyone of you, for if he was a Muslim his Islam would compel him to pay me what is due to me, and if he was a Christian, the Muslim official would compel him to pay me what is due to me, but today I do not deal except with such-and-such people.'

Faith is rooted in the innate pure nature which reveals to people that this vast universe is accurately organized and managed by a Great Power. It is also organized in a manner that is not subject to anyone's control. Furthermore, this universe which follows a perfect system has been created and controlled by the Supreme Power, which is marked by Omnipotence, Knowledge, Wisdom and all other attributes of perfection.

The human mind cannot name this Power or its intentions without a messenger that reveals and conveys its message. When a messenger comes, and says that the Power that people seek, and they have generally believed in, is called Allah, they should believe him. People's minds cannot name this Supreme Power by themselves, but they know it as well as its intentions via the Message which is conveyed by Allah's messengers. This is the shortest path to Allah away from the complications of philosophy, intricacies of logic and the sophistries of argumentation. This path proves that whoever worships any god other than Allah is not entitled to this kind of worship.

For instance, could the one who worships the sun tell us the guidance the sun has set for the human being? Furthermore, what did the sun set as a reward for good deeds and punishment for bad deeds? Or what could the sun do to the one who does not worship it? It is not capable of either rewarding or punishing, and has no guidance. But a deity who does not prescribe a specific course or guidance for those who believe in him cannot be ascribed with this name. A true god must have a specific course that guides people to proper action, proscribe bad deeds and can reward and punish people. In contrast, the sun does not possess a path that it can convey to people nor do rocks or the moon. All these things are created by the Creator and cannot be taken as gods. The existence of messengers who conveyed Allah's Message is evidence in support of the truth of the Message. Allah *the*

Glorified and Exalted makes us believe in His Existence through the guidance He has revealed. Before the revelation of the Message, people recognized the existence of the Creating Power Whose name and Intentions are not known to them. Therefore, sending messengers to convey Allah's Message indicates that Allah is Merciful to His creatures. Thus, the one who attempts to plan his life using his own reason without the guidance of the Messenger, burdens himself, and his efforts will go in vain. The following example illustrates this point well – and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection. If a group of people are sitting in a room and the door is closed, and then someone knocks on the door, all people will agree that there is someone knocking at the door. But if they want to identify the one who is knocking, they will have different opinions regarding whether he is a man, woman, child, a person carrying good tidings or a warning, a person serving coffee, or a person that is charged with arresting them.

The group agrees that someone is knocking on the door, but they will disagree concerning identity of the person who is knocking. The same applies to the universe. Underlying the universe is a Great Power Whose Name and Intentions may cause disagreement among people when they try to reach them by everyone's reason. But when this Power sends a messenger to convey Its Name and Intentions, the disagreement gets settled.

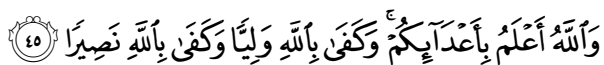
The matter that has exhausted philosophers and led some of them into misguidance is that some of them were not content with merely rationalizing the Supreme Power that has created the universe. Rather, they wanted to envisage this Power, Its Entity and Intentions. The philosophers' view about the Creator is incorrect, and they will remain astray due to this view. However, when a messenger conveys the message, this matter becomes settled. The Hadith that was related by Hudhayfah about honesty depicts the mission of faith, how the believer should learn from the Quran and *Sunnah*, and what happens when this knowledge is neglected.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* depicted the stages of the loss of honesty with which Allah has entrusted to Muslims. He warned them against the phases of deviation which increase gradually. This point has been explained giving the example of the switch of trains.

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘...purchase misguidance and want you [believers], too, to lose the right path.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 44) This implies that they do not want to be the only deluded people. Allah *Glorified is He* safeguards and immunizes us against their sayings, as they were given a share of the Book of Allah; a matter which makes the Muslims expect good from them because they received a Divine Book, and followed messengers. But Allah *Glorified is He* explains that those people want the Muslims to lose the right path, using the share they have of the Book of Allah as a way to misguide them.

In our time, we find that the worst enemies of any creed are not its apparent adversaries, but the false followers of this creed because the disbeliever’s enmity is apparent and explicit, and the Muslim is sure that the disbeliever wants to distort his religion and fabricate lies about it. However, when a Muslim says the same, his words are believed and considered true. This implies that the adversaries of Islam despaired of confronting Islam in an overt manner; therefore, the west lost interest in orientalism, and orientalists’ studies, which are found currently, are old. Those orientalist thinkers used to write books, when read by a Muslim, he may say that the author of this book works for serving knowledge, culture, and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This author may just infiltrate one corrupt idea in the book to make the reader trust him.

When the orientalists have realized that we have discovered their plan, they have introduced the occidentalists who are Muslims that travelled to the West, adopted its ailing ideas and came back to spread them in our educational curricula, media and press. These occidentalists are Muslims; so people trust them, and the West has found that it is easier for them to penetrate Muslim societies through some of the Muslims who were granted a share of the Book of Allah because Muslims will always feel comfortable that these occidentalists are Muslims like them. Therefore, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* explains that the apparent enemies are easier to handle than the ones who are allegedly religious because the later will be trusted as they are also Muslims. Therefore, our Lord explains the matter because it may disturb the believers and cause suffering to them. He says when describing deceiving people: ‘...those who were given a share of the Book of Allah...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 44). Those people regard this point as their main source of credibility. Then, Allah says:



God knows your enemies best: God is enough to protect and to help you [45] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 45)

The Muslims may know their enemies, but Allah knows all enemies because a person may have enemies such as himself, his wife or children, but not all forms of enmity will be clear to a person. However, Allah knows what people hide in their hearts, so He says: ‘Allah knows your enemies best...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 45).

Allah has mentioned this verse after His saying: ‘...and want you [believers], too, to lose the right path’ (*an-Nisa'*: 44) because some people may say that those people are people of the Book or Muslims like them. So long as Allah is the One Who knows our enemies best, He will not deceive or delude us; therefore, we should pay attention to Allah’s saying about them, describing them as our enemies. Then, He says: ‘...Allah is enough to protect and to help you.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 45) This saying suggests that as Allah is enough to protect the believers, they do not need any other person to protect them. A person may say about someone that he is enough for him because he makes him in need of no one else, and suffices him about the different aspects of life.

‘... Allah is enough to protect and to help you.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 45). Certainly, Allah is enough as a Supporter because other humans may possess means to do things, but Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is the One Who has created these means, and those beyond them. Therefore, He comforts us, saying: ‘... Allah will find a way out for those who are mindful of Him, and will provide for them from an unexpected source....’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3)

The word *wali*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, refers to an intimate person. ‘...Allah is enough to protect and to help you.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 45) This means that sometimes the intimate person cannot be a helper or supporter, but Allah is close to the believers as well as a helper and supporter. As long as the matter is one of a continuous conflict, Allah says: ‘Allah knows your enemies best. Allah is enough to protect and to help you.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 45)

Allah warns the believers against seeking support and advocacy from anyone except Him; they should spare no effort, and entrust what is beyond their abilities to Allah. In addition, Allah explains that the believers should

not consider their enemies as supporters, or seek help from them. Allah will support the believers by throwing fear in the hearts of their enemies so that they will be defeated even if they are more powerful and more equipped. If the believers do not have weapons, Allah will advocate them by throwing fear and terror in the hearts of their enemies. As long as Allah supports the believers by terrifying their enemies, this should suffice because once He does so, the enemies will lay down their weapons that will be taken by the believers. Allah commands the believers to spare no possible effort, and did not say command them to prepare what they need to achieve victory over their enemies because He knows that He can make us triumph by throwing fear in the hearts of our enemies, 'We will strike fear into the disbelievers' hearts because they attribute partners to Allah although He has sent no authority for this...' (*Al-Imran*: 151). As long as Allah has struck fear in the hearts of the disbelievers, their means of combat will eventually become in the hands of the believers, and the whole conflict will get settled. Then, Allah says:

مَنْ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِ، وَيَقُولُونَ سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا وَأَسْمَعُ غَيْرَ
مُسْمَعٍ وَرَاعِنَا لَيًّا بِأَلْسِنِهِمْ وَطَعْنًا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأَسْمَعُ وَأَنْظُرْنَا
لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَّهُمْ وَأَقْوَمَ وَلَكِنْ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

Some Jews distort the meaning of [revealed] words: they say, 'We hear and disobey,' and 'Listen,' [adding the insult] 'May you not hear,' and 'Ra' ina [Look at us],' twisting it abusively with their tongues so as to disparage religion. If they had said, 'We hear and obey,' 'Listen,' and 'Unzhurna [Look at us],' that would have been better and more proper for them. But God has spurned them for their defiance; they believe very little [46] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 46)

In the chapter of *an-Nisa'*, Allah has tackled the first creation and explained that He has created mankind from one soul, Adam *peace be upon him*, then He has created his spouse from him, and then He has created a lot of men and women so that man's succession on earth can continue. Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified that He wants a strong society wherein the rights of the orphan will not be lost. In so far as Allah wants this succession to continue, the orphans must take their due rights. Then, Allah has tackled the inherited fortune, and the

feeble-minded people who cannot be entrusted with their money. Subsequently, He has tackled marriage and its protocols.

Therefore, the whole process of creation is intended to build an integrated system of life for mankind because the succession of man on earth requires continuous reproduction. This reproduction cannot bear its fruits unless it leads to the creation of strong people, as the reproduction of weak people will not serve the purpose. Accordingly, Allah instructs the Muslims that if there are orphans among them, they must take care and watch over them; and if there are feeble-minded people who cannot manage their wealth, other sound-minded people should take care of their wealth on their behalf. In addition, people should do their best to leave some of the fruits of their labour to their offspring until they become strong enough and able to take care of their own affairs. Then, Allah has explained the system of inheritance, and has allowed the people to marry, but He has set conditions for marriage, and has revealed the general guidance: 'Worship Allah; join nothing with Him. Be good to your parents...' (*an-Nisa*: 36) He has explained all these rulings.

But why does Allah *Glorified is He* revert to the issue of the Jews after explaining all these rulings? Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the rulings in full, and then urges the people to abide by them. He explains that there are some people who know the rulings but cannot force themselves to abide by them; thus, He warns the Muslims from doing this. The Muslims should also know that there are people who have been granted a share of the Book and know the rulings as they do, but they have bartered this knowledge for delusion. Allah explains that this is the reality, and He does not bring about sayings just to give information, but He presents what happened, and warns the Muslims against adopting the same line. Therefore, Allah says: 'Of those who are Jews (there are those who) distort the meaning of [revealed] words...' (*an-Nisa*: 46). The meaning of distortion is to use a word that bears more than two meanings, one of which is good and the other is evil, but the person who says it intends the evil sense. For example, same people may say, '*as-samu`alykum*' which resembles '*as-salamu`alaykum*' in the way it is written and pronounced, but the word '*sam*' means death. Therefore, some words may be said to make people think that it is said with a good intention, but the real intention of these words is evil.

Another example of this attitude is when some people said to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him ra`ina* (take care of us). While the apparent meaning is 'taking care of', they intended *ru'unah* (rashness and recklessness). Thus, Allah has commanded the Muslims to leave aside the word that bears dual meanings because the speaker may intend either good or bad it. For example,⁽¹⁾ a person went to a tailor to have a garment made. The tailor had only one eye, and this person did not like the garment he made. The person thought that if the tailor made his appearance bad by the garment which he tailored for him, he would write a poem that will scandalise him in front of all people. Thus, he said,

'Amr tailored for me a garment

I wish his two eyes were the same.

But what does the poet's saying, 'I wish his two eyes were the same' mean? Does it mean that he wished the defective eye to be like the one which is intact? Or does he wish that the healthy eye to be like the defective one? Thus, the saying bears a good and a bad intention. It was narrated that one of the rulers asked a preacher to insult and curse the Companion 'Ali *Allah honours his face and family on the pulpit*. The preacher asked the ruler to excuse him from this mission, but the ruler insisted on his order. Then, the preacher told him that if he wants him to obey this order, he would ascend the pulpit and say that the ruler asked him to curse 'Ali, so repeat your curses upon him. Then the ruler told him not to say anything, as he understood the preacher's intention and ability to use words in a double sense.

Allah speaks: 'Of those who are Jews (there are those who) distort the meaning of [revealed] words...' (*an-Nisa'*: 46). The Muslims should heed the style of the Quran because sometimes it uses the same words in different meanings, a matter which may cause the shallow-minded to think that this is repetition, but this is not true. For instance, Allah in one instance says: 'They have bought error in exchange for guidance...' (*al-Baqara*: 16). In another instance, He does not mention guidance as a price for error; rather, He says, 'bought misguidance.' They did not pay attention to the fact that the guidance

(1) *The story of the tailor 'Amr who tailored a cape for a gentleman*

derived from *fitrah* (innate natural disposition) has been effaced in them. Another example is the saying of Allah raising the question about who: '...distort the meanings of [revealed] words....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41)

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Some Jews distort the meaning of [revealed] words....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41) This means that Allah's saying was initially received and interpreted correctly, then those people distorted and replaced it with other words in the manner they did with stoning and replacing it with *Had* (ordained punishment for violating Allah's Law).

As for Allah's saying: '...who distort the meanings of [revealed] words and say [to each other]...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41), it means that they have removed the Sacred Words of Allah from their true context, and placed them in a false context, distorting their meanings in accordance with their desires. In so doing, the words had no context. In one instance, they have replaced the words of Allah with their own words, and in another they have distorted the words of Allah by interpreting them per their interests and desires.

And '...say, "We hear and disobey"...' (*an-Nisa'*: 46). They said openly, 'we hear' then said in secret, 'we disobey', which reflects their intention to disobey. Thus, the word 'hear' implies that their ears hear the words, but in fact they 'disobey' Allah's ordainment. They indeed explicitly and openly said 'we hear'; however, they said 'we disobey' in secret. They thus said 'we have heard' while bearing the intention to disobey. May '...you not be made to hear!' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) But the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the person who caused them to hear, and the evidence is that they said, 'we heard.' So, what did they intend by saying 'isma'? Did they ask the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to listen to them because he was saying something that they did not like, and they planned to respond to him, or did they want to use an ambivalent word and turn it into an inappropriate meaning like *ghayr musma* ('may you not hear anything that pleases you' or 'may you not hear' - Allah forbid)? It may also be an insult on their part. All of these are probable interpretations.

'Listen, may you not be made to hear! and; 'Raina, (distorting the word with their tongues and taunting about religion)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 46). They did not intend 'giving care' by the word *ra'ina* which is mentioned in the Arabic

text of the verse, but they intended recklessness and heedlessness. Allah commanded to avoid this term because people may interpret it in a manner that is insulting to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Arabic word '*lay*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means twisting and twining things together into a pattern. For instance, it may be used to mean interweaving and binding two threads together. Such twisting and interweaving give strength to a rope. But why did they use to do such practices? They did so because they knew well that such practices would give them strength.

By '...distorting the word with their tongues and taunting about religion...' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) they intended evil by twisting and distorting the words of Allah as the intention of religion is causing uprightness which they did not intend. Therefore, when a person twists and distorts the meanings of religion, he intends to disparage it. They should have said, 'We have listened to what has been revealed.' Instead of concealing disobedience, they should have also said, 'We hear and obey, Listen, and *unzhurna* (look at us) ', instead of *ra'ina*. This would have been better, since *unzhurna* does not bear any negative implication.

Thus, this means that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wants to inform the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might use words to insult him. Therefore, He explains that they should beware of not uttering their words because they intended negative implications, and they had to avoid all words that could be used in an evil manner. '...and if they had said instead, "We have heard and we obey and listen and wait for us to understand", it would have been better for them and more upright...' (*an-Nisa'*: 46). The word *lakin* mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse suggests that what had actually happened contradicted with what the Legislator intended...'..but Allah has cursed them because for their disbelief, so they do not believe but a little.' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) The word *la'n* stated in the Arabic text of the verse, means expulsion and dismissal, i.e. Allah spurned and expelled them because of their disbelief',...but Allah has cursed them because their unbelief, so they do not believe but a little.' (*an-Nisa'*: 46)

Once negation of a particular act is followed by an exception, this implies that the exception proves some of this act or event. For instance, when

someone does not eat except for a little bit, this means that the first part of the sentence negated eating, but 'except for a little bit' came to prove that he still does have some food. Allah says: 'they do not believe but a little.' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) The act of believing requires suggesting the person who believed. Thus, there is the act and the one who undertakes and performs such an act. Accordingly, exception may apply to the action or the person who performed the action. The saying: 'they do not believe but a little' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) means that they only had faith in a few things, i.e. they had little faith in prayers, and they did not work on Saturdays. However, they did not pay heed to the rest of the prerequisites of faith. In addition, this statement may mean that only a few of them believed, and this opinion is more likely because some of them actually believed. It is also true that they believed in some parts of the Book and disbelieved in other parts. Thus, their faith was little due to the act itself.

Some of them embraced Islam after the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent and recited the Quran; and they were assured that he perfectly fit the description mentioned in their Divine Book. However, only a few number of the Jews believed like 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Ka'b Al-Ahbar, but other Jews like 'Abdullah ibn Suriyyah, Ka'b ibn Asad and Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf, did not believe.

Therefore, if 'they do not believe but a little.' (*an-Nisa'*: 46) refers to those who believed it, this will be a probable interpretation. It will also be possible to interpret it as the disbelievers used to believe in certain parts of the Book and disbelieve in the other parts. The expression which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has used is called 'probability consideration' because when the Quran was revealed with such a saying, some Jews were thinking of declaring their faith in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Had Allah said, 'they do not believe', it would have been difficult for them to declare their faith. But when He has said, 'they do not believe but a little' the one who was considering embracing Islam knew that the One Who has said such a saying knows all things hidden in the soul. Therefore, Allah has considered the probability that those few people might declare faith. Subsequently, Allah says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ ؕ اٰمِنُوْا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنۡ قَبْلُ اَنْ نَّطْمِسَ
 وُجُوْهًا فَرَرْتُهَا عَلٰى اَذْبَارِهَا اَوْ نَلْعَنَهُمْ كَمَا لَعَنَّا اَصْحٰبَ السَّبْتِ ؕ وَكَانَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ مَفْعُوْلًا ﴿٤٧﴾

**People of the Book, believe in what We have sent down
 to confirm what you already have before We wipe out
 [your sense of] direction, turning you back, or reject
 you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath:
 God's will is always done [47] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 47)**

All people know that the divine legislations do not involve any contradictions, since they were revealed by the same Legislator. He will not decree legislation one day, and then send another messenger to enact another new contradictory legislation. The fundamentals of all religions that were revealed through different messages are the same. They only differ in certain rulings required by the conditions of different ages. Even the rulings of the same legislation may develop especially those related to habits. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* the Merciful to His slaves would never bring about an issue concerning a habit to which people have been accustomed, and then abrogate it. Religious texts pertaining matters of creed were decisive. As for the matters that need habituation, Allah sets the rulings relevant to them gradually and gently. In other words, He sets these rulings in phases to avoid the transitional gap.

This transitional gap could be likened to the case of the person who smokes 100 cigarettes a day. If he reduces the number of cigarettes he consumes to only fifty cigarettes then thirty and so on, he will get rid of this habit overtime. Thus, the time lag between one cigarette and another will be an hour instead of ten minutes or half an hour. Accordingly, this person will get rid of this habit gradually. The same also applies to social affairs pertaining to habits.

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: ‘O you who have been given the Book! Believe that which We have revealed...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 47). He clarifies that this Book does not contain different rulings. Someone may say: As long as this Book contains the rulings they have in their Book, why did Allah reveal it? That is because new issues have emerged during this age that did not exist at the time when their Book was revealed. The Quran includes treatment of new issues that arose as well as the issues pertaining to faith, miracles, monotheism, creed, and all other indisputable matters.

‘O you who have been given the Book! Believe that which We have revealed...’ (*an-Nisa*: 47). The phrase ‘... have been given the Book...’ (*an-Nisa*: 47), suggests that this Book is evidence against them, as Allah has not presented to them sayings they did not know, as He says: ‘...We have revealed, verifying what you have (*an-Nisa*: 47). This means that they know very well what they have. Therefore, they should have compared what was revealed to them at the hands of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to what they already had. If they have found it confirming what they already had, then the whole matter would have been settled.

Subsequently, the threat included in the following verse should be considered: ‘...before We obliterate faces then turn them on their backs, or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath, and the command of Allah shall be executed’ (*an-Nisa*: 47) is intended to warn those people and urge them to believe in Muhammad’s *da`wah* (call to Allah). The word ‘*tams*’ which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse) means obliteration, and if an object has experienced ‘*tams*’, it has been obliterated after being distinct. In addition, the word *wujuh* is used in the Quran in different senses. In some instances, it is literally used to refer to the face, as a part of the body, as in His saying: ‘On the Day when some faces brighten and others darken...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 106). In other instances, it is used to refer to intention and orientation as in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘In fact, any who direct themselves wholly to Allah’ (*al-Baqara*: 112).

The words *aslam wajhahu* which are mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse mean directing oneself wholly. Thus, the word is sometimes used in reference to the face with which we face people, and in other instances it is used to refer to the intention and objective, but what is the relation between the intention, objective and face? The relation is envisaged in the fact that when someone intends to do something, he directs his face towards it. Therefore, the word *wajh* refers to the part of the body with which we encounter things, and also refers to the intention and purpose one may have.

The use of the saying *natmis wujuhan* suggests that Allah has honoured the humans, and has given them distinct features, such as their eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth, which cannot be created by any person. Then, Allah *Glorified is He*

declares that He can efface these facial features that characterize those people in a manner that their faces would become like the back of their necks. This is the meaning of the verse if *wujuh* refers to the face as a part of the body.

The explanation of the verse when *wujuh* refers to intention and hope: The people who purchased misguidance and wanted the believers to go astray, distorted the sayings of Allah, and said *ra'ina* and 'May you not hear' absolutely had a certain intention. What is their objective and intention? Their intention is to keep themselves and other people away from following Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah urges those people to believe in Muhammad's *da'wah* (call to Allah) before He obliterates their intention, and prevents it from reaching its end; keeping people away from believing in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah urges them to save themselves before this happens and He curses and dismisses them out of His Mercy. Therefore, when 'Abdullah ibn Salam heard this verse, he went to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* placing his hands on his face and said, 'I have feared that Allah may efface my face before I convert to Islam.'

This proves that he believed that the One Who said these sayings can execute his warning. During the caliphate of 'Umar ibn Al- Khattab *Allah be pleased with him*, Ka'b Al-'Ahbar used to go to him not knowing that this verse was revealed, but when he knew about it, he went to 'Umar ibn Al- Khattab covering his face with his hand lest his face be effaced before he embraces Islam. This proves that he truly believes that the One Who said these words can execute His Warning.

Someone may say that among the Jews are people who have not believed, but Allah did not efface their faces. We say in response, 'Did He say that He will only efface the faces'? No, He also said, '...or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). It suffices that some people among their rabbis and religious figures believed that effacement might happen. In addition, the Jews who believed the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew about the intrigues of the Jews, as 'Abdullah ibn Salam said to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before embracing Islam, 'I would like to embrace Islam, but I am afraid that if I embrace Islam, the Jews would bad mouth me, so ask them about me before I convert to

Islam.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the rabbis about him, 'What do you think of `Abdullah ibn Salam?' They answered, 'He is the best of us, and the son of the best of us and the most knowledgeable person amongst us'; and went on glorifying him. When Ibn Salam heard this, he testified that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Consequently, they insulted and offended him. Then, Ibn Salam said, 'O Messenger of Allah, did I not tell you that they are not trustworthy people.'

When the news of the arrival of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Medina reached `Abdullah ibn Salam, he went to him to ask him about certain things. He said, 'I am going to ask you about three things which only a Prophet can answer. What is the first sign of the Hour? What is the first food that the people of paradise will eat? And why does a child attract the similarity to his father or to his mother?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Gabriel has just now informed me of that.' Ibn Salam said, 'Gabriel is the enemy of the Jews amongst the angels.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'As for the first sign of the Hour, it will be a fire that will collect the people from the East to the West. As for the first meal, which the people of paradise will eat, it will be the caudate (extra) lobe of the fish-liver. As for the child, if the man's discharge precedes the woman's discharge, the child attracts the similarity to the man, and if the woman's discharge precedes the man's, then the child attracts the similarity to the woman.' Then, `Abdullah ibn Salam said, 'I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah, and that you are the Messenger of Allah.' and added, 'O Allah's Messenger, the Jews invent lies as to make one astonished, so please ask them about me before they know about my conversion to Islam.' The Jews came, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked, 'What kind of man is `Abdullah ibn Salam among you?' They replied, "The best of us and the son of the best of us, and the most superior among us and the son of the most superior among us." Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked, 'What would you think if `Abdullah ibn Salam should embrace Islam?' They said, 'May Allah protect him from that.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* repeated his question and they gave the same answer. Then `Abdullah came out to them and said, 'I testify that none has the right to be worshipped except Allah and that Muhammad is the

Messenger of Allah!' Then, the Jews said, 'He is the wicked among us and the son of the wicked among us.' and so they degraded him. Thus, 'Abdullah ibn Salam said, 'That is what I was afraid of, O Allah's Messenger.' Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas said, 'I have not heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say to someone walking on the earth that he will be among the inhabitants of Heaven, except 'Abdullah ibn Salam. The following verse was revealed about him: 'Say, "Have you thought: what if this Quran is from Allah and you reject it? What if one of the Children of Israel testifies to its similarity [to earlier scriptures]..."'? (*al-Ahqaf*: 10) ⁽¹⁾

Allah says, '...before We obliterate faces then turn them on their backs...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). If the intended meaning of the word *wujuh* is actual effacement of the face, then this is what scared 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Ka'b Al-Ahbar. The former went to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the later went to 'Umar, covering their faces, lest it should be effaced. Therefore, the words *natmis wujuhan*, which are mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, mean either the actual effacement of the face, making the face without any distinctive features, or prevention of those people from reaching their goal, which is keeping people away from believing in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '...before We obliterate faces then turn them on their backs, or reject them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). This means expelling them from Allah's Mercy. Allah says: 'Allah has sealed their hearts...' (*al-Baqara*: 7). As long as the disbelievers renounce faith, Allah will not only increase the seal on their hearts, but He will also assist them in this matter; Allah says: 'There is a disease in their hearts, to which Allah has added more...' (*al-Baqara*: 10).

As long as those people wanted to disbelieve in Prophet Muhammad's *da'wah* (call to Allah), He fulfilled their demand, saying: '...or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). In this verse, Allah addresses the Jews, who know the story of the Sabbath in which Allah banished, destroyed, rejected them and prepared for them a great torment. Thus, Allah does not give them a baseless warning, as this warning has a history and background that Jews know well; believe and remember its date: '...or reject

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Muslim and an-Nisa'*

you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). The story of the people who broke the Sabbath is known even though it will be mentioned in another chapter of the Quran. The word 'Sabbath' means comfort and peace, from which the word *subat* (sleep) is derived. The Arabic words *sabat* and *yasbu* mean to repose and rest.

'...or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47). The word *la'n*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of verse means banishment, insult and ruin. Those who want to doubt the meanings of the verses say that the exegetes of the Quran do not restrict themselves to one meaning for a single word, as they say different meanings for a word. We reply that they do not master Arabic, and their knowledge of it is limited to what is needed for their career, and not a talent. Learning language just for the sake of a career enables a person to command its basic rules, but not the ability to use the word in its actual proper sense or to clarify its intention. If the word *la'n* means dismissal, we should infer that this requires someone to perform the act of dismissing, someone to be dismissed, and a place out of which the latter will be dismissed.

So who dismisses?

Who is dismissed?

And out of where is he dismissed?

If the verse is interpreted in this sense, people will not have problems with the diverse implications and meanings of rejection and dismissal. For example, if a person is sitting and eating, and his dog that safeguards his house comes and goes around your table, what will this person do? He will drive it away from the table, an act which is considered as a form of dismissal. Another example is: if a person's son did something wrong in the presence of guests, this person will drive him out of the room, telling him to go to his mother, an act which is considered also as dismissal and expulsion. Further, if the son's misdeed is great, and the father has control over the son, he may drive the son out of the house, and preclude him from staying at home. Furthermore, if the son's misdeed is more serious, the father may dismiss him from the village or town wherein he lives. Sometimes a person who has perpetrated is driven out of life

by another person who has influence; an act which is considered a dismissal. The word *la'n* is used when disgrace and humiliation are intended. If the intended meaning is ruin, this meaning is proved by the fact that a lot of the children of Israel have already been ruined in battles, and suffered disgrace and humiliation because the Muslims captured their women and their daughters, subdued them and destroyed them. In addition, the Muslims drove them out of their homes towards the Levant and Daraa where Allah caused them to die. Thus, all meanings of dismissal can apply to them, and can be understood in connection with all that happened to them; however, it semantically differs per the one who dismisses the one who is dismissed, and the place out of which a person is dismissed.

When Allah says: '...or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa'*: 47), this indicates that rejection may take different forms, among which the rejection of those who broke the Sabbath. The word 'Sabbath' refers to Saturday which is one of days of the week; therefore, it is a temporal unit of the week. It is noticed that the names of the rest of the seven days of the week have numerical connotations. *Al-ahad* (Sunday) refers to number one, the word *al-ithnayn* (Monday) refers to number two, and the same applies for the Arabic names of the days of the week except *jumu'a* and *sabt* (Friday and Saturday), as they have no numerical connotations. They rather take numerical significances from the names of the days of the week which precede or follow them. For instance, *al-khamis* (Thursday) refers to number five, so it is implied that *al-jumu'a* (Friday) is the sixth day of the week even if number six is not literally implied by the word. Similarly, *al-Sabt* (Saturday) is the seventh day, so the numbers to which *al-jumu'a* (Friday) and *al-sabt* (Saturday) refer to can be suggested by the number to which the preceding day refers because these two words have semantic implications that override their numerical reference. For instance, the word *al-jumu'a* (Friday) refers to gathering; therefore, the numerical connotation of the word has been overridden by the reference to gathering. *Al-sabt* (Saturday) refers to tranquillity, as it is derived from the Arabic root *sabata* which means being stable without any motion. This meaning is suggested by the saying of Allah: 'Give you sleep for rest.' (*an-Naba'*: 9) The word 'rest' stands for the word *subata* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse.

When Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wills to examine some of His creatures to assess their degree of faith and obedience to the Commands of Allah, He forbids an act during a particular time and permits it in other times. For instance, Allah proscribed hunting on a certain day, although He allowed people to hunt on all days. Those people used to catch fish from the sea for livelihood, but He chose this day in particular, and commanded them not to go fishing on this day, intending to any type of activity on this day. This is the meaning of Sabbath in terms of rest and peace. The people who broke the Sabbath are the group who took part in an event in violation of the peace and rest on Saturdays. The story of this group is explained and tackled in general in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'You know about those of you who broke the Sabbath...' (*al-Baqara*: 65).

In this verse, Allah says, '...or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath...' (*an-Nisa*': 47). He *the Glorified and Exalted* has mentioned their story in detail before. Allah commands the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask those who were concerned with the story of the Sabbath, i.e. the Jews. When Allah puts forward a confirmed story, He presents it as a statement which the people who have faith believe. But sometime He puts forward the topic in an interrogative form because He is certain that the questioned people will not give any answer other than that which Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* intends. When our Lord says to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '[O Prophet], ask them about the town by the sea; how its people broke the Sabbath when their fish surfaced for them only on that day; never on weekdays. We tested them in this way because of their disobedience.' (*al-A'raf*: 163) They cannot deny this incident; Allah would have put it forward, but He wants to assert it in a way that does not leave room for any denial or dispute. Thus, He explains that He will not put forward the incident; but He commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask them about it. Their answer would match with what has happened because it is a clear and undeniable issue.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And ask them about the town which stood by the sea...' (*al-A'raf*: 163). The Arabic word *qariya* in the verse, translated as 'town', is derived from the word *al-qira* which means generosity and providing

hospitality for guests. A host is not expected to accommodate his guest for long periods of time and provide hospitality to him for many months. Rather, he is required to offer his guest one *qariya*, or meal (the minimum hospitality to be offered to guests). If a passer-by comes at your door seeking your hospitality, you should serve him one meal (since a Muslim is enjoined to be hospitable to guests). *Umm Al-Qura* is given this name since it tends to many people's needs or because it the greatest town. The *qariyah* mentioned in the chapter of *al-A'raf* is described as 'by the sea', meaning that it was close to the sea. Something that is described as *hadir* implies that you find therein whatever you aspire to. This meaning is similar to the words of what the Arab poet Ahmad Shawqi said,

When my beloved Layla stands by my side, I have everything I need.⁽¹⁾

The word *al-hadar* in the poetic verse refers to the place where everyone's possible needs could be found. However, *al-badiyah* is the place where people have only what suffices concerning some of their needs. *Al-badiya* contrasts *hadar*; *al-badiya* is the desert land in which there is no permanent settlements (*hadar*). The word *hawadir*, plural form of *hadira*, is used to refer to big cities, towns and capitals. Thus, the reference to the 'town stood by the sea' (*al-A'raf*: 163) should be understood as a reference to a big town overlooking the sea or that which abounds in all kinds of sea goods. In this verse, the city in reference is the city of (*'aylah*) which lies between Midyan and at-Tawr.

The story of the people of this town proceeds as follows: Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to test them. He prohibited fishing on a specific day, Saturday, or the Sabbath. The town stood by the sea; its people mostly depended on it for their livelihood. They were commanded to abstain from fishing on Saturdays as a test for their obedience. One may wonder why Allah *Glorified is He* would prohibit such an activity on this particular day. We should bear in mind that not all things and activities that are deemed prohibited by Allah *Glorified is He* must be harmful. The prohibition may be merely intended as a trial and test for people's compliance with the commands of their Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good

(1) Poet Majnun Layla (literally 'He Who Was Driven Crazy by Love for Layla')

things that had been permitted to them before, for having frequently debarred others from Allah's path' (*an-Nisa*': 160).

The reference to 'good things' in the verse means that what was deemed temporary prohibited for them was originally lawful. These people disobeyed their Lord and accordingly incurred His punishment. They transgressed the limits of Allah, took that to which they were not entitled and made lawful what Allah had deemed prohibited for them. Their punishment was the outcome of their action. Why did they transgress the limits of Allah and make lawful what He had deemed prohibited? When they refused to abide by the commands and prohibitions of their Lord, they were denied some of what was deemed lawful to them as punishment.

It should be noted that not all unlawful things are deemed prohibited because they are harmful. Rather, Allah requires our absolute compliance with His prohibitions whether the forbidden things and acts apparently seem harmful or not; He wants our faith to be based on unwavering conviction. For this reason, He says: 'And among men is he who serves Allah (standing) on the verge so that if good befalls him he is satisfied therewith, but if a trial afflicts him, he turns back headlong; he loses this world as well as the Hereafter. That is a manifest loss.' (*al-Hajj*: 11)

Allah does not want the people to worship Him on edge, worshipping Him to achieve worldly gains. People are confident when they are prosperous, but when they face hardships, they turn away from worship. Rather, He wants people to be moderate and steadfast in faith. Worshipping Allah on edge reflects disturbance, doubt and confusion of such a person who does so, which is unbecoming of a believer who should, instead, relish tranquillity in his religion. This is similar to an army commander who fights only when victory is expected possible, aspiring for the spoils of war; otherwise, he would flee and withdraw his men. Allah wants us to attain genuine faith. Some people may say, 'I will pay *zakat* in order to have my wealth blessed and increased.' To this person we say, 'You should not pay *zakat* in order to have your wealth blessed and increased. Rather, you should pay it because Allah has commanded you to do so. Having your wealth blessed and increased is a bonus. Allah may test your faith by denying you this bonus in order to see if you are abiding by

His commands He has ordered, or if you are doing so merely because you aspire to the bonus. When Allah blesses you with increasing your wealth, you are required to pay *zakat* on it as well. He wants to know those who will readily abide by the Divine Command merely because He is the One Who has ordered it and not because they aspire for worldly gains.

As underlined above, it was deemed prohibited for them to fish on Saturdays as a punishment for their disobedience and transgressions. It could have been possible that they would not have to face any enticements urging them to violate the Divine Command, but it is a trial for them. They were commanded to refrain from fishing on the Sabbath day (Saturday), and fish were made to appear on the surface only on the Sabbath, never on weekdays. They began using deceitful means to avoid adhering to the command of their Lord (and refrain from fishing on Saturdays) by placing their nets for the purpose of fishing before the Sabbath. When the fish came in abundance on Saturday as usual, they were caught in the nets for the rest of Saturday. During the night, they collected the fish after the Sabbath ended. Their faith was tested by making the fish become very easy to catch on Saturdays; they were tempted by the easy of the catches made on Saturday, and they thought of this plan to get around the Divine restriction. Had fish not appeared on the surface, becoming easy to catch on Saturdays, the adherence to the Divine Command would have been easy. However, they could not resist the temptations. Allah says: ‘...when their fish came to them on the day of their Sabbath, appearing on the surface of the water, and on the day on which they did not keep the Sabbath, they did not come to them.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 163)

Their trial had two dimensions: the fish came to them on Saturday, appearing on the surface of the water easy to catch and did not come to them on any other day. This made them more anxious. Had they been genuinely confident in their Lord and believed in Him as due, they would have abided by His command.

It was a trial and test for the purpose of spiritual purification. What did they do? They wanted to abide by the command of their Lord, but their material greed was too overwhelming, and they could not resist the temptations to catch the fish that came to them on Saturday. Had they savoured faith in the bounties and grace of Allah, they would have passed the test. Sometimes deprivation is,

in essence, giving, while restriction is liberation in disguise. However, who is heedful to this fact?

They should have reminded themselves that Allah had prepared for them what was better than fish that were easy to catch. Tempted by the easy catch to be made on Saturday, the fishermen cunningly devised their plan to get around the Divine restriction. They set up trenches and canals to divert the fish and nets and ropes to catch them. On Saturdays, the canals, nets and ropes were set up, and the fish would swim into them in large numbers. At night, before the fish could return to the sea, the canals were dammed. Then on Sundays, the fishermen would easily catch all the trapped fish. They thought that by means of such a plan, they would deceive Allah. In fact, they failed to grasp the essence of the Divine Command. They were forbidden from fishing on Saturdays; fishing, in essence, means to take possession of the fish. Therefore, as long as they had exerted efforts on Saturdays to catch fish, they violated the Divine Command. Allah says: '[Prophet], ask them about the town by the sea; how its people broke the Sabbath when their fish surfaced for them only on that day, never on weekdays. We tested them in this way because of their disobedience.' (*al-A'raf*: 163)

They disobeyed the command of their Lord and made lawful what He had deemed prohibited. As a punishment, Allah deemed forbidden what was originally lawful for them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'How, when some of them asked [their preachers], "Why do you bother preaching to people Allah will destroy or at least punish severely?" [The preachers] answered, "In order to be free from your Lord's blame, and so that they may perhaps take heed."' (*al-A'raf*: 164)

This proves that there were good people among such a community. These good people admonished the disobedient ones and urged them to be mindful of their Lord and abide by the Divine Command. A party of them exclaimed, 'Why do you admonish us with a severe punishment?' Those who advised the evildoers said, 'To be free from blame before your Lord, and that haply they may guard (against evil).' This means that there were three groups: those who violated the command of Allah, those who wanted to advise the evildoers and forbade them from such a prohibited act and those who blamed the ones who wanted to admonish the evildoers. The third group exclaimed, 'Why do you

bother preaching to people Allah will destroy or at least punish severely?' Those who wanted to admonish the evildoers replied, 'In order to be free from your Lord's blame, and so that they may perhaps take heed.' They wanted the admonition to be an excuse before Allah that they did not stand still and could not at least forbid the evil from being committed before them. They said, 'To be free from blame before your Lord, and that haply they may guard (against evil).' They hoped that these evildoers would be admonished and deter when reminded of Allah. What happened next? Allah says: 'When they ignored [the warning] they were given, We saved those who forbade evil and punished the wrongdoers severely because of their disobedience.' (*al-A'raf*: 165)

The verse states that those who forbade evil were saved; this means that other groups were punished and destroyed (the wrongdoers and those who refused to forbid them from violating the Divine Command).

Back to our main verse; it is concluded with the statement, 'Allah's Will is always done.' (*an-Nisa'*: 47) This is true, indeed. There is nothing to be classified as difficult or impossible for Allah *Glorified is He*. His Power is infinite, and none can repel His Will. If Allah promises or commands anything, it will undoubtedly occur. Divine Promises are different from human ones. The promises and warnings made by human beings may be fulfilled or not. You may promise someone that you will do something good for him in the future; however, you may become unable to fulfil your promise later. Similarly, you may threaten to harm someone in a given way in the future, but you may fall ill later and become unable to fulfil your promise.

This is because human ability is limited and changes; one day you may be able to fulfil your promise, and other days you may be unable to do so. However, this is not the case with Allah. When He promises or threatens to do something, it will surely take place. He may pardon evildoers, out of His Mercy and Grace, the disbelief in Him and associating partners with Him in worship.

We know that the Will of Allah is not bound by time since He controls it. However, human being's actions are constricted by time. We describe the events according to time on which they occur; the past events are described in the past tense, the current ones are described in the present tense and the future events are described in the future tense. When you say that a future event will take place,

your statement may or may not be believed due to the fact that you have no control over the future. However, when Allah, describing a future event using the past tense, as is the case in many verses of the Quran, this means that it will surely happen because the Will of Allah is not constricted by time.

Allah says: 'Allah's Judgment is [bound to] come.' (*an-Nahl*: 1) The Arabic verb '*ata*', translated as 'is bound to come', is used in the past tense. The literal meaning of the verse is that the (Day of) Judgment has already taken place before making this statement. The verse continues: 'So, do not ask to bring it on sooner.' (*an-Nahl*: 1) This indicates that it had not happened yet! Those who criticise the Quran may say, 'Why does the Quran say that something has already happened even though it will actually take place in the future?' This is a recurrent style in the Quran; the actions and decrees of Allah are described in the past tense, indicating that they will surely happen (as if they had already happened). Verily, none can repel His Decrees or hinder His Will.

Allah says: 'Allah's Judgment is [bound to] come.' (*an-Nahl*: 1) The verse reads as follows: 'Or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath.' (*an-Nisa*': 47). It may be said that the wording of the verse suggests that Allah may or may not reject them. In fact, this is refutable since Allah's Will is surely bound to happen. He is not bound by time unlike human beings who are constricted by it. This is due to the fact that human beings have no control over their future. A person may say that he will do such-and-such tomorrow, but he may die, or he may change his mind; and his situation may change. The same goes for threatening; one may threaten to take revenge on someone, but changes his mind later. This means that human beings have no control over their own future affairs. It is, therefore, foolish to argue with Allah's statement in reference. He teaches us to be polite with Him and consider the universal order and decrees set by Him in order to avoid falling into the abyss of lying. He tells his Messenger: 'And do not say of anything: "Surely, I will do it tomorrow", without adding, "God willing." Remember your Lord when you forget and say, "Maybe my Lord will guide me to a nearer course to the right than this."' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24)

Allah teaches us to avoid falling into the abyss of lying by conditioning all future events to His Will. If someone says, 'I will do such-and-such tomorrow',

and does not do it, he would be considered a liar because he tacitly assumed that he would be alive tomorrow and able to carry out this action.

We have previously underlined that every event requires a doer, subject matter, time, reason and power to materialise it. Do human beings have full control over these factors? In fact, you do not have control over any of these factors. You do not even have control over your own existence in this worldly life! Therefore, a believer is enjoined to condition all future events to the 'Be polite to the Will of Allah by adding the phrase 'Insha' Allah' (meaning, 'if Allah will'). Thus, he who does so spares himself the trouble of being considered a liar. Accordingly, 'Allah's Will is always done' (*an-Nisa'*: 47) when He says: 'or We reject them...' in the verse in reference means that they will certainly be cursed, and none should question the promise of Allah. Similarly, as we read the verse: '...and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful' (*al-Ahzab*: 5), we should know that it means that He has been, is still and will always be Forgiving and Merciful. His Mercy and Forgiveness are pre-eternal (existing without any prior nonexistence and without any beginning). He is ever Forgiving and Merciful before the existence of whom He bestows His Mercy and Forgiveness upon, and His Attributes do not change. His Attributes are equally pre-eternal and post-eternal even before there is one to whom He manifests His Forgiveness and Mercy. None can repel or challenge His Will and Decrees. He may decree that things should exist with no causes because He is the Creator of the causes.

Then, He addresses a fundamental doctrinal issue pertaining to the relation between Man and his Lord, and so Allah says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ
يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَىٰ إِثْمًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٤٨﴾

**God does not forgive the joining of partners with Him:
anything less than that He forgives to whoever He will, but
anyone who joins partners with God has concocted a
tremendous sin [48] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 48)**

It should be noted that this verse is one of the most hope inspiring verses in the Quran. This is why: when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

was once asked, 'What are the requirements of faith in Allah?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He who proclaims that none is worthy of worship but Allah (genuinely believes in it, fulfilling its conditions and acts upon its implications), will be admitted to Paradise.'⁽¹⁾

Moreover, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'He who dies while knowing that none is worthy of worship but Allah will be admitted to Paradise.'⁽²⁾

He who associates partners with Allah in worship is committing the ultimate and gravest sin of all. It may be described as the creed-related high treason, in law terminology. The purpose of manmade laws is not to emphasise religious matters, although they should. Suppose that a group of people formed a movement. Afterward, the president of the movement exploited his position to serve his own interests, and another one tried to topple the president of the movement. The action of the second person will be perceived as 'high treason' by the president. By contrast, the one is opposing this president due to his injustice without the intention of toppling him. The concept of high treason as a capital crime exists in human systems of law, and it is punishable by the severest penalty as compared to other offences. The punishment of a certain crime should be in proportion to its gravity.

Back to our verse, Allah underlines the fundamental belief in the Islamic creed, namely the belief in Allah *Glorified is He* as the One and Only God worthy of worship and has no partners. He wants us to acknowledge that none is worthy of worship but Him. When a person recognises and professes that He is the One and Only God with no partner in divinity, he enters the realm of security and deliverance. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'I bear testimony to the fact that there is no god but Allah, and I am His messenger. He who would meet Allah without entertaining any doubt about these (two fundamental beliefs) would enter Paradise.'⁽³⁾

In another Hadith, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Nobody proclaims, "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah", and then

(1) *Abu Ya'la in his Musnad*

(2) *Muslim*

(3) *Muslim*

later dies while believing in it, except that he will enter paradise.' Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* asked, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft?" Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft." Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* exclaimed, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft?" Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft." Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* said, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft?" He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Even if he had committed illegal sexual intercourse and theft, in spite of the Abu Dharr's dislike."⁽¹⁾

Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* was 'jealous' that some people may transgress the limits of Allah. He was not upset when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'In spite of Abu Dharr's dislike!' This is why he was not annoyed when relating this Hadith. Rather, he *Allah be pleased with him* was happy that Muslims were blessed with the Mercy of Allah as such. If this were not the case, what would be the criterion to distinguish between the one who believes and professes it and the one who does not do so? There has to be criterion to distinguish between the two persons. Some Muslims may fall into the abyss of any of the crimes and offences that are punishable by the Islamic Shari'a. Concerning this, Allah says: 'And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38)

This means that it is possible that a believer could steal and fall into the abyss of adultery and immorality while being in a state of oblivion. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us that the five daily prayers and that from one Friday Prayer to the next serve as expiation of the sins committed in between their intervals, as long as major sins are not committed. Hajj and fasting expiate a person's sins as well.

It has been related on the authority of Abu Hurayrah *Allah be pleased with him* that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The five daily prayers and from one Friday Prayer to (the next) Friday Prayer are expiations

(1) *Muslim*

(of the sins committed in between their intervals), as long as major sins are not committed.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, we have come to realise that Allah set up several venues for forgiveness and mercy. He says: 'Certainly, Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases...' (*an-Nisa'*: 48). You should bear in mind that believing in Allah as the One and Only God and refraining from associating partners with Him in worship is for the benefit of human beings. Worshipping diverse deities overwhelms humans who would be required to submit to diverse entities having power over them. Allah spared us such trouble by requiring us to submit only to Him. Worshipping Allah alone is, thus, a source of tranquillity and comfort for a believer.

The belief in Allah as the One and Only God of the universe teaches us genuine nobility and dignity. Instead of submitting to every powerful created being, you should solely submit yourself to the Creator of the universe Who caused it to come into existence by His Perfect Power. Thus, He has created us in the most perfect shape and form and has control over the whole universe. He stands not in need of the worship of His creation. When a person believes in the unique Oneness of Allah, i.e. being the One and Only God of the universe, it is for his own benefit.

For this reason, we have previously underscored that Allah commands His servants to gather once every week, i.e. on Friday. Throughout the week, every Muslim performs the daily prayers in his house, workplace or anywhere else, but on Fridays, He commands all Muslims to gather in the mosque and perform the Friday Prayer in congregation. He shows humbleness to his Lord by crying and imploring Him when he observes the prayer (*salat*) in solitude. Allah has decreed that all Muslims of different social standings, the strong and the weak, the powerful and influential and the weak, the rulers and the ruled should gather and recognise that they are all equal and that they all submit themselves to One and Only God. The same concept is realised in *Hajj*. These collective acts of worship emphasise unity and brotherhood in Islam, as well

(1) *Muslim and At-Tirmithi*

as equality. All worshippers stand shoulder-to-shoulder and prostrate in submission to Allah together, regardless of wealth, race or social status.

Thus, we come to understand that the fact that Allah does not forgive the ascribing of divinity to other than Him and solely worshipping Allah is, actually, for the benefit of people. Had He forgiven such an act, people would have been lost in worshipping diverse deities and submitting to many powers.

However, He has decreed that there should be no deity worthy of worship save Him so that all humankind would submit exclusively to Him and relish the genuine dignity in the servitude to Allah alone. The verse continues: '...anything less than that He forgives to whomever He wills.' (*an-Nisa'*: 48)

Ibn Jurayh narrated on the authority of 'Ata' *Allah be pleased with them* that Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Wahshi, who brutally killed Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* the uncle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Battle of Uhud, came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, "Oh Muhammad, Oh Muhammad, I came to you seeking protection, so grant me safety so I may listen to the Words of Allah." Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* accepted his attendance, despite his (Wahshi's) killing and mutilating his uncle, Hamza. He (Wahshi) (then) said, "I used to associate partners with Allah, killed a soul He forbade and fornicated. Would Allah accept my repentance?" Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* abstained from responding until the following verses were revealed. Allah *Glorified is He* says: "And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful." (*al-Furqan*: 68-70) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited them to him (Wahshi), who replied, "I see conditions I might not fulfil. So, I am at your side (waiting) to listen to the Words of Allah. The following verse was revealed: "Certainly, Allah does not forgive the joining of partners with Him. Anything less than that He forgives to whomever He wills, but anyone who

joins partners with Allah has concocted a tremendous sin."(*an-Nisa*':48) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called Wahshi and recited the verse to him. Therefore, Wahshi said, "Maybe I am from those whom He does not wish to forgive! I shall be by your side until I hear the Words of Allah. Upon this, the following verse was revealed, "Say: O, my servants who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah. Surely, Allah forgives the faults altogether. Surely, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (*az-Zumar*: 53) Wahshi said, "Yes, now I do not see any conditions!" He declared Islam as his religion and was a good Muslim.'

Back to our verse, Allah forgives all sins except for disbelief in Him out of His Mercy and Kindness. He considers the people's actions done out of oblivion as accidental. If someone commits an act of disobedience and then repents to Allah, people should not be reminded of their past sins. If someone commits a sin openly such as giving a false testimony and then repents to Allah, he must not be reminded of his sin. Upon repentance, the repentent's past sins are cancelled, and he must not be reminded of them since he has already repented to the Most Forgiving and Merciful. The One Who has full control over all matters absolved him of his sins. Why does Allah decree such a thing? The objective is that the repenting would not be humiliated due to the sins he has committed in the past. The sinners who indulge in sin are often looked down upon and abhorred by others. For this reason, when a person sins, repents to Allah and regrets what he has done, he earns a reward. Despite tasting the sin, he chose to repent and give it up. This is the reason why Allah substitutes sins of the repenting with good deeds. Upon knowing that our Lord substitutes their sins with good deeds, we learn that we must not detest or abominate the repenting. Rather, we should be happy with their repentance and refrain from judging them according to their past sins.

Allah says: '... but anyone who joins partners with Allah has concocted a tremendous sin.' (*an-Nisa*': 48) The Arabic word *Al- 'Ifira* ' used in the verse originally means telling a lie deliberately. This is different from the case of someone telling something false because he mistakenly thought it was true. For instance, someone may tell you, 'This person visited so-and-so yesterday.' He may have told you that because someone else had told him this or because

he had seen some indications of this visit. However, this visit may have never had happened. Ascribing divinity to anyone but Allah means to lie about Him deliberately and such an act is regarded as a tremendous sin. Allah says: '...but anyone who joins partners with Allah has concocted a tremendous sin.' (*an-Nisa'*: 48) This is due to the fact that it contradicts the affective nature of a human's inclination wanting a person to speak of what he actually knows only. Therefore, one should not go against the dictates of his sound human inclination by deliberately ascribing a false partner to Allah. When Allah proclaims that none is worthy of worship but Him, it should be accepted as an established fact and truthful statement. Had there been any other partner with Allah, why would he not have responded to that? If he had not heard the statement, he would have been an oblivious god, and if he had heard, but had not responded to it, why would he not have objected and brought forth a more persuasive miracle than the one brought forth by Allah? This proves that when Allah proclaims His unique Oneness and sends His Messenger to communicate this message to mankind, and none could or dared to object to it, and that, it should be accepted as an established truth that should be indisputably and intuitively embraced.

Lying means making a false statement or an action intended to mislead others or speaking or acting untruthfully with intent to mislead or deceive others. It may also mean holding false beliefs. Such a deed is considered 'a tremendous sin', and this implies that minor sins are those that do not violate the Islamic monotheistic creed, namely, the unique Oneness of Allah. The following verse related to the Jews, reads as follows:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْكُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ بِاللَّهِ يُرَكِّي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٤٩﴾

[Prophet], have you considered those who claim purity for themselves? No! God purifies whoever He will: no one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone [49] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 49)

We have previously emphasised that the Arabic expression used in the verse, '*Alam Tara*' (meaning have you not seen?) does not necessarily mean actual vision; rather, it may mean, 'Have you not considered or known?' This

indicates that when Allah informs us of anything, it is as truthful as the truth established by actual vision. In fact, sometimes vision is deceptive and turns out to be a mere illusion. The verse says: 'Have you considered those who claim purity for themselves?' (*an-Nisa'*: 49)

Purification in this context denotes purity from all defects and flaws. This means negating all deficiencies and asserting all aspects of perfection. They thought highly of themselves. Allah says: 'And the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 18)

Allah *Glorified is He* responded to their claim when He says: 'Say, "Why does He then chastise you for your faults? Nay, you are mortals from among those whom He has created..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 18). This means that if they had truly been the sons and beloved ones of Allah as they claimed, why were they punished? It proves the falseness of their claim. What is the point of informing us of such information? Why would you lie to us? We cannot benefit you. They praised and credited themselves falsely claiming that they were purified from all defects and argued that they were the sons and beloved ones of Allah. Another example of their false claims was related in the verse saying: 'And they say, "None shall enter the garden (or paradise) except he who is a Jew or a Christian." These are their vain desires. Say, "Bring your proof if you are truthful."' (*al-Baqara*: 111)

This is a false allegation as well. The following question arises 'If someone praised himself, and it were true, would it be accepted?' In fact, we need to answer another question first, 'What is the purpose of this praise?' If its purpose were arrogance and boasting, it would be false. However, it should be noted that self-praise may be obligatory in certain situations necessitating it. For instance, when a group of people board a boat, and the captain, or the one in charge of running the boat, turns out to be incompetent, and then a storm breaks out and the incompetent captain is unable to steer the boat through the storm. In this case, a competent and more talented person should step forward to steer the boat through the storm and tell the incompetent captain, 'Give up your position. I am more capable of steering the boat.' This involves self-praise, but it is commendable and even required because at such times we cannot afford mistakes. Moreover, this competent person is truthful in what he is saying; he

is actually more competent than this captain. There is thereby a difference between self-praise on a false basis and self-praise on a truthful basis.

We know well the story of our Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*. One day, the king of Egypt dreamt that seven thin cows ate seven fat cows, and he saw seven fresh and healthy ears of corn and seven others that were withered. It would have made more sense that the thin cows would eat the fat ones. The interpretation of visions is not a craft or science. Rather, it is a given talent bestowed upon those whom Allah chooses, enabling them to read the symbols in the visions and deduce their meanings. This is evidenced by the fact that when the king wished to understand the interpretation of this strange dream, he consulted his advisors and soothsayers. Everyone was puzzled because no one could really say what it meant. Some of them thought that it was a passing dream. They were honest enough to admit that they did not have the ability to interpret dreams. Allah says: 'They said, "These are confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of confused dreams."' (Yusuf: 44)

They were fair and honest with the king. This is an important lesson for all of us. When someone is asked about something he does not know, he should simply confess his lack of knowledge. When a scholar is asked about a matter of which he has no knowledge, he should simply say, 'I have no knowledge of this matter.' This way the person would simply consult another scholar. On the contrary, when a scholar gives a questioner a wrong answer, he would settle for it and the scholar would bear the sin.

Allah underlines, in previous verses of the same chapter, Prophet Yusuf's (Joseph's) *peace be upon him* gift of interpreting dreams. He says: 'And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said, "I saw myself pressing wine." And the other said, "I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds ate. Inform us of its interpretation. Surely, we see you to be of the doers of good."' (Yusuf: 36)

Why did these two young men think that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was able to interpret dreams? They clearly stated the reason as related in the verse that says: "Inform us of its interpretation. Surely, we see you to be of the doers of good." (Yusuf: 36) This means that they observed his noble manners and kindness and concluded that he was a good man. When they were troubled

and needed help, they said to themselves we will not find anyone better than him to ask for help. It should be emphasised that good manners speak for themselves and making the person displaying them deserving of respect; even liars will always respect an honest and truthful person.

Can someone judge another person to be a doer of good unless he has criterion to distinguish good from evil? Upon hearing their question, Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* could have answered them directly and interpreted their visions right away. However, he seized the opportunity to invite them to Allah. He *peace be upon him* was a Prophet of Allah and a descendant of a family of Prophets of Allah. He said, as related in the verse, saying:, 'He said, "There shall not come to you the food with which you are fed, but I will inform you both of its interpretation before it comes to you."' (*Yusuf: 37*). He praised himself because he wanted to invite them to Allah. The verse continues: "...This is what my Lord has taught me." (*Yusuf: 37*) It was important for him to praise himself in this context to establish his creditability and earn their trust before inviting them to Allah. He, then, emphasised that it was not a unique gift for him and that anyone could be endowed with it. Allah says: 'Surely, I have forsaken the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and they are deniers of the Hereafter.' (*Yusuf: 37*)

Then, the following verse says: "And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), and Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qoub (Jacob)." (*Yusuf: 38*)

His statement meant that they could have been like him had they chosen to follow the path leading to truth. Then, Allah says: "O, my two mates of the prison! Are sundry lords better or Allah, the One, the Supreme?" (*Yusuf: 39*)

He, then, appealed to common sense, asking them, 'Is having numerous deities better or one God?' They were polytheists, yet when they wanted help, they turned to the one worshipping one God. The verse says: "O, my two mates of the prison! Are sundry lords better or Allah, the One, the Supreme?" (*Yusuf: 39*)

Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* praised himself in order to invite them to Allah. When the king knew of his gift and aptitudes, he requested that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* should be brought to him to be in his close entourage. After the seven years of abundance, foretold by Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* in the interpretation of the vision, came the

seven years of drought. He had advised them to save part of their grains for the following years. He *peace be upon him* informed them of a future event yet to come. When it happened as foretold by Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* they learned that his knowledge was given to him by Allah.

He *peace be upon him* said (to the king): 'He said: "Place me (in authority) over the treasures of the land. Surely I am a good keeper, knowing well."' (*Yusuf*: 55). Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* praised himself and clearly stated the reason why the king should appoint him in this position. Allah says: "... Surely, I am a good keeper, knowing well." (*Yusuf*: 55) The task required honesty and knowledge; there was no room for error.

Therefore, there are two conditions for self-praise to be allowed. First, it has to be based on true reasons. Second, it has to have a purpose so that the one who praised you does so for the right reason. This is why Allah says: '...Therefore, do not attribute purity to your souls; He knows him best who guards (against evil).' (*an-Najm*: 32)

This is because when you praise and attribute purity to yourself, you should bear in mind that Allah, Who shall judge your deeds, knows your real character. It is foolish that a person would praise himself in the wrong situations and fail to do so in the right ones; self-praise is allowed when it is for the benefit of Muslims rather than a person's own interests.

Allah says: '[Prophet], have you considered those who claim purity for themselves? No! Allah purifies whomever He wills. No one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 49)

Indeed, nothing escapes the knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He*. His knowledge encompasses all things, hidden and apparent. It is possible that someone may pretend to be good for a period of time, and people would not be able to realise his true nature and may even praise him. However, when Allah praises someone, it is based on true Knowledge and Wisdom. When they praised themselves, were their good deeds cancelled? Despite the fact that these people praised themselves, Allah will not praise them; their good deeds shall be cancelled, but they will not be wronged. '...No one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 49) This is the ultimate justice.

We know that the Quran was revealed in the Arabic language, communicated to an Arab Messenger of Allah and that the first ones who believed in it were Arabs. We also know that most of its meanings were in harmony with the environment into which it was revealed. Arabs believed palm trees to be the best of all trees because of their abundant benefits.

'Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that one day Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Amongst the trees, there is a tree, the leaves of which do not fall and is like a Muslim. Tell me the name of that tree.' Everybody started thinking about the trees of the desert areas. And I ('Abdullah ibn 'Umar) thought of the date palm tree but felt shy to answer. Then, the others asked, 'What is that tree, O, Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'It is the date palm tree.'⁽¹⁾

Palm trees have many benefits. In fact, the benefits of a palm tree are present in all of its parts and under all conditions. Since it grows until it dries, it is eaten, then all of its parts are used: its seeds are given to animals, its fibre is used in for making ropes, besides other benefits. The fibre that grows around the palm tree is used to make sweepers, washing-brushes and sometimes chairs. The Quran uses examples and references suitable for the Arabian environment then continues to illustrate and express abstract meanings perfectly. Allah says: '... no one will be wronged by as much as the husk of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 49) The Quran mentions three parts of dates; *Al-fatil* is the Arabic word translated as 'husk of a date stone.' The nucleus of dates is characterised by the three hidden small parts: The first one is known as (*Al-fatil*) which is in the long slit of a date-stone, the second one is (*Al-naqir*) which is a speck on the back of a date-stone and the last one is (*Al-qitmir*) which is the thin membrane over the date-stone. Allah says: '...Do they have any share of what He possesses? If they did, they would not give away so much as the groove of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 53).

Allah also gives examples of the heavens like the crescent. He says about the small crescent: '...And (as for) the moon, We have ordained for it stages till it becomes again as an old dry palm branch.' (*Ya Sin*: 39) Date palms have branches, along with stalks that support these branches. The date stalk is upright and

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

straight when young, but as it grows older, it bends. Allah likens the crescent in the sky to a tangible thing on earth: '...as an old dry palm branch...' (*Ya Sin*: 39). Arabs used to use many metaphors derived from their environment that not all people might have noticed. For instance, an Arab poet said:

The light of a small moon I was observing vanished,
As if it was my clipped fingernail that I cut.

Thus, Allah illustrates abstract ideas by referring to material examples from the environment to make the meaning both more meaningful and more accessible. When you eat a date, you do not notice *Al-fatil* which indicates that it is a negligible thing. The same holds true for *an-naqir* and *Al-qitmir*.

Therefore, our Lord adduces examples from the seed of the date; in a different context, He cites examples from palm trees and their life cycle to make another meaning clearer and more meaningful to us: '... and none shall be wronged as much as the husk of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 49) Then, Allah says:

أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَكَفَىٰ إِثْمًا مُّبِينًا ﴿٥٠﴾

**See how they invent lies about God, this in itself is
a flagrant sin! [50] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 50)**

The command 'see' in the verse is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well as to his followers. We explained previously that Jews praised themselves and deliberately lied when they said, 'We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 18) And 'None shall enter the garden (or paradise) except he who is a Jew or a Christian.' (*al-Baqara*: 111)

The verse says: 'See how they invent lies about Allah. This in itself is a flagrant sin!' (*an-Nisa'*: 50) The sin is described as 'flagrant' because a person may lie to another person, and the person may believe it; however, lying to Allah is utter impudence! This is why Allah says: '...This in itself is a flagrant sin!' (*an-Nisa'*: 50)

Lying in general is a sin, but lying to Allah is a flagrant sin; and it does not avail the person in the slightest. The following verse says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ
وَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَتُّولَاءَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الْإِذِينَ ءَامَنُوا سَبِيلًا ﴿٥١﴾

Do you not see how those given a share of the Scripture, [evidently] now believe in idols and evil powers? They say of the disbelievers, ‘They are more rightly guided than the believers’ [51] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 51)

The verse explains that they were given the Scripture which indicates a connection to the heavens, the Messengers of Allah and the divine Books revealed to the messengers who were commissioned to relay the divinely revealed way of life to mankind. If they did not have such a connection, their claim would have been plausible due to the absence of the Divine Revelation for a while. However, they were given Scripture, and one of the fundamental functions of Heavenly Books is to connect the Creator with His creation. This bond between the creation and Creator fosters the aptitudes and abilities of the created beings because without this bond they are without the means and needed help for matters over which one has no control. If one does not have a God, to whom he can resort when he exhausts all available means, he will collapse and may even commit suicide! On the other hand, a believer cares less about causes since he is bonded with the Creator of causes.

The belief in Allah gives person strength and provides a firm basis for a believer so that no matter how much he fails to control the different factors in his life, he remembers the Creator of all factors and causes. When one remembers the Creator of all the causes, he will find the horizons expand before him. People who commit suicide have been lost in their sufferings. A believer, on the other hand, turns to Allah during harsh times, and He, thus, grants him relief.

When a person turns to the Creator of all causes at the time he loses control over the worldly causes, he relishes the strength of belief from an unexpected source. Once one invokes his Lord, he will find tranquillity because you he has connected his existence to his creator. He has control over some aspects of his existence and does not have control over others. The person's body will testify against him on the Day of Judgment. A person's legs, skin and all other faculties will testify against him since he has control over them in the worldly

life, and they were subservient to his will. I may tell my hand to do something, and my leg to do something, and my tongue to offend this person. Allah has subdued all faculties to a person's will in the worldly life. However, on the Day of Judgment, they will testify against him. Allah says: 'And they shall say to their skin, 'Why have you borne witness against us?' They shall say, 'Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak, and He created you at first, and to Him you shall be brought back.' (*Fussilat*: 21)

Our faculties will tell us on the Day of Judgment, 'You had control over us in the worldly life and forced us to do things we hated. Now we shall testify against you.' The faculties disclose their secrets because on the Day of Judgment all sovereignty belongs to Allah, the One, the Prevailing. He says: 'To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).'

 (*Ghafir*: 16)

The Scripture is the first bond between the Creator and created beings. When a created being is bonded to His Creator, he will face every event in his life confidently, and Allah will endow him with happiness and joy. We have to reflect on the creed-related scenarios when we read the Quran. For instance, we know that when Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* tried to save the Israelites from the Pharaoh and flee out of Egypt, the Pharaoh and his soldiers found out and pursued them. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his followers reached the sea. The enemy was behind them, and the sea before them. The followers of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* evaluated the situation based on worldly criterion. Allah says: 'So, when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Musa (Moses) cried out, "Most surely we are being overtaken!"' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) Can anyone question this statement? No, it seemed to be the plain truth for such a situation. Why did Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* remark differently? Allah says: 'He said, "By no means. Surely, my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out."' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) He considered his firm faith in the Creator of all causes.

Can any one question the truth of his statement? No, no one can because he did not make this statement based on worldly criterion. It was the fruit of his faith. He asserted, 'No, by no means. Surely, my Lord is with me.' Then, what did Allah say? He says: 'Strike the sea with your staff...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 63). Allah did not command Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to turn back,

but to attack them and try to defeat them. Rather, He commanded him to strike the sea with his staff! Allah assisted him with a miracle beyond human abilities to teach us that He can cause action and its opposite, and none of the creation is capable of that. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* knew the liquid nature of water, but obeyed his Lord and struck the sea with his staff. The verse continues: 'Thereupon it parted and every part looked like a huge mound.' (*ash-Shu'ara':* 63) The mound is solid, whereas water is fluid. How could water become a mound? When Allah commanded Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to strike the sea with his staff, He wanted him to utilise the available means so that he would be reassured from a human standpoint. Allah says: 'And leave the sea intervening. Surely they are a host that who shall be drowned.' (*ad-Dukhan:* 24) Allah commanded him to leave the sea while it was still because He intended to drown and destroy them with the very means He used to save Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his followers.

Back to our main verse; Allah says: 'Do you not see how those given a share of the Scripture [evidently] now believe in idols and evil powers? They say of the disbelievers, "They are more rightly guided than the believers."' (*an-Nisa':* 51)

After the battle of Uhud, Huyayy ibn Akhtab, Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf, Ibn Abu Al-Haqiq and Abu Rafi', who were the chief leaders of the Jews at that time, took seventy other Jews, and went to the people of Mecca and violated the covenant they had forged with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Their leader Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf went to Abu Sufyan and said to him, 'We want to make an agreement to stand against Muhammad.' Abu Sufyan said, 'You are among the People of the Book and you have your scripture. You believe in God, and a Prophet of Allah had been sent to you, but we experienced none of that. Muhammad says that he is a Messenger of Allah, communicating a Divine Message and Scripture. You are connected. How could we not be sure that you are siding by him and trying to trick us! We do not trust you unless you come before our deities, practise our rituals and prostrate yourselves before them.'

Al-Jibt and *At-Taghut*, translated as idols and false gods respectively, were two idols of Quraysh. The Jews who had the Torah and had been granted a share of the Book went to them in submission. Furthermore, *Al-Jibt* is everyone

who preaches for a god other than Allah, whether he is a devil, a priest or a magician. *At-Taghut* refers to everyone who transgresses; in Arabic language, it is an intensive form in such a degree that the one who is so described is not just a transgressor, but a tyrant as well. The more you unrightfully obey *At-Taghut*, the more cruel and oppressive he becomes. Whether *Al-Jibt* and *At-Taghut* were two idols or two deities worshipped by people or not, we should learn that a delegation of Jews prostrated before them so that the Quraysh would believe that they were doing so to antagonise Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.


In this regard, Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf asked Abu Sufyan, 'For what do you blame Muhammad?' He answered, 'He abandoned the religion of his ancestors, cut off the ties of kinship and fled to Medina. And we follow quite an opposite path. We provide pilgrims with water, serve our guests generously, set captives free, uphold the ties of kinship, tend to the Sacred Mosque and perform the *Tawaf* (walking around the *Ka'ba*).' Abu Sufyan continued to exalt the deeds of the Quraysh. Driven by their enmity to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* those who were granted a share of the Book said to Abu Sufyan and his people, 'You are more righteous and more rightly guided than Muhammad.'

Our Lord *Glorified is He* explains this point to this effect: O, Muhammad, be leery of their inconsistent and contradictory acts. Despite that they were granted a share of the Book, their enmity to you, their opposition to your religion and the light that you have brought forth has made them forget this share of the Book and believe in *Al-Jibt* and *At-Taghut* (idols and false gods). It is those same people who, in the past, used to tell Arab nomads, 'There will come a prophet, and we will follow him. We together will kill you just like the people of 'Ad and the City of Iram.' Astonishingly enough, they tended to believe in idols and false gods. Hence, do such people really maintain true religion and faith?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* intends to comfort and assure Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they have been deprived from the Support of Heaven (Allah's Help). Thus, if he experiences a conflict or disagreement with them, he should be reassured that Allah *Glorified is He* has

rejected them since they have renounced the share of the Book they have been granted. So, he should not even think that they truly belong to the Book.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* further assures His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *Glorified is He* has given up on these people, saying to the effect that He will surely support him (Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*). Therefore, he must not be deceived by their possessions, wealth or knowledge. All of these things will eventually vanish. They no longer enjoy their high status as they have been separated from Heaven. Their association of partners with Allah *Glorified is He* has controlled and misguided them. They have thus antagonised the prophet and joined the side of the infidels against whom they used to beseech Allah *Glorified is He* for victory with the coming of Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* Message. They have sacrificed all this to follow their own desires and abandoned their faith. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* then says:


 أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ يَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا

**Those are the ones God has rejected: you
[Prophet] will not find anyone to help those God
has rejected [52] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 52)**

The word *ulaa'ika* is an Arabic demonstrative pronoun translated in this verse as 'those', and it is composed of *ulaa*, which is used in the plural form and the letter *kaf*, which is another pronoun intended to address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We, Muslims, are included in this pronoun originally related to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, 'those' refers to the people who have been granted a share of the Book and, nevertheless, have believed in idols and false gods along with saying to infidels that they are more righteous and better guided than those who believe. Alternatively, 'those' may refer to Jews and those who associate partners with Allah, or it could be taken as a reference to all of them in this verse: 'Those are the ones Allah [God] has rejected...' (*an-Nisa*: 52). Rejection can take the form of 'driving out', 'shaming' or 'destroying.'

But how does Allah *Glorified is He* disgrace and demean infidels? This is evident when you see that nowadays Islam spreads more and more in the

world, while they (infidels) are losing both momentum and land. 'Do they [who deny the Truth] not see how We come to [their] land and shrink its borders?...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41)

'Those are the ones Allah [God] has rejected...' (*an-Nisa'*: 52). Thus, the one who rejects is Allah. When the one who rejects is equal to the one who is rejected, the latter may find someone else to help him mitigate the effects of this rejection. But when the one who rejects is Allah *Glorified is He*, the one who is rejected will never find anyone who can support him. And '...he whom Allah rejects...' (*an-Nisa'*: 52) means that the one whom our Lord *Glorified is He* drives away, '...never will you [Muhammad] find for him a helper.' (*an-Nisa'*: 52) Since the True Lord *Glorified is He* has driven him away, He will make everyone abandon him for whatever reasons so that no one would support him: 'Those are the ones Allah [God] has rejected, and he whom Allah rejects never will you [Muhammad] find for him a helper.' (*an-Nisa'*: 52) Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُلْكِ فَإِذَا لَا يُؤْتُونَ النَّاسَ نَقِيرًا ﴿٥٣﴾

Do they have any share of what He possesses? If they did they would not give away so much as the groove of a date stone [53] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 53)

What is the meaning of this verse: 'Do they have any share of what He possesses? If they did, they would not give away so much as the groove of a date stone.'? (*an-Nisa'*: 53)

Allah describes these people as being extremely stingy. This means that they in fact do not possess the world, and nor do they possess what Allah *Glorified is He* has. Dominion, in reality, belongs solely to Allah *Glorified is He*; He gives it to whomever He wills and removes it from whomever He wills. However, if they were granted the possessions of the world and the Dominion of Allah *Glorified is He* they would keep it to themselves and share it with no one. Allah *Glorified is He* elucidates this when He says in the following verse: 'Say [to the disbelievers], "If you possessed the very stores of my Lord's Bounty, you would hold them back for fear of spending. Man is ever stingy.'" (*al-Isra'*: 100) They are addressed in this verse to the effect that they are so

afraid of spending lest their wealth would decrease. If they thus take possession of the stores of our Lord *Glorified is He* they will believe that when they give away some of them to others, they will diminish. What I want to say here is that these people, whether they are the infidels of the Quraysh or the chiefs of the Jews, were most keen to maintain their status and safeguard their fortunes, while Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to treat all people on equal terms. So, who would be grieved and disappointed due to the coming of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*? Certainly, it is those who used to have mastery over others since they did not want people to be equal. Furthermore, they did no good to their followers through their mastery. If they had possession of fortunes and dominion, they would not have given people the groove of a date stone as man, by nature, does not give up tyranny since this tyranny is the source of his mastery and ascendancy over others. As long as he enjoys this high status and has authority over others, man will not pay attention to the essence of faith. It is not enough to enjoy prosperity and authority for some time; more importantly, they must maintain this prosperity and authority all the time. One can attain the pleasures of life as long as he lives in this world, but he is destined to live for only a certain period of time. Moreover, the whole life will come to end. Hence, the true prosperity and bliss exists in the Afterlife: 'Neither failing, nor forbidden' (*al-Waqi'a*: 33). They are further addressed, 'While you are keen to preserve this dominion, fortunes and social distinction, are you prepared to give others some of your pleasures and bounty so that you would have an excuse for your desire to retain wealth and status?' Why do they then want our Lord *Glorified is He* to continue conferring His Bounty upon them even though they are so stingy? Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* will never grant such a bounty to them forever.

In this context, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says in the chapter of *al-Fajr*: [The nature of] man is that, when his Lord tries him through honour and blessings, he says, "My Lord has honoured me", but when He tries him through the restriction of his provisions, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me.' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16)

Thus, the one who enjoys Allah's Blessings says, 'My Lord has honoured me', while the one who has not been endowed with any of Allah's Blessings says, 'My Lord has humiliated me.' The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted*

comments on the two cases by saying: 'No, indeed!' (*al-Fajr*: 17) This means that both parties are liars. The former is a liar because he says that the blessings given to him by Allah is proof of his being honoured, while the latter is a liar too because he says that his denial of blessings by Allah *Glorified is He* is an indication of his being disgraced. This is a totally false and groundless conception. Allah's Bestowal of fortune to His slaves is not a sign of honouring or disgracing. Regarding this, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'No, indeed! You [people] do not honour orphans.' (*al-Fajr*: 17) This means that you are in possession of wealth, but you are not generous towards orphans. This money will thus be evidence against you. It is not an issue of honour to you; rather, Allah will punish you for not using your money for good deeds. He *the Glorified and Exalted* adds: 'You do not urge one another to feed the poor.' (*al-Fajr*: 18)

How would fortune then be deemed as a sign of honouring, while it would bring you disaster? No; possession of such fortune, in this sense, is much better. When man has wealth and does not donate a part of it to the weak and the needy as decreed by Allah, this fortune becomes evil and a plague. In this regard, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...Whatever they meanly withhold will be hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 180).

If you greedily withhold what Allah has given you, your neck will be encircled with what you withhold on Doomsday. Hence, when the chains are tightly encircled around your neck, you will wish that you had not been stingy so as to stop the punishment. The True Lord *Glorified is He* in effect, puts forth the following questions in this verse: 'Why do they align themselves with the camp of infidelity and abandon a portion of the Book they have been granted? Why do they go to infidels and say, "You are better guided and more righteous than Muhammad", even though they know well through their portion of the Book that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is truly the Messenger of Allah?

They were protecting their dominion in the same manner as the camp of infidels. We may learn that Jews in Medina were forming an affluent community, and they mainly depended on usury for their livelihood. They possessed castles and farms and possessed a vast amount of knowledge. They thus enjoyed all

facets of mastery. However, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by Allah, all the pillars of dominion and mastery were shaken; so, they were grieved and disappointed. Similarly, the infidels of Quraysh were the masters of the entire Arabian Peninsula. People of all tribes did not dare attack any of their trade caravans lest they would be punished by the Quraysh when they went to their land during the season of *Hajj* (pilgrimage). Hence, the Quraysh were used to this immense glory they experienced from being hosts of the Sacred House (*Al-Ka'ba*); this is the same house that Allah protected and caused defeat to all of those who tried to harm it by destroying their malicious plans. Regarding this, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* tells us: 'Do you [Muhammad] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant? Did He not utterly confound their plans? He sent ranks of birds against them, pelting them with pellets of hard-baked clay. He made them [like] cropped stubble.' (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

The following verses explain why Allah destroyed that army. He *the Glorified and Exalted* says: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys...' (*Quraysh*: 1-2). Had not Allah *Glorified is He* consecrated this House for people to worship Him, it would not have had any importance. Moreover, the Quraysh would not have had any power, and nor would they have been able to secure its winter and summer trade journeys. So, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'So, let them worship the Lord of this House...' (*Quraysh*: 3).

Allah is the One Who granted them mastery and power. He is the One Who provides as stated in the following verse: 'Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.' (*Quraysh*: 4) Allah *Glorified is He* is also the One Who endowed them with the fruits of different plants and saved them from danger when their trade caravans went on journeys whether they were bound north or south.

'Do they have any share of what He possesses?...?' (*an-Nisa'*: 53) If they had this share, then 'they would not give people even the groove of a date stone.' That is to say that they would not give people even a tiny bit of what they own. Then, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says:

أَمْ يَحْسُدُونَ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ فَقَدْ آتَيْنَا
 آلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَآتَيْنَاهُمْ مُلْكًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٥٤﴾

Do they envy [other] people for the bounty God has granted them? We gave the descendants of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom, and We gave them a great kingdom [54] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 54)

Envy in this verse is directed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since our Lord *Glorified is He* had chosen him for His Message. Some people at the time of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did likewise and said, as narrated by the Quran: 'Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man from either of the two cities? [Mecca and Ta'if]' (*az-Zukhruf*:31)

Thus, the Quran was acceptable from their perspective, but what grieved them was that it had been revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We can say that these people are quite ignorant. They are very similar to those who once said, as related by the Quran: '... "Allah [God], if this really is the Truth from You, then rain stones on us from the heavens"...' (*al-Anfal*: 32).

They wished to die, being killed by stones raining hard from the sky since they did not want to follow the Truth. This is complete idiocy and ignorance based on unfounded bigotry. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* giving them the following response: 'Are they the ones who share out your Lord's Grace? We are the Ones Who give them their share of livelihood...' (*az-Zukhruf*:32) .

Allah asserts that He chooses to bestow His Grace on whomever He wills. Why then do they envy others? They envy people because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come for their guidance. Had they fairly and justly received what Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought forth, they would have found that his teachings aim to help man achieve happiness and that whoever follows them will lead a good life. Those who had been given knowledge of the Book by Allah *Glorified is He* were supposed to foretell the good news about the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. What had been revealed to them made it incumbent for them to be the first to believe in him, but they did not. Rather, they denied the Truth and barred others from his path, siding with the infidel idolaters and claiming that

they were more righteous and better guided than Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* confers special privileges upon some of His creatures, He intends the fruits of these special privileges to benefit other created beings. We know that every created being has certain unique talents. If every created being shares his talents with others, they will treat him on equal footing. Thus, they exchange talents for the interest of all.

These people were granted a share of knowledge by Allah, but they kept it for themselves, refusing to benefit others. This might have been acceptable if this knowledge had pertained only to their own lives, but it was associated with their relationship with Allah *Glorified is He*. That is to say that they represent the people of the Book who know quite well the Path of Allah and are well acquainted with the procession of His Messengers. The True Lord *Glorified is He* in effect, intends to tell them these words, 'You have been granted a share of the Book, but you have not behaved in a good way reflecting this share. Furthermore, if you were in possession of My Dominion, you would not duly care for it, nor would you give anyone the tiniest part of it, even if it were the groove of a date stone.' Therefore, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'Do they have any share of what He possesses? If they did, they would not give away so much as the groove of a date stone.' (*an-Nisa'*: 53)

Thus, they are not open-handed either concerning morals and values or material objects. Since they are too stingy to transfer their values to others, it is only common sense for them to be so stingy as far as material things are concerned. Hence, they have become devoid of any goodness.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* in effect, further explains this point, 'Since these people have been given a share of the Book that enables them to recognise the attributes of the coming Messenger (Muhammad) who is the seal of the prophets, what has then precluded them from believing in and supporting him? Undoubtedly, it is envy that has pushed them to do so even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come to confirm what they have been given. They have certainly envied Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Envy always comes from an unkind heart that is not pleased with the shares given by Allah *Glorified is He* to His slaves. Envy, as

said, means to wish that a bounty given to someone would vanish. The opposite of envy is the desire to be given the same bounty that was granted to someone so that both of you can enjoy the same bounty. If you want a similar bounty from Allah *Glorified is He* you have to ask Him. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'What you have is bound to come to an end, whereas what Allah [God] has is everlasting...' (*an-Nahl*: 96)

So, people must not envy the bounties of others that Allah has given them. However, some people may envy and bear a grudge against others since rich people give them some of whatever they have. These enviers behave this way since they want to have the endowments of the rich people exclusively for themselves. If you have much money and you give some of it to people in need, others, who want to be the only recipients of your endowments and charity, may tell you, 'You are decreasing your fortune by giving these people a portion of it since what you have is ultimately limited. In contrast, the Bounty and Grace of the One Who grants all creatures is infinite and everlasting. He can thus give to you and others without His possessions decreasing.

Thus, a believer can wish to be granted with a bounty similar to one given to others without wishing them any harm or loss since he knows that Allah's Gifts are not restricted to certain people. If Allah *Glorified is He* gives everyone what he asks for, this will not decrease what He possesses even as much as what decreases an ocean when a needle is dipped into it. Regarding this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrates in a Qudsi Hadith that Allah *Glorified and Exalted* says: '...O, My servants, even if the first among you and the last among you and the whole human race of yours and that of jinn all stand in one plain ground and you were to ask Me and I confer upon every person what he asks for, it will not, in any way, cause any loss to Me (even less) than that which is caused to an ocean by dipping a needle in it...' ⁽¹⁾

'Do they envy [other] people for the bounty [prophethood given to Muhammad] Allah [God] has granted them?' (*an-Nisa'*: 54) Envy as we have learnt means wishing that a bounty given to someone comes to an end and vanishes. This wishing means that you hate that someone be granted with a blessing. You would

(1) Related by Muslim in the section of the proscription of injustice. It is also related by Ahmad

hate that someone else be granted with a blessing when you are rebellious against the One Who confers such a blessing upon this person.

The main error the envious person commits is to reject the fate ordained by Allah *Glorified is He* for His creatures. Then, he has got a heart burning with grudges, even before doing any harm to the envied person. For this reason, it is said that envy is the sin or crime whose punishment comes first, whereas punishments usually follow other crimes. Before the envious person embarks on envying others, he receives the punishment since his heart burns with spite and grudges. Someone may wonder what the fault is of the one who is envied. We may answer that by saying that Allah *Glorified is He* plagues some people with diseases that may harm others; envy harms people's health and fortune. Similarly, what is the fault or sin of a murdered person when the murderer points his gun at him and kills him? The gun, for instance, could be considered a gift given to man so as to defend himself and not to be used for aggression.

Suppose that Allah *Glorified is He* has created in man something that makes him hate the blessings granted to others. Why does man not say the following relieving words whenever he sees a person enjoy good things, 'This is Allah's Will. There is no power but with Allah' (*al-Kahf*: 39). Thus, if you combine the gifts granted to other people with such words, you will safeguard your heart from envy and spite. Once you utter this phrase when seeing the blessings gifted to some people, you immediately recall that those people have not granted these blessings to themselves, but it is our Lord *Glorified is He* Who has conferred such blessings upon them. Allah *Glorified is He* is capable of giving whatever bounty He wills. Envying others could be practised by some people, but the one who feels envy in his heart and wants to eliminate it must feel certain that Allah *Glorified is He* controls everything. Once this person is convinced that Allah *Glorified is He* controls everything, he protects himself from being an envier and protects the bounty given to others as well. In this context, the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'and from the evil of the envier when he envies.' (*al-Falaq*: 5)

Thus, it is possible that the heart of anyone of us may bear a grudge against someone else due to the blessings he enjoys. This may accordingly cause envy. Therefore, every one of us must keep himself away from grudges

and protect his heart from succumbing to the temptation of envy. We may come to realise that envy causes a chemical change in the structure of man. This chemical change is behind man's suffering. One may think that such chemical tensions caused by jealousy regarding others' possessions could result in reactions that might release radiation striking the envied person and killing him. (This hypothesis is a mere attempt to understand this verse): 'And from the evil of the envier when he envies.' (*al-Falaq*: 5)

Though you may ask Allah to protect you from the harm of an envier, you may ultimately be hurt. Your supplication to Allah *Glorified is He* to safeguard you from this man's evil means that it has already hurt you. In such a case, you must voice the following words which are again a part of a verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara*: 'We belong to Allah and unto Him we shall return.' (*al-Baqara*: 156) You must be assured that it is intended for your good. Thus, if envy causes harm to a blessing you possess, be certain that there is something good in this calamity. Furthermore, if an envious person harms you regarding a gift given to you by Allah *Glorified is He* know then for certain that the real harm that may befall you is to be deprived from Allah's Reward in event that you suffer depression at the loss of such a gift. Hence, when someone is stricken with a misfortune, he should say, 'We belong to Allah, and unto Him we shall return. O, Allah, you are my Lord and you intend to grant me good things since you have created me to lead a good life. However, sometimes I cannot comprehend the goodness in everything happening to me.'

If a Muslim deals with this situation like this, Allah afterwards demonstrates to him that such a misfortune would turn to be in his interest. For instance, this misfortune may be the death of one of his children. In this case, he may in effect say, 'I know nothing about the unseen. Could it have been possible that the child who has passed away was going to lure me into losing my faith, stealing or accepting a personal bribe? It may have been that Allah *Glorified is He* has taken him away from me and protected me from such an evil. Instead, the misfortune may be the removal of a blessing such as wealth or power, etc. 'in which case, the inflicted Muslim may say, 'Such a blessing could have caused me to be a wrongdoer, a transgressor or a tyrant. My Lord says to me that if I were to fall sick, I might be more modest.' Accordingly, the one who suffers a

calamity must expect good things and put his trust in Allah *Glorified is He* by saying, and something good must come from this calamity.' However, someone may say that we should always recite these verses: 'Say, I seek refuge in the Lord of the dawn, from the evil of that which He has created, and from the evil of darkness when it overspreads, and from the evil of those who blow upon the knots of mutual relationships to undo them, and from the evil of the envier when he envies.' (*al-Falaq*: 1-5)

Why then does Allah not protect us from the evil of enviers who continue to harm us with their envy? We may respond to such a question by saying that you did not understand the meaning of this verse: 'and from the evil of the envier when he envies.' (*al-Falaq*: 5). You think it means that the envy of the jealous person will not harm you if you repeat this verse. No, this is not the case since his envy may still harm you, but you have to know that Allah has decreed such harm for a certain purpose. You must accordingly say, 'My Lord, you have ordained that this misfortune to happen to me since you intend to grant me a good thing.' If you treat the situation this way, then you will definitely be protected from evils.

Nowadays, in our world, we see that the more humanity progresses in knowledge and science, the more Allah reveals to us His signs in the universe, and the more He uncovers to us the secrets of existence which provide us with many explanations. For instance, consider those who manufacture weapons of mass destruction. We may know that the smaller and subtler weapons are, even to the extent of becoming invisible, the more violent and destructive they tend to be. Modern weapons are extensively different from older ones. During earlier times, man used to use stones to hit his enemies, and then guns until we reached the stage of the atomic bomb which is much more destructive than all of the old weapons combined and whose tiniest part that may equal a pin head, could easily kill anyone. We also see that most of the new weapons function by means of radiation which does not have mass, but it has radiopacity. We may hear physicians saying that they perform operations via radiation, without spilling a drop of blood. A good example of this is the use of laser rays. Therefore, the subtler the tool is, the more effective it tends to be.

The following example illustrates the following point. Suppose you want to build a palace in the wilderness, and a friend passed by you and asked,

'Why have you not made iron bars for the windows of the first floor?' You may reply, 'Why should I do so?' He may then answer: 'Because there are wolves and lions in the area. So you should use iron bars to keep them out.' Afterwards, another friend may pass by and say: 'The spaces between the iron bars are too wide, and there are many snakes around here.' In which case, you may narrow the spaces between the bars. A third visitor may pass by and say: 'There are many gnats that bite and carry microbes.' Hearing this, you may place screens in front of the windows.

Thus, we see that the subtler the enemy is, the more destructive it tends to be, and the more cautious you need to be. We may realise that since microbes are minute and cannot be seen by the naked eye, they are capable of destroying people. If these organisms had been larger, it may have been easier for man to protect himself against them. However, when they reach this level of minuteness, man fails to protect himself from them. The most lethal microbes are the ones that are too minute to be identified. Physicians sometimes admit that they know nothing about the viruses that cause certain diseases; this means that these viruses are too minute to be examined by microscopes. Why should then we rule out the possibility that there may be a speck of a microbe coming from an envious person who is jealous of anyone enjoying bounties granted by Allah. Their envy may be like laser beams that destroy whatever they hit. Why can we not assume that this may happen? We do the same thing nowadays when we focus laser rays on anything we target since we are well aware that laser beams are among the most destructive weapons of our time. So, why cannot we believe that chemical reactions agitated in an envier's heart could result in radiation that might hit the envied person and destroy him? We can say that radiation is a blessing that must be used for doing good things instead of using it to harm others. We may cite a similar example of someone who owns some money, but he becomes green with envy and holds grudges towards his opponents. Therefore, he may buy a pistol or a gun to kill one or some of them. He thus converts this thing which is a blessing into a tool of revenge. Such acts result from the agitation of the various instincts that control man's reactions.

Then, what kept Jews from believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even though he came confirming what they had been given by Allah *Glorified is He*? There is no doubt that they envied him for

having such a bounty and looked at the Grace of delivering the Message of Allah *Glorified is He* as a privilege granted to the Messengers of Allah *peace be upon them*. Is this true? It is truly a privilege for the Messengers of Allah *peace be upon them* but it is at the same time a burdensome mission. People of all nations leave fortunes for their children as legacies, whereas prophets are not allowed to leave any possessions for their children (as they spend all of them for the Cause of Allah).

The prophets *peace be upon them*, were not sent by Allah *Glorified is He* to obtain social distinction or to be arrogant. Rather, they were given troublesome assignments. Jews wrongly viewed the power of religion given to them by Allah and used it as a tool for luxury and arrogance. What was their reaction when a messenger came to teach and guide them to the straight path? They grieved and felt disappointed because they had established for themselves a temporal authority and had not adhered to values. They were only interested in having authority and power. Thus, when a Messenger of God came to relieve them of this power, they said that they would not follow him. They envied Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for delivering the Message of Allah *Glorified is He* believing that it was a privilege and a source of power granted to him. Why did they then envy Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whereas Allah *Glorified is He* had given dominion and control to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), Prophet Dawud (David), Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) and Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon them*? Why did they also feel envious solely due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* intended to honour the other branch of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) posterity, namely, Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* with prophethood?

Allah honoured the first branch that descended from Ishaq (Isaac) who was the father of Ya'qub (Jacob) who was the father of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon them*. Afterwards, Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* followed in the same lineage. All these descendants of Ishaq *peace be upon him* were honoured with prophethood. Why were they grieved and disappointed just because Allah *Glorified is He* honoured the second branch of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) posterity, namely Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* and sent Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a messenger?

Why did they not admit that Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* and his descendants came from the posterity of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*? Why did they further deem the Message and prophethood a privilege? Why did they not take into consideration how difficult and burdensome this task is for any of the Messengers of Allah *peace be upon them*? A messenger and his family must always be positive role models for the entire community. None of the members of a messenger's family gains benefits from such a mission. To further this point, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'We, prophets, bequeath nothing (to our offspring).'⁽¹⁾

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* barred his family from taking *zakat* (alms) from others. Furthermore, he says: '*Sadqa* (mandatory charity) is not lawful for the family of Muhammad. These charities are but the impurities of people (which they wash off themselves).'⁽²⁾ We thus see that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not work for the benefit of himself or his children.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says: 'We gave the descendants of Ibrahim [Abraham] the Book and wisdom, and We gave them a great kingdom.' (*an-Nisa'*: 54) *Al-Kitab* is translated to mean 'the Book' which is the Religion sent down from Heaven by Allah *Glorified is He*. *Al-Hikma* is translated to mean 'wisdom' which is the sayings voiced by a messenger that are intended to explain the Religion of Allah *Glorified is He*. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon them a mighty dominion. Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was in charge of the storehouses of Egypt and became the nation's governor. Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them*, were granted dominion in addition to prophethood. Therefore, there is dominion, and there is prophethood. Our Lord *Glorified is He* has granted Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only prophethood, and not dominion. So, why did they envy him? Furthermore, what was their stance towards their prophets whom Allah *Glorified is He* granted both prophethood and dominion? The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* answers this question by saying:

(1) Related by Ahmad

(2) Related by Muslim

فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ ءَامَنَ بِهِۦ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ صَدَّ عَنْهُۥ وَكَفَىٰ بِجَهَنَّمَ سَعِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

**but some of them believed in it and some turned
away from it. Hell blazes fiercely enough [55]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 55)**

If we consider Allah's Words: 'But some of them believed in it (or him)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 55), we find that the pronoun 'it' in this verse may refer to the belief in the principles of the religions of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and the messengers who followed him, whom Allah *Glorified is He* granted prophethood and kingdoms. 'Some of them' means that some of the people of the Book believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as referred to by the pronoun 'him' in this verse like 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Ka'b Al-Ahbaar *Allah be pleased with them* for instance. 'And some turned away from it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 55) means that among them are those who disbelieved in the Path of Allah *Glorified is He*. As a result, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says afterwards: 'Hell blazes fiercely enough.' (*an-Nisa'*: 55) This means that the result of turning away from the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* is the blazing and burning fire as a punishment for what they have done.

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* shows us the procession of messengers He sent to people at intervals, He reminds people of His Guidance. This Guidance is indeed the main core of the mission of Adam *peace be upon him* and his posterity as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Whoever follows My Guidance, when it comes to you [people], will not go astray nor fall into misery.' (*Ta Ha*: 123)

Adam *peace be upon him* conveyed his knowledge about life, about the Truth and about the Guidance of Allah to his offspring. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed that sometimes His human creatures would be oblivious to his Guidance. The Guidance of Allah *Glorified is He* always disagrees with the absurd and transient desires of the human self. Yet, if you consider the reality of the Divine Guidance, you will realise that it allows man to satiate his desires but in a decent and exalted way. Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates this point when he says: '...They (the helpers in Medina) give them (the emigrants from Mecca) preference over themselves, even if they too are poor....' (*al-Hashr*: 9)

Everyone possesses a set of things that he needs. However, he may find a fellow believer who desperately needs some of these things. So, does he give preference over himself? Does he want him to be better than himself? No, he would rather give these small worldly things that have a short duration in this life so that he may be rewarded by Allah in the everlasting hereafter. In such a manner, this person satisfies his desire in an exalted way. Another example is the one who is ordered by Allah, *Glorified is He* to avert his eyes from what is unlawful. Apparently, it seems that a man's desire is suppressed, but in fact, man is prevented from having *haram* (impermissible) desires in this mortal life to be compensated by *halal* (permissible) desires in the everlasting hereafter. Then, which of these two is fond of beauty: the one who examines a beautiful woman's body with his eyes while she is walking or the one who turns his eyes away from her? The one who really appreciates beauty is the one who keeps his eyes away from women who are *haram* (impermissible) to him.

Religion only opposes the inclinations of the foolish self that craves and covets the immediate, passing desires even if they were trivial. Rather, religion encourages man to work for what follows worldly life, i.e. the Afterlife since it lasts forever and never perishes. As for worldly desires, you bear in mind that you either miss them by death or forcibly lose them in your lifetime. In the life to come, this will never happen.

Righteous people know quite well how to avail themselves of such an opportunity, while others are foolish enough to miss this offer. The True Lord *Glorified is He* explains to us that the one who indulges himself in the pursuit of instant passing pleasures is bound to regret it when he faces eternal torment in the Hereafter. This is the true failure. This world is a place of changes and inconstant factors. In this life, man is exposed to the fortunes of time; there is nothing immortal in this world because it is always in a state of great flux. As long as the world is in great flux, everything in it changes constantly. Since everything is bound to change, harm may one day befall the one who enjoys a pleasure or blessing today. Similarly, the one who is strong may become weak, whereas the one who is weak may become strong. Indeed, if the strong and the weak were to stay in the same state, no change would take place in this world.

Thus, people sometimes say to be wary of asking Allah to perfect His blessings on you. If blessings are perfected for someone in this life of great flux, this means that he may be awaiting death. The ultimate realisation of bounty is to rise to the highest point in this life, while you are still in this world of change. Will the blessings granted to man remain at the highest level forever? No, they will not. They have to decline. Therefore, do not be delighted when all your wishes are fulfilled since Allah *Glorified is He* explains that we have to think of this life as a temporary stay. People toil and suffer when they fail to determine their ultimate destination and focus on immediate goals.

It is not useful at all to grieve overly so the loss of beloved relatives and friends. Think about this matter from a logical standpoint. What is our ultimate destination? It is death and the return to our Creator *Glorified is He*. Should we be extremely sad when we return to the Creator *Glorified is He*? Rather, we should be immensely delighted since we are in this world always concerned with means and ways, whereas we will be in the Hereafter with the Creator of all means and ways. In this life, we enjoy blessings, but in the Afterlife we will be in the company of the Donor of these blessings *Glorified is He*. Then, what grieves you? You should only be grieved if you enjoy a blessing, but do not remember the Donor of this blessing *Glorified is He*. However, if you enjoy a blessing, along with remembering the Donor of this blessing *Glorified is He*, you will surely be pleased when ultimately returning to Him.

Since the ultimate purpose of human existence is to go back to the True Donor Who bestows blessings on His creation and to be in the company of His Majesty, why should anyone grieve then? It is sheer folly that some people do not treat Allah *Glorified is He* in the same way they treat each other.

Suppose that someone's goal is to travel from Aswan to Cairo. Thus, Cairo is his final destination. Afterwards, someone comes and tells him, 'We will go on foot.' Another one suggests, 'I will find some good riding animals that we may use.' A third person says, 'I will bring a car.' A fourth person suggests, 'We should travel by plane.' A fifth one says, 'Let us travel by space shuttle.' Every means of transport that gets you to your destination is thus favourable and commendable. Since our ultimate destination is to go back to the True Lord *Glorified is He*, why should we be grieved if someone amongst us dies?

You should only feel sorry and grieve for yourself. When man dies after he has lived a life obeying Allah *Glorified is He*, he will be pleased with the Presence of the True Lord Who confers bounty upon His creation. Meanwhile, you are still attached to these temporary blessings. This person would indeed laugh at you for feeling sorry for him and would say, 'Look at this oblivious, naïve man. He wants me to stay in this world of means and ways and not to go back to the Creator of all means and ways.'

We find that people who lament their beloved ones never see them in their sound dreams because the soul of the deceased person never visits the one who mourns his return to the Donor of blessings *Glorified is He*. People have to realise that the ultimate goal of existence is to live according to the means and ways created by the True Lord *Glorified is He* in this world, then to return to the True Lord in the Hereafter. Death is the vehicle that takes you from the means and ways of this life to the Creator of these means and ways. So, what is the cause of your grief then?

Allah *Glorified is He* always intends to give man all good things. Sometimes, He *Glorified is He* relieves man of the hardships of life and the sufferings that accompany success and failure. Some people may say, 'This person died when he was still young and did not fully enjoy the pleasures of life.' To such people we may say, 'Will the enjoyment of life pleasures be a good thing for him? You, man, have grown up, and you may have committed sins, while Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed to take this young person to protect him from being exposed to such a bitter experience.' Think carefully of this significant point.

Companion Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari *Allah be pleased by him* narrated that he once passed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who asked him, 'How have you found yourself when you woke up today, Harith?' Al-Harith replied, 'I have found myself a true believer.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, 'Do you know the meaning of your words? There should be evidence for such claims. What is the evidence of your being a true believer?' Al-Harith replied, 'My soul has lost interest in the pleasures of this life. Thus, I stay up most of the night (in worship) and fast for the whole day (as an act of worship too) as if I am seeing the Throne of my Lord prominent before me. I also feel as if I look at the people of paradise exchanging visits

and the people of the fire crying and suffering.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* then concluded, 'Harith, you have definitely learned the essence of faith. So, adhere to it.' He repeated this statement three times.⁽¹⁾

We should also follow the example of Companion Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once asked him, 'How are you today?' (That is to say, 'how is your faith today?') Hudhayfa replied, 'Messenger of Allah, my soul has lost interest in the pleasures of this life. Thus, gold and stone have become equal to me.' (That is to say, 'this is how I see the world now.') Hudhayfa then added, 'I feel as if the people of paradise are enjoying (their rewards) and the people of the fire being punished (because of their disbelief and sins).'

Therefore, we find that the Companion Harith *Allah be pleased with him* always remembered the image of the Hereafter. When he led his life in a good way, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'You definitely have learned the essence of Faith. So, adhere to it.'

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions various (religious) rulings, He also tells us about those who revolt and rebel against these rulings. He *Glorified is He* then reminds us of paradise and the fire. He *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا سَوْفَ نُصْلِيهِمْ نَارًا كَمَا نَضِجَتْ جُلُودُهُمْ بَدَلْنَاهُمْ
جُلُودًا غَيْرَهَا لِيَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٥٦﴾

**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
may continue to feel the pain: God is mighty and
wise [56] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*': 56)**

The Arabic verb *nuslihim* is translated in this verse as 'burn (them) in the Fire' and is derived from '*istila*', or sending to the fire. Someone may say that when man is exposed to the fire of this world, he actually burns and turns into nothing. All pain will then come to end. We should note that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says regarding this: '...When their skin has been burnt away,

(1) Related by At-Tabrani

We shall replace it with a new one so that they may continue to feel the pain...' (*an-Nisa'*: 56). Therefore, suffering and torment in the fire of the Hereafter is not like that experienced by the worldly fire because fire in our world burns for a while, and then it is over. By contrast, the fire of the Hereafter is an eternal suffering and torment that never stops. Hence, once the skin is burnt, a new one replaces it. However, is this skin identical to the original one or different from it? Consider this part of the verse once again: '...When their skin has been burnt away, We shall replace it with a new one so that they may continue to feel the pain...' (*an-Nisa'*: 56) Is the new skin identical to the first one? Yes, they are of the same kind. Let me clarify this point by saying if you have a ring and you say that you are going to make another one from this same ring. This means that the material of the two rings is the same. Then, is the torment intended for the skin and body organs? Torment and suffering is always directed towards the conscious self. The evidence is as follows: when a man suffers from a tumour with oozing pus (an abscess for instance), he may not be able to endure pain. Then, once he sleeps, he will feel no pain. However, as soon as he wakes up, pain will start anew.

Thus, pain is not felt by the body organs themselves, but by the conscious self. This is quite true since modern medicine shows us that we can anaesthetize the conscious self so that when pain may occur, man does not feel it. Hence, the abscess can be opened with a lancet, while the person undergoing the operation does not feel any pain. So, torture has nothing to do with the skin and body organs. They are only conductors of pain and suffering, whereas the receiver of torture is the conscious self. This is why skin and organs will testify against us on the Day of Judgment. On this Day, skin and body organs will testify against man and be instruments for transmitting pain and suffering. Moreover, they will take pleasure in meting out pain to sinful souls.

These are Divine Procedures. Thus, do not be amazed at what the Quran tells us. The more knowledge and science progresses, the more it guides us to the signs of Allah in the universe. Nowadays we are capable of anaesthetizing the conscious self and splitting the body with lancets, while man feels no pain. Again, we learn that pain does not pertain to an organ itself, but rather to the conscious self. Thus, all the organs are instruments that communicate torturing pain to the conscious self, and they rejoice in undertaking such a role. This is

similar to someone who has an abrasion. However, when he scratches his skin, he may bleed and be pleased with such rubbing.

Hence, this part of the verse: '...When their skin has been burnt away, We shall replace it with a new one so that they may continue to feel the pain...' (*an-Nisa*': 56) means that the skins is recurrently replaced by other skin that evolves from the same material and transmits pain and suffering to the conscious self.

'We shall send those who reject Our Revelations to the Fire. When their skin has been burnt away, We shall replace it with a new one so that they may continue to feel the pain..' (*an-Nisa*': 56). We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* revealed a Book, namely the Quran, and made it a miracle and a way of life for people to follow. This is the key attribute of Islam (as compared with other religions). The way of life in Islam is the real miracle. Before Islam, every messenger had a way of life that differed from his miracle.

For instance, the way of life preached by Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is the Torah, whereas his miracle was the staff. As for 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, his way of life is the Gospel, whereas his miracle was healing the blind and the lepers and bringing the dead back to life by Allah's Permission. Meanwhile, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is the Quran because his religion is the final word from Allah *Glorified is He* to His creation till the end of this world. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* has made the Way of Life preached by Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* his miracle too; therefore, it proves the truthfulness of the Way of Life at any given time. Thus, none of the followers of the previous messengers could say, 'The miracle of the messenger I follow is his way of life since all the miracles of the previous messengers were immense workings that came to an end as much as a burning matchstick turns into ashes.' So, some people witnessed these miracles at the time and that was it. However, a Muslim should take pride and boast that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah, that he is true and that this (the Quran) is his miracle. The miracle of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is, indeed, eternal, whereas the miracles of other messengers *peace be upon them*, who came before him were experienced by those who witnessed them. Thus, the miracle of every

messenger before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was distinct from his way of life.

We realise that The Way of Life actualised by the Quran includes (religious) rulings. Rulings mean doing some things, while not doing others. These rulings have been quite clear since Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* till the Day of the Hour arrives (Doomsday). Whoever obeys and follows these rulings will be rewarded, while those who do not will be punished. All people are equal as far as adherence to these rulings is concerned till the Day of Judgment.

As for the signs of Allah in the universe, they do not change as time moves forward. People at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have benefited if they had known these universal signs. Allah *Glorified is He* has concealed these signs in the Quran, giving only allusions here and there. The reason is that Arab minds were incapable of assimilating them at the time when the Message was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If the Quran had included, for example, a verse that explicitly states that the earth is round, rotates and revolves around the sun, what, by Allah *Glorified is He* would the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have said? Some people nowadays are questioning this fact. So, imagine the reaction of the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* if he had told them such a thing. They would have wholeheartedly disbelieved what he was preaching.

They used to benefit from the fact that the earth is round as much as a peasant or a nomad benefits from it presently. Similarly, those who have not studied electricity are now benefiting from this field through watching TV and using electric lights along with other applications without knowing the technical functioning details. Consider another example. When the sun shines over the world, water evaporates from the oceans, rivers and seas to form clouds. Then, rain falls from these clouds. All these phenomena are universal signs whose secrets have not been revealed by Allah *Glorified is He* except to the extent that human mind can comprehend them. Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* has left in his Book (the Quran) what always satisfies the aspirations of scientific research.

When we as Muslims learn about a new scientific discovery in the universe, we often say that the Quran has told us about such a thing. However, we should not say that the Quran has mentioned a certain fact before it is scientifically proved so that people would not question the verities of this miraculous Book. For example, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'But they are denying what they cannot comprehend— its prophecy has yet to be fulfilled for them...' (*Yunus*: 39)

Had the Quran said that everything in the universe multiplies and has a positive and a negative part, a male and a female, would they have believed it? No, and the reason is that they learned about males and females among humans, animals and some plants such as palm trees. They did not know anything about procreation in many plants like wheat and corn and nor did they realise that the male part in corn is located in the corncob spike that is moved by the air so that pollen grains may drop and seeds may sprout. For this reason, we notice that intelligent farmers open corn plants a bit from above so that pollen grains can reach their targeted place. A farmer may open a corncob to find amid the lines of seeds a dead seed that does not have a thread. This means that this seed was not fertilised by pollen grains. Such a seed is called in the country, 'an aged tooth.'

Thus, all forms of multiplication must have male and female parts. So, our Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says: 'Glory be to Him Who created all the pairs of things that the earth produces, as well as themselves and other things they do not know about.' (*Ya Sin*: 36) We first learned about males and females in humans and animals, and then we recognised them in plants. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* mentions '...and other things they do not know about' (*Ya Sin*: 36) to include everything, like positive and negative charges in electricity. We have thus come to realise that every living organism has two parts: a male and a female. The more science makes progress, the more it becomes capable of explaining cosmic signs.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is so Merciful to the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He has not willed to make His Laws in the universe clear and explicit so that the human mind would not stand incapable of working them out, particularly the Book (the Quran) that initially addressed an illiterate *ummah* (Nation) that did not have any culture. Suppose that this

Book is intended to address the contemporary world; there will be universal issues that our contemporary world knows nothing about. Had the Quran addressed these issues in an explicit manner, it would have turned people away from the religion. The Quran came as a Way of Life, whereas miracles came to support this Way of Life. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has not intended to turn miracles into an impediment that may keep people from pursuing His Way of Life. Nonetheless, He *Glorified is He* has left much room in His universe for the ambitions of the human mind, created by Him, to look into this vast universe created by Him too. Every single day, the human mind makes new discoveries. Such discoveries do not come from nowhere; rather, they are based on things that actually exist.

If you investigate the origin of the most subtle discoveries of science achieved by the contemporary mind and their size in comparison to the whole universe, you will ultimately get back to the basic facts. Intellects have created or invented nothing new. They have just thought of something which already exists and deduced a non-existing proposition from the premises of this existing thing. The non-existing proposition then becomes an existing premise so that someone else may come and use it to deduce and infer something new. Thus, scientists tend to be well-behaved and modest when they say they have discovered a given thing since it already exists.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us examples to help us understand matters. When we learned geometry, for instance, we knew that geometry is composed of theories from number one to infinity. When a teacher tries to prove theory number one hundred, for example, he refers to theory number ninety nine. In turn, when a teacher proves theory number ninety nine, he refers to the one that came before it.

So, the proof of every theory depends on the preceding one. A conscious thinking mind that is capable of deduction and inference is the one who arranges the premises to make conclusions. People participate in everything in the universe. However, the mind that arranges and deduces thinks, and so do people, and one may think he has brought something new even though he has not actually done so. Rather, he has generated something new from what already exists. A good example is when a child is born to two parents. Have they created their

child from nothing? No, the child has come through copulation. When we go back in sequence, we ultimately arrive to Adam *peace be upon him*. However, who created Adam? It is Allah *Glorified is He*.

Hence, axioms in the universe are the basis for all scientific progress, and they have been created by Allah Who has perfected everything. Every theory, no matter how complicated it is, originates based on an axiom. A good example of this is steam. How had steam been discovered before it was used as a source of energy to operate machines? One day someone noticed that the steam produced by the boiling water in a container caused the lid of a container to move upwards and downwards. Searching the secret behind this phenomenon, he found out that steam could be used as a driving force. This is how the age of steam power started. This person is quite intelligent in as much as he bases his discovery on an intuitive observation present in the universe. Therefore, do not be full of conceit and say that man via his intellect is the one who creates. Rather, you should say that man uses his intellect and makes earnest, organised efforts to discover Allah's secrets in the universe.

Thus, when the human mind invents something new, we may tell this mind that it has not really invented something new, but it has only discovered such a thing. The True Lord *Glorified is He* lets people discover the secrets of the universe from time to time. This is evidenced when he says: 'We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth...' (*Fussilat*: 53).

So, when humanity makes a new discovery, we tell them that this discovery is already mentioned in the Quran. Consequently, they will ask, 'How is it that the Quran, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago, refer to this discovery since it was addressed an illiterate *ummah* and was communicated through an unlettered Messenger?' We say to such people, 'Yes, it is true that the Noble Quran refers to the recently discovered scientific facts fourteen centuries ago.' This point is even supported and proved definitively by the verse this very discussion, that is, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... When their skin has been burned away, We shall replace them with a new one...'.

We have previously explained how skin and sensations function. Regarding this, it is important to note that scientists had exerted great efforts to understand

how humans' senses work. Some of them mistakenly believe that the human brain is the source of sensation since these are matters the brain is not involved with even though we are able to still sense them. This is proved by the fact that when someone approaches the front of someone's eyes and points his finger to poke any of them, that person will close his eyes before his finger even reaches it. This clearly means that man can feel things and matters without the intervention of the brain. Other groups of scholars yet hold the position that sensation occurs through the spinal cord and reflexive movement, in general, and the nervous endings under the skin, in particular. This is proved by the fact that when a person is given an injection, the pain of penetrating the skin will look like the sting of a bug, and there will be no pain at all.

Thus, the centre of sensation is the sensory nerve endings scattered on a human's skin. This fact is proved by this particular verse of the Quran in which Allah *Glorified is He* explains clearly that when the skin burns completely, there will be no sensation at all after that. That is why He *the Almighty* replaces their burnt skin with a new one so that they would continue to feel the severe punishment. Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...When their skin has been burned away...' means that when their skins are burnt completely and entirely cease to feel pain, Allah *the Almighty* will replace them with new skin to perpetuate their torment since skin is the medium through which pain is transmitted to the conscious self. As such, the verse sheds light on a practical scientific topic. As a matter of fact, had the Quran addressed this topic directly and said: 'O, Children of Adam! Skin is the source of sensation. People would have understood naught.' That is why it the Quran left the matter for the human intellect to infer and deduce as it progresses and matures.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... When their skin has been burnt away, We shall replace them with a new one so that they may continue to feel the pain...' clearly indicates that the chief purpose for replacing the skin that was burnt with a new one is to perpetuate the torment. He *Glorified is He* and then concludes the verse with His saying, '... Surely, Allah is Almighty and All-Wise.' The word Al-*‘Aziz*, or *the Almighty* means the One Who is invincible and Who can defeat the entire creation, irrespective of what meticulous preparations they may have made. It is at this point that a disbeliever may say,

'We have taken pleasure in committing the sin for five minutes and in another instance for two hours. So, I can endure the pain until my skin burns away and then I will suffer nothing at all.' To this person, we give the following reply, 'The One Who tortures you is invincible, and thus He *Glorified is He* will perpetuate the torment for you by replacing your burnt skin with a new one. As well, He *the Almighty* is All-Wise and thus He *Glorified is He* does not want to torture you only for the sake of displaying or showing off His Might and Power. Rather, He *the Almighty* uses His Might in the light of His Justice.'

Having told us about the punishment and torture prepared for those who refused to have faith in all the Divine instructions and teachings, He *Glorified is He* did not forget to discuss the opposite case so that His Discourse would have addressed both purposes: that of those who are religiously committed and that of those who are deviant. He *the Almighty* says:

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا لَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَنُدْخِلُهُمْ ظِلًّا ظَلِيلًا

As for those who believe and do good deeds, We shall admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams and there they will remain forever. They will have pure spouses there, and we shall admit them into cool refreshing shade [57] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 57)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* sheds light on the reward prepared for those who, contrary to those mentioned in the previous verse, believe in Allah and all what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them about. We know for certain that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the last and seal of all the Prophets and Messengers and his *ummah* (followers of Islam) is thus the closest to the Day of Resurrection. Previous nations and people, since the creation of Adam, lived for long periods of time. Yet, we, Muslims, are the closest to the Day of Resurrection. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I and the Last Hour have been sent like this.' He joined the forefinger with the middle finger (to illustrate his point).⁽¹⁾

(1) Muslim, *Sahih*

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* did not use *Sawfa*, or will, which is an Arabic particle implying the existence of a time lag between two events, when describing the reward prepared for believers. On the other hand, He *Glorified is He* used it to refer to the punishment prepared for disbelievers. This is due to the fact that this particle refers to an action which is intended to take place after a long period of time. In addition, it may be viewed as an indication from Allah *Glorified is He* that He does not immediately afflict His punishment on disbelievers so as to give them time to repent. In truth, when Allah *the Almighty* informs us that the distance between doing good deeds and receiving the reward for Him in return is really short; this clearly points out that He *Glorified is He* wants to strongly encourage us to firmly adhere to His Obedience. The distance between you (O, Muslims) and the Garden is not remote; it is close. This is why He *the Almighty* says: '...We shall admit them into Gardens graced with flowing streams...'

The word *jannah* is the Arabic word that means 'Garden', and it is derived from *Al-Jinn* and *As-Sitr* which mean hiding and concealing. *Al-Jannah* is the garden whose trees veil and cover one who walks within. It is completely different from earthly gardens of flowers whose short flower plants can bring enjoyment only for man's eyes. As for the heavenly Garden, it includes ever so tall and massive trees, to the extent that they hide the person who walks amongst them. In the same respect, it contains various and different kinds of sustenance. Therefore, it prevents you from looking at any other garden since it contains what is completely sufficient for you. Generally, if someone does not have what suffices his needs, he will long for whatever will meet them. However, the one who has what totally suffices his needs is not in need of anything else in the world. As a matter of fact, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of something that is unknown to us now, but that we shall, due to His Will, witness it in the near future. We know full well that the Garden encompasses everything that a soul may ever wish for. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrates for us the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the Divine Hadith, 'I have prepared for My pious worshippers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and nobody has ever thought of. All that is reserved as well as all that you have seen is

nothing.' Then he recited: "No soul knows what is kept hidden (in reserve) for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do." (*as-Sajda*: 17)⁽¹⁾

Due to the fact man knows about the universe in relation to his ability, Allah *the Almighty* upon describing the great reward prepared for believers in the Garden, says that it includes such things that eyes have never seen. It is taken for granted that a human's sight is limited. This is contrary to the sense of hearing which is wider in range than sight. This is because he will hear news from a particular person who sees it. As such, the series of a human's perception may be ordered as follows: sight comes in first place, and then hearing follows. Naturally, a human hears much more than what he sees. For example, one may visit Aswan and see it, but he might hear about the USA, and, thus, the range of hearing is broader and wider than that of seeing.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the Qudsi Hadith narrated to us by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '...and nobody has ever thought of...' means that no one can actually imagine the reward prepared for believers in the Garden. This naturally leads us to the following question, 'How many descriptions are there for the Paradise?' The first is that it includes such things that eyes have never seen; the second is that it includes such things that no ear has ever heard of, which indicates that one is able to hear much more than he can see; the third is that it includes such things that nobody had ever thought of, which means that even imagination could not vividly catch the essence of the Garden. So, the question to be asked here is as long as Allah *the Almighty* will give us all this reward in the Garden, which words in the Arabic language would truly communicate the clear and exact meanings of this reward.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tells us that no words can fulfil this task since the meaning has to be initially known before a word is coined for it. In truth, every word in the language has a particular meaning, or even various meanings. However, as long as paradise has not been seen, heard or even comprehended by any mind, there are no words that could express it. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) *Muslim, Sahih*

did not give full and complete descriptions for paradise; rather, he said that it would be such and such since there are no words in our language that could express these meanings both exactly and precisely. As a matter of fact, due to the fact that this Divine reward in paradise was not seen by any eye, heard by any ear, or even comprehended any mind, there are no words in human language that could depict or portray it for us. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* gives us a striking example for the unimaginable reward He *Glorified is He* prepared for believers. In this example, He *the Almighty* chooses to draw a comparison between earthly rivers and those in Paradise. He *Glorified is He* states clearly that paradise includes rivers of water that do not alter, rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change and rivers of a delicious drink for those who partake of it, along with rivers of honey clarified and for them therein are every kind of fruit and protection from their Lord. (*Muhammad*: 15)

We see rivers in this worldly life, but Allah *the Almighty* assures us that rivers in paradise will be completely different; He *Glorified is He* tells us that He will remove purities from it. The water of a given river may naturally stop moving and thus become still and corrupt. This is why He *Glorified is He* created the rivers of paradise in such a way that does not render their water corrupt. As such, He *Glorified is He* gives us an example with something known to us, but He explains that He will remove all impurities that we witness in the worldly life's rivers. Furthermore, the rivers of this world flow and run in cracks between two banks, and thus, they are totally different from the rivers in Paradise that flow, due to the Will of Allah, between no banks. You will also find rivers of milk the taste whereof never alters.

The Arabs used to take milk from camels and store it in leather canteens. Camels would then travel to grazing fields or to any other place. So, when an Arab nomad needed milk, he might not find any to drink except what he had previously stored in these canteens and whose taste has been altered and changed. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that the milk in the rivers of paradise will never change or alter since they are not like ones in this worldly life. He *Glorified is He* also states that paradise will contain rivers of wine which are completely different from those in this worldly life. These various points are definitively proved by the fact that He *the Almighty* in this

aforementioned verse in the chapter of '*Muhammad*' provides us with examples of how paradise will look. This is why He *the Almighty* describes the wine of the paradise, for example, in this particular verse of the chapter of '*Muhammad*' as 'being delicious to those who drink.' As a matter of fact, many people do not delightfully drink wine in this world, which is a point proven by the fact that when someone drinks it in this world, he usually pours it in his mouth all at once. This is, of course, entirely different from the scenario of someone who tremendously enjoys drinking a glass of mango juice. The person drinking wine often drinks it in one shot to reduce the time he has to taste it due to its being bitter and acidic. In addition, wine of this worldly life covers and corrupts people's minds; therefore, it is completely different from that of the Hereafter, which never corrupts minds.

Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He* gives a parable of paradise, He *Glorified is He* simultaneously explains that it has no impurities. In the same manner of speaking, we find that there are various parables in this respect. For example, when an Arab nomad would find any small jujube tree in the desert, he used to consider it an oasis under which he could rest and enjoy its fruits. He thus used to reach out and avoid the thorns to pick the fruits. In certain cases, a thorn might hurt him. When he did not find any thorns in the tree, he would say that this tree was free of thorns. In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* emphatically and firmly affirms that paradise does not contain any of the impurities this world experiences.

He *Glorified is He* and then tells that there are rivers of purified honey in paradise. The Arabs used to gather honey from the mountains because bees used to make their hives in the cracks of mountains. Upon gathering it, they used to find sand and pebbles mixed with it. This is why Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He purified the honey of the paradise from all the impurities that could corrupt it. Having said that, the question to ask is the following: 'Allah *the Almighty* had already purified the honey of the Hereafter, so why did He *Glorified is He* clearly state that this is just a parable even though He confirmed doing so?' The main reason is that since no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human mind has ever thought of the reward prepared for believers in paradise; all the words in the dictionaries of all human languages

would fail to express or describe such a great blessing. However, Allah *Glorified is He* uses familiar examples, and gives us a vivid picture so as to enable us understand the reward He prepared for believers in paradise, exactly as He did when He gave us a striking example for how His Light illuminates the universe. In this respect, He *Glorified is He* clearly states that He is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp, the lamp is within glass and the glass as if it were a pearly [white] star lit from [the oil of] a blessed olive tree. (*an-Nur*: 35)

Therefore, He gives us a familiar example to more closely fathom the meaning in our minds since human languages do not include any words that could lend an adequate and sufficient explanation for this high and great reward prepared by Allah *the Almighty* for believers in paradise. This is why He *Glorified is He* when describing paradise, sometimes says that it includes trees 'from beneath which rivers flow', while other times He says that it includes trees 'beneath which rivers flow.' So, what is the difference between the two sentences? The difference is that the second sentence may mean that the rivers flow from another place and that they may be owned by another person who might prevent one from their water. This is why He *Glorified is He* wants in the first sentence to assure believers that their rivers in paradise flow directly from beneath their trees.

Allah *the Almighty* then states clearly that the dwellers of paradise will live therein forever. Concerning this point, He *Glorified is He* is addressing those who already enjoyed some of His Bounties in this worldly life and who also knew perfectly well that the pleasure of this world will definitively and surely come to an end. That is why He *the Almighty* clearly and plainly states that the blessings prepared for the believers in paradise are eternal and never ending.

In the same manner of speaking, He *the Almighty* gives us another example of one of the temporary pleasures of this worldly life, namely, wives. He *Glorified is He* plainly states that the believers in paradise will have *Azwajun Mutahharah* (pure spouses). Therefore, it is of great importance to know that when Allah *the Almighty* describes a plural noun, He uses the adjective in the form of plural, as well. This is clear in the following example when He *the Almighty* says that He ordered the jinn to obey Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be*

upon him and thus they made for him many items including *Qudur Rasyat*, or cooking-pots. (*Saba'*: 13). However, concerning the state of wives in paradise, He *Glorified is He* did not put the adjective in the plural form; rather, He used it in the singular. What does this mean? This means that there may be discord and disagreement among man's various wives in this worldly life, but the matter will be completely different in paradise where a man's wives will be in total agreement with each other, along with it that in paradise there is no form of discord and disagreement. If someone asks, 'How could a woman accept that her husband would be married to another wife in the Hereafter?' The answer is quite evident in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* will remove any traces of ill-feeling in the breasts of the dwellers of Paradise. (*al-A'raf*: 43)

As such, this clearly means that even though a man will be married to various women in paradise, his wives will never cause him any annoyance. He will really like each one's extraordinary beauty and good manners. His wives in paradise will not suffer from any defects. Allah *the Almighty* as such, gives us a clear summary for all the pleasure that could possibly be attained with his wives in paradise.

He *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse with His saying: '... and We shall admit them into cool refreshing shade.' In Arabic, when one wants to emphasise a particular meaning, he uses a derivative from the same word repeatedly. For instance, a native Arabic speaker may say, '*Hadha Laylun A'lyaq*', which means it is a very dark night. Similarly, when someone wants to lay emphasis on the range and value of a shade, he may describe it as *Zhalieel*, or dense. Therefore, what is definition of the term 'shade'? It is the withdrawal of sunlight from a particular place. It may also refer to the same place which sunlight never reaches, such as a cave.

People who live in the desert know perfectly well the expression *Zhillan Zhaliala*, or dense shade. Once one sees a tree in the desert, he hastens to sit under it and enjoy its shade. Truthfully speaking, the shade itself may be abounding like the air-conditioned tents people manufacture and use nowadays and are often made of two layers; the first is exposed to sunlight in such a way that enables it to absorb heat; the second layer, on the other hand, keeps the heat from penetrating into the tent. This particular design is called 'the

double ceiling.' It is often found in high places since apartments in middle floors are naturally protected. However, apartments found on upper floors of a building, especially in warmer climates, are often swelteringly hot. For this reason, a two-layered ceiling is made for such apartments. In this manner, a shade may exist within another one.

However, this raises a question: 'Why does one enjoy sitting under the shade of a tree more than he would enjoy sitting under the shade of a wall?' The reason is that the shade of the wall is often composed of one layer. It is true that it protects us from the sunlight. However, it, unfortunately, blocks air. The case is completely different when one sits under the shade of a tree. It is taken for granted that the leaves of a tree are neatly organised, one above another, to the extent that one can see each of them lying under the shade of the one above it. Due to the fact that leaves are light and can easily be moved by air, they can protect one from the hot sunlight while allowing him to simultaneously enjoy the gentle and soft breeze. This is actually the precise meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '*Zhillan Zhaliala*', or dense shade.

For this reason, when a poet once wanted to describe *Ar-Rawadah*, the place between Prophet Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* pulpit and his grave, he said:

A valley abounding with trees protected
us from the sweltering heat of the sun.
We sat under a tree and it was tender and kind to us
as much as a mother is tender and kind towards her children.
The taste of its abounding shade is tastier
than any drink a server could serve you.
It blocked the sunlight if it faced us and
still allowed the breeze to reach us

The poet describes the situation of a man walking in the desert who then finds a garden of trees that kindly and lavishly provides him with abounding shade that prevents sunlight from hitting. Furthermore, he describes delicious water to drink and a soft breeze, as well as different kinds of fruit; in much

the same way a mother does with her children when trying to wean them. This is actually how we should understand the expression *Zhillan Zhaliala*, or dense shade, for it is the shade of paradise that is even covered and shaded with another shade.

Having shed light on the destiny awaiting the two categories of His creation, i.e. disbelievers who disobey Him *the Almighty* and deviate from His Path and believers who obey Him and firmly adhere to His Path. To further illustrate this point, Allah *Glorified is He* says that the people of the first category will be admitted to the Fire, and whenever their skin is burnt away, He *the Almighty* shall replace it with a new one so that they will continue to feel the pain. On the other hand, He *the Almighty* says that He prepared paradise with all the descriptions we explained previously for believers. Having thus clarified the punishment and the reward prepared for the two categories respectively, He *Glorified is He* directs our attention to a new ruling. This is due to the fact that the human psyche at this particular time (after talking about the Fire and Paradise) will be quite afraid of the fire and, meanwhile, will be longing for paradise. Under these conditions, it will be easier for man to accept this ruling and even readily apply it. In addition, one will be properly prepared for receiving any new rulings. Consequently, one will be able to know perfectly well about the reward prepared for those who firmly adhere to the Path of Allah and the punishment prepared for the disobedient and the misguided.

As a matter of fact, in the event one is fully prepared for receiving a particular ruling, and in the event, the wisdom and the purpose behind this ruling are crystal clear, man will receive it wholeheartedly. This is due to the fact that the human soul knows many things and understands many matters. From the Mercy of Allah, man's brain includes a memory and an imaginative power that are incapable of comprehending and encompassing excessive information all at once. This is why one cannot entertain a new thought unless his mind is fairly empty of any particular thought that may be occupying his mind at the same moment of receiving the new one. Indeed, if the old meaning is retained in the mind, one will not be able to receive a new one.

Accordingly, a human's consciousness is especially interested in what is taking place right now, and thus, thoughts and ideas have no place to be in

intermixed with each other. For this reason, when someone wants to recall something from his mind, he finds that meanings swiftly flow in such a way that enables the hidden ideas and thoughts to come to the conscious mind. Once this happens, the first thought completely vanishes.

As such, we should not think that the human mind can store every piece of information in its conscious part all at once; this is completely wrong. Truthfully speaking, it is due to the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty* that He created minds in such a way that enables them to store information. For this reason, one may remember something that happened ten years ago. Therefore, if this incident had been already removed and erased from one's mind, he would not have been capable of remembering it! This clearly indicates that it already exists in the subconscious. When different ideas and thoughts intermix with each other, this particular incident comes to the conscious mind where it performs its function and vanishes.

Therefore, this clearly indicates that the human mind has the power and energy necessary to enable it to store events and incidents. Despite this, people's capacities for storing events may vary. There may be someone who needs to study a poem ten times before he can learn it by heart, whereas another may be capable of memorising it after just two times, or even three times. In reality, the human mind is like a camera; it may be capable of shooting an excellent picture upon first trial. What really matters is that one's consciousness should be free at the time of thinking. If the consciousness is free of any other thoughts, one will be able to receive a new one.

You may read a poem, a verse or a word repeatedly in order to memorise it. However, if you manage to focus all your consciousness on the text you are studying, you may be able to memorise it immediately from the first reading. You only fail to memorise the text when ideas dart across your mind continuously, thus distracting you and causing you to lose your concentration. As such, your consciousness gets distracted, causing you to fail to memorise new pieces of information. You then repeat the studying process until you are capable of assimilating each part of the poem or the verse you are trying to memorise. For this reason, they say that there are students who memorise slowly and others who do so quickly. The entire process may be explained as

follows: if the person pays particular attention to what he is studying, he will be able to memorise it from the first time; otherwise, he will take a longer time to memorise it.

I will give a striking example to illustrate this point. I believe that most of us, especially students, have undergone such a situation. If we assume that there is a student who was about to take an exam, and before the bell rang, heralding as he was about to enter the examination room. Then, one of his colleagues came to him and said, 'There will be a question about such and such part from this particular text.' However, the student had not studied this particular part. So, he immediately grabbed the book and read it carefully. Would he at this moment be thinking of what he will have for lunch? Would he even be thinking of the one who was with him yesterday? No, he would never think of any of these things because he did not have much time before taking the exam, and thus, he had been paying special attention to this particular text. As such, he might be faced with a question from this text and would be able to answer it even though another student, who studied the same text a month ago, was unable to answer it, for he was distracted while studying. As for this particular student, he studied it while using his total concentration, thus making him able to answer it correctly.

Another example to illustrate this point is a student who complains about his inability to understand the lectures of a particular professor. However, another student may fully comprehend the lectures from the same professor. As for the student who does not understand, he was distracted by other topics, which have nothing to do with the main and prime theme of the lecture. Thus, when he attends a new class, he will be surprised by new pieces of information that could not be assimilated unless he fully understood the previous pieces of information. Accordingly, when the teacher explained the new lesson, this student who was unable to understand said, 'What is this teacher saying?' As for the other student who fully understood the teacher, he perfectly comprehends all the new pieces of information delivered by the teacher. For this reason, a good teacher must attract the attention of his students by capturing their attention and maintaining throughout the lecture. He may, for instance, explain a particular theme of a lesson under discussion and then may tell a student,

'Stand up and recount what I have just said.' In this manner, students will remain alert the entire time for fear that they may be embarrassed if the teacher asks them and they fail to answer. Thus, they will pay attention to the lecture and automatically keep their focus on him.

Having shed light on the Fire and Paradise, to the extent that this matter became firmly implanted in people's minds, He *Glorified is He* started to reveal new rulings. As matter of fact, every time Allah *the Almighty* sheds light on the Fire and Paradise, He follows this by the most important legal rulings which, if people firmly adhere to, they will be admitted into paradise and keep away from the fire. Having prepared and qualified people's minds by telling them about the appalling destiny, the fire, and the attractive one, He *the Almighty* reveals the ruling in the following verse:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ
 أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ نِعِمَّا يَعِظُكُمْ بِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٥٨﴾

**God commands you [people] to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners, and, if you judge between people, to do so with justice: God's instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything [58]
 (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 58)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners...' succinctly summarises and encapsulates all the Divine Rulings and Commands to people on earth. This is due to the fact that trust is of three kinds: the most supreme trust manifested clearly by believing in Allah, trust that exists between people themselves and the one which pertains to all other creatures in the universe.

Al-A'manah, or trust, means that people's things are entrusted to you for the sake of preserving and keeping them, and you are the custodian of these things and items. Therefore, you may or may not return these things entrusted to you. It must be said that if you ask someone to keep something for you, and you have officially documented that matter, this action will not fall under the category of the 'trust' since there are witnesses and evidence. Yet, in the case

of 'trust', there shall be no witnesses since the act of 'trust' entails that you entrust a person to keep something for you while allowing his conscience to finally decide whether to return the 'trust' back to you or not.

In the chapter of *al-Ahzab*, Allah *the Almighty* clearly says: 'Verily, We have offered the trust of the Divine Law to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Indeed, he is capable of being unjust to, and neglectful of, himself.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72). Therefore, this raises the question, 'What is this particular trust referred to in the aforementioned verse of *al-Ahzab*?' We know perfectly well that the universe has different creatures including the inanimate things which represent the lowest rank in the chain of creatures; plants would be considered in the middle rank, while animals would be of higher rank than plants. Finally, man would top all of the previous ranks since all of them are subjected to his service. One point to be made is that it is of great importance to realise that inanimate things, plants and animals do not have freedom of choice to do whatever they want; rather, each of them has been created to perform a certain function and cannot choose to refrain from performing it.

The heavens, the earth and the mountains, as such, refused to have freedom of choice or to bear the trust. This clearly means that they did not want to have free will by means of which they would decide whether to do an act or not to do it. They all were afraid of assuming the burden of this trust due to the lack of confidence in themselves at the time of fulfilling the trust. This means that one of these created beings may have the intention to return a trust to its owners; however, it may, out of self's enticement, fail to do so at the time of delivering. That is why the heavens, the earth and the mountains, out of their fear, said, 'We do not want to assume this trust, and we do not want to have the freedom to do things or not do them, or to obey or disobey. Rather, we want to be subservient to what you (O, Allah), without any choice on our part.' This clearly and plainly means that the heavens, the earth and the mountains have chosen to willingly submit to the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. Man, on the other hand, out of his ability to reason, chose to assume the trust and said, 'I will assume the trust, and my reasoning will enable me to deliver it.' Therefore, man failed to consider the difference between the act of shouldering the trust and his state at the time of actually delivering it.

For example, someone may entrust you with a sum of money. You may then take this money while being certain that you will deliver it when this person asks you to give it back. Nonetheless, at the time of actually delivering the trust, you may not be able to control yourself. For instance, you may be going through bad financial circumstances and spend some of this money. Your integrity may even, Allah forbid, have been destroyed.

Therefore, it is not guaranteed that one would be in full control of himself at the time of delivering the trust even though he may be so at the time of taking it. This is why those who are cautious may say, 'Keep us away from assuming trusts. We do not want to keep anything for you.' But, due to the fact that man was unjust to himself and ignorant about his state at the time of actually delivering the trust, he accepted to shoulder it. Thus, now it becomes quite clear the trust referred to in the chapter of *al-Ahzab* is none but that of the freedom of choice upon which all Allah's Legal Obligations are based.

As a matter of fact, *At-Taklif*, or a legal obligation, is restricted to the two following commands, i.e. 'Dos' and 'Don'ts.' Thus, if one has the will to do a particular act, he is able to do it, and vice versa. This means that the trust in this context is restricted to what Allah *the Almighty* asked human beings to do. However, it did not tackle the other kinds of trusts that exist between mankind. The 'trust', in fact, may also refer to the rights of others you have in your custody. For this reason, when a person gives another one (person) something for him to keep, the former is considered to be entrusted with the thing he took, for/he may then will to deliver back what he took or not.

However, there are other trusts that were not given by a person to another one (person). Rather, they were given by the Lord of the Worlds to all humans. The list of this particular kind of trusts includes the knowledge that Allah *the Almighty* grants man. Truthfully speaking, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who taught you and enabled you to understand a particular field of knowledge. Then, He *Glorified is He* asks you to deliver the trust of knowledge He gave you, in the exact same manner one is asked to return the trust of money he is entrusted with.

We say to every scientist and knowledgeable person, 'Your knowledge did not emanate from yourself so that you may give it to someone else and expect him to give you something in return. This is totally wrong since Allah

the Exalted will reward you for delivering this trust of knowledge to others.' The same equally applies for the virtues of patience and courage. As far as relationships or transactions among mankind are concerned, the virtue of keeping the trust often manifests itself in material affairs. However, as for other kinds of trusts, they are between Allah *Glorified is He* and His Servants. He *the Almighty* may entrust you with a certain field of knowledge so that you can deliver it to those who do not know. In the same respect, He *the Almighty* may entrust you with great strength and command you to assist those who are incapable, or need assistance.

Accordingly, the question to be asked here is 'Who gave you this trust?' It is Allah *the Almighty*. It is thereby not necessary that you should return the trust to the same one who gave it to you. This is due to the fact that the trust is that with which you have been entrusted is either from the creation, or mankind, or the Creator *Glorified is He*. Therefore, you are obligated to deliver it in all cases. The meaning of trust in this sense is thus broad; the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the Only One Who deserves to be worshipped is a trust; your ability to carry out legal obligations is a trust as is your ability to use given talents Allah *the Almighty* bestowed upon you. So, everyone who has a talent is entrusted with it and has to deliver it and transmit its effects to the one who lacks it. In this regard, it is important to know that our Lord *the Almighty* may give a particular person muscle power. Similarly, He *Glorified is He* may give another person sound reasoning. He *the Almighty* furthermore, may give a third person the ability to show forbearance, while giving a fourth the ability to acquire knowledge. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* has endowed His creation with all different kinds of trusts so that they would complement each other. As such, when every man delivers his trust to others, all the members of the society will certainly enjoy each other's talents.

When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Allah commands you [people] to return things entrusted to you to their owners...', we should immediately recall that the most important thing with which we have been entrusted is to worship Him *the Almighty* alone and not to ascribe others with Him *the Almighty* in worship. We should also take into account the other kinds of trusts He *the Almighty* entrusted you with, for just as you are obligated to deliver and return other's

trusts to them, they are also obligated to deliver and return your trusts to you. This is why, when He *Glorified is He* forbids you from stealing, it means that He *the Almighty* is obligating everyone else not to steal you in return.

In truth, just as you keep trusts for other members of the society, they, in turn, should keep trusts for you. If you, thus, fulfil the requirements of that with which you have been entrusted, the society around you will deliver the trust it possesses for you. The trust then transpires to be the deliverance of another person's right that you have in your custody.

It is narrated that the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Allah commands you [people] to return things to their owners...' had been revealed concerning 'Uthman ibn Abi Talha ibn Abi Talhah who was the servant of the Sacred House in Mecca. When Allah *the Almighty* opened Mecca for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he wanted to enter the *Ka'ba*, but 'Uthman ibn Abi Talhah refused to give him the keys, closed its doors, ascended to its roof and said, 'Had I known that he was the Messenger of Allah, I would not have prevented him from entering the *Ka'ba*.' Then, 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* fiercely took the keys from him and opened the doors of the *Ka'ba* for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who entered into it and offered two units of prayer. Upon getting out of it, his uncle Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to give him the keys and to appoint him as the new servant of the *Ka'ba*, but this particular verse was revealed. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* consequently ordered 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* to return the keys to 'Uthman ibn Abi Talhah and to apologise to him. When 'Ali went to him, 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'After you hurt me, you returned to apologise and speak leniently to me.' 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* then told him that Allah *the Almighty* had sent down this verse and he recited it for him, whereupon 'Uthman embraced Islam. Finally, the archangel Jibril descended and told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the family of 'Uthman ibn Abi Talhah are rightfully entitled to the service of the Sacred House until the end of time.

What should be mentioned is that we must certainly know that the non-deliverance of trusts necessarily entails that the fulfilment of justice becomes

a must. As a matter of fact, if every one of us were to deliver the right he owes to its owner, there will be no need at all for justice. Justice naturally emerges due to antagonism and hostility. Truthfully speaking, the act of litigation indicates that someone has denied the right he owes to someone else. Thus, if everyone were to deliver the rights of others that are in his custody, there will be no need for litigation since there would be no antagonism amongst people. Indeed, there will also be no need for the application of justice at this time.

However, due to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who knows perfectly well His creation and their flaws, He *Glorified is He* is fully aware of the fact that some people would be heedless and may not give back the trusts to their owners. This is why He *the Almighty* laid down another principle through which people could have their due rights once again, that is, justice. However, if people made sure to give back the trusts to their owners, there would be no need at all for the application of such justice.

Therefore, it becomes clear that justice was revealed to overcome the flaws and defects of the human soul when it rejects to return things to their owners. This is why He *the Almighty* says: '... And if you judge between people, you should do so with justice...' Here, we must take into account a very important point, that is, He *the Almighty* did not say if you are entrusted with a trust, return it to their owners; rather, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah commands you to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners...' So, in case you refuse to give back things to their rightful owners, what will be the solution then? This is where the role of justice applies which means to give back a right to the custody of someone to someone else. This means that this right is not in your custody since you arbitrate so that you could settle an issue or resolve a dispute.

In this manner, we know that there is a difference between *Al-Amanah*, or trust, and *Al-Adl*, or justice; the first entails that you have something in your own custody and that you must give it back to its rightful owner, whereas the latter entails returning things which are not in the custody of oneself to their rightful owners. That is why He *the Almighty* says: '...And if you judge between people, you should do so with justice...' Just as the order of giving the trusts to their rightful owners addresses all of mankind, the order of

maintaining justice also addresses all of mankind. Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... And if you judge between people, you should do so with justice...' is not restricted to rulers alone; rather, everyone is required to maintain and achieve justice. If you have been appointed by others as an arbitrator, and they agreed to accept your judgment, you have to judge justly even if such arbitration concerns something pertaining to sensitive matters like ennoblement, honour and talent. It is not realistic that arbitration should always pertain to material matters. This point is proved by the story of 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* when he saw two boys seeking the judgment of his son Al-Hasan *Allah be pleased with him* concerning their handwriting. Both boys wanted to know which of their handwritings was better than the other. Even though this issue may not be of great importance, it occupied the minds of the two boys and thus it was a must that Al-Hasan judged justly between them. For this reason, 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said to his son, 'O, Be careful how to judge, for Allah will hold you to account for your judgment son On the Day of Resurrection.'

This gives a striking example of how the judge must be extremely precise in his judgements even if the matter seems of no great importance. Even in football matches, the referee who judges the match must be properly qualified to perform his job. That is because his decisions will lead to the winning of one of the two teams and the defeat of the other. The fact of the matter is that one gets enraged when he watches a football match and notices that the referee did not take into account a particular violation.

I wonder at this point, why people are so earnest and serious about applying the rules of justice in a game while paying them no attention at all in real life. This is what happens often, for we tend to take the application of justice in games seriously and leave out many of the important matters without a governing law. Had we cared for these matters as much as we cared for the games, all our disputes and conflicts would have been settled. Justice is thereby a right that someone owes to another even if it were in matters pertaining to a match. Likewise, as long as a matter concerns two parties involved and caused them to have a dispute and disagreement amongst themselves, you have to put an end to such dispute in a just manner.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...Allah's Instructions to you are excellent...' This means that there is nothing greater than such an admonition, namely delivering the trusts to their rightful owners and judging justly amongst people. Accordingly, the movement of life will be in its correct path. If people deliver that with which they have been entrusted, there will not be any dispute or disagreement amongst them. Furthermore, if they judge justly amongst each other, all disputes will certainly come to an end. Regarding this, scholars say, 'If the people in a particular society knew that they are governed by a just ruler who maintains justice, no wrongdoer would dare to do any injustice anymore.' The opposite naturally occurs when there is an unjust ruler since people will say, 'This person has committed wrong and injustice, but he was not held accountable for his actions.' The absence of justice thus entices and emboldens the wrongdoer to do more injustice. But when people see that a ruler deters and punishes the one who usurps someone else's right and gives back the right to its rightful owner, no one will dare to wrong another.

O, People! You must know that your obedience never benefits Allah *the Almighty* and nor does your disobedience harm Him *Glorified is He*. Thus, your obedience is for your own benefit, while your disobedience is against you. The best form of command is the one that does not bring any benefit to a commander because if the command involves a benefit accruing to a commander, its purpose and value may be dubitable. Thus, to enjoin a command from which you expect no benefit and in which you have no interest, is the apex of justice. Yet there may be a person who has no vast knowledge or deep wisdom, yet he commands doing acts from which there is no personal benefit. The matter in this context is quite different than with Allah *the Almighty* since He does not have any interest in the command. In addition, He *the Almighty* is All Knowing and All-Wise. For this reason, this Divine Admonition is quite conceivable. Furthermore, it is a bounty conferred by Allah *the Almighty* on mankind and what is at odds with it is a bad admonition since no benefit accrues to Him *the Almighty* from His Command, and He is entrusted with all His servants. In addition, there may be someone who commands something from which he may not have any benefit. However, this person may be deficient in knowledge and flawed in wisdom and so his admonition and command would not be acceptable. Therefore, the saying of Allah, '...Allah's Instructions are

excellent to you...' means that He *the Almighty* exhorts you to deliver that with which you have been entrusted and to judge justly among people.

We should also notice the rhetorical expression of the Quran when He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah instructs you to return...' This rhetorical style indicates clearly that He *Glorified is He* addresses all mankind, which plainly means that all people are required to firmly adhere to and follow this Divine Command of delivering the trusts to their rightful owners. The same applies to judging amongst people with justice, that is, all members of the society are also required by virtue of the Divine Command to judge amongst people with justice. As matter of fact, these two Divine Commands point out that Muslims are not only ordered to protect their own rights amongst themselves, but also they are obligated to protect the rights of others even if they are not Muslims.

In the same respect, His saying, '...Allah's Instructions to you are excellent...' must be interpreted to mean that He *the Almighty* orders us to protect the rights of those who believe in Islam and those who do not believe in it; a point which is obviously indicated by the fact that He *the Almighty* addresses all mankind with this particular command. As a matter of fact, He *Glorified is He* does not appoint any particular group with this command, whether they are believers or disbelievers.

The word 'people' indicates the justice of the command enacted by Allah *the Almighty* the Lord of the Worlds. He is the One Who created a person to be either a believer or a disbeliever. However, no one, whether he is a believer or a disbeliever, is excluded from His Divinity. He *the Almighty* supplies all His creation with their provisions. Yet, it is of cardinal importance here to know that Allah *the Almighty* provides those who make use of reasons and means for attaining provision, whether they are believers or disbelievers. This clearly indicates the Divine Justice. He *the Almighty* provided man with sustenance and made everything in the world subservient to him. The truth of the matter is that He did not make the universe subservient only to believers. Rather, He made it equally subservient to all mankind, whether they are believers or disbelievers. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* commands us to deliver trusts to their rightful owners whether they are believers or disbelievers. Furthermore,

He *the Almighty* commands us to judge justly amongst all mankind, whether they are believers or disbelievers.

This previously mentioned point is even proven by the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is narrated that a Muslim man called Tu'mah ibn U'bayriq had stolen armour from his Muslim neighbour Qatadat ibn an-Nu'man, *Allah be pleased with him*. Tu'mah was in a state of complete confusion since he did not know where to hide the stolen armour. This is why he hid it in a sack of flour, but there was a hole in the sack and thus the flour leaked and made a mark on the road. Tu'mah finally hid the armour at the house of a Jew named Zayd ibn As-Samin. When Qatadat discovered that the armour had been stolen, he shouted loudly, and people came and followed the marks of the flour on the road till they reached the house of Tu'mah ibn U'bayriq, but he swore to Allah that he did not steal it. Therefore, they traced the marks of flour once again till they reached the house of Zayd ibn As-Samin who told them that Tu'mah was the one who brought it to him. There were some Jews who witnessed to this. The case was thus referred to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. At that time, people of Banu Zhufar came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to defend their man by saying, 'O, Prophet Muhammad! If you did not defend him, he would be exposed, and the Jew would be acquitted.' It is at this point that Allah *the Almighty* sent down some verses of the chapter of *an-Nisa'* in which He *the Almighty* states clearly that He revealed the Book to him *peace and blessings be upon him* with the truth that he may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught him. He *the Almighty* also ordered him *peace and blessings be upon him* not to be an advocate on behalf of the treacherous and to ask Him *the Almighty* for forgiveness. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* further ordered him *peace and blessings be upon him* not to plead on behalf of those who act unfaithfully to their souls, for He *Glorified is He* does not love those who are treacherous and sinful. (*an-Nisa'*: 105-107)

These verses of the chapter of *an-Nisa'* clearly indicate that Muslims must not support their fellow brothers and sisters in committing injustice even against non-Muslims. This is why He *Glorified is He* follows these three aforementioned verses on the story of Banu Zhufar with His Saying in which He clarifies that

if they plotted in secret, but He *the Almighty* is All-Acquainted with everything and that He is with them when they meditate by night words which do not please Him. He *Glorified is He* furthermore, gives warning to the believers not to defend the wrongdoers even if they are Muslims. He says that if you (O, Muslims) plead for the treacherous in this worldly life, no one will be able to plead for them on the Day of Resurrection. (*an-Nisa'*: 108-109)

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice...' clearly means that Allah *the Almighty* addresses all of mankind and orders them everyone to judge justly whenever any one of us is appointed as a judge amongst people for any given case. This Divine Command is not restricted to believers only; rather, it includes disbelievers' relations with Muslims, as well. It furthermore includes the disbelievers' relations with each other, in the event that they accept the *Sharia* of Islam to settle their disputes and disagreements.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '... Allah's Instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything.' When we notice a verse ending with Two Divine Attributes or Two of the Most Beautiful Names of Allah *the Almighty* we must realise that there is a relation between these Attributes or Names and the content of the verse. In this verse, He *the Almighty* having ordered us to return trusts to their rightful owners and to judge justly among people, tells us that He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained this matter when he ordered the one assuming a judicial position to treat both parties equally in both attention and discourse. This means that a judge should not be biased towards one of the two parties, and nor is he allowed to pay special attention to one of them while neglecting the other. He must thereby treat them both equally paying the same attention to both parties, while addressing both of them in the same way.

It has been narrated that there was a dispute between a Jew and 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb, *Allah be pleased with him*. The dispute was thus referred to the "Umar ibn Al-Khattab, the Commander of Believers, *Allah be pleased with him*. When 'Ali and the Jew were before "Umar, he called upon 'Ali and said, 'Stand up, O, father of Al-Hasan!' However, 'Ali was angry. "Umar then

asked him, 'O, 'Ali, do you hate the fact that I treat you and your litigant equally in the court?' Whereupon 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'No, but I disliked that you called upon me with my title while not doing the same with my Jewish litigant.'

Accordingly, when "Umar *Allah be pleased with him* advised Abu Musa Al-A'sha'ry *Allah be pleased with him* upon being appointed as a judge, he said to him, 'Treat everyone who attends your court equally even in the way you sit with each of them and the way you look at each of them.' This clearly indicates that arbitrators and judges must give equal treatment to the two litigating parties. They, arbitrators and judges, are not allowed to pay special attention to one of the two parties, while neglecting the other, and nor are they allowed to give preference to one of them over the other.

Al-Lahzh, or seeing, is the function of the eye, and it requires someone who can see, whereas *Al-Lafzh*, or utterance, requires an ear to hear it or someone capable of hearing. However, the question to be asked here is 'Why did Allah *the Almighty* give precedence to the Most Beautiful Name of "All-Hearing" over that of "All-Seeing"?' The reason is that what is heard involves a clear expression, but the act of seeing is only recognised by the one who looks at others tenderly and respectfully. However, did the Divine Attribute of being 'All-Hearing' evolve in Allah after He came across what He could hear? Also, did the Divine Attribute of being 'All-Seeing' evolve after He identified what He could see? The answer is that all the Divine Attributes of Allah including these two ones mentioned are eternal. He *Glorified is He* is Eternal, and He is the Creator of the existing universe. Furthermore, His Attributes are as eternal as He is.

Therefore, there is a difference between the following words, Sami', or All-Hearing, and Sami', the one who could hear, and *Basir*, the All-Seeing, and *Mubsir*, and the one who has the ability to see. Truthfully speaking, one is described as 'hearing' if he actually comes across someone or something that could be heard, and he hears it. However, what does the word 'All-Hearing' mean? It means that the One Who acquires this attribute of 'All-Hearing' is always capable of hearing regardless of whether or not that which could be heard exists. The same holds true for the attribute of 'All-Seeing.'

Let me give you an example to illustrate this point for you. When a poet composes a poem, this does not mean that he was not a poet before doing so; rather, this means he was originally a poet and that he composed it out of his potential capacity to write poetry. Similarly, when we say that Allah *the Almighty* is All-Forgiving, this means that He was so even before He created any creature. It also indicates that this Divine Attribute of 'All-Forgiving' is eternal and that He *the Almighty* had it even before the creation committed any given sin. The same equally applies to the Two Divine Attributes of 'All-Hearing' and 'All-Seeing.' This means that they are eternal and that He *the Almighty* had them even before creating what would be seen or heard. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ
مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَزَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ
تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٥٩﴾

You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day: that is better and fairer in the end [59] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 59)

We have extensively discussed this verse and mentioned it in almost all occasions. However, we have to briefly recount what we have previously mentioned about it. Why should we obey Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? The answer is that this order is viewed as the legal justification for either the Divine Reward or Punishment. Similarly, when a judge passes a verdict, he puts forward the legal justification for the judgement. For instance, the judge may say, 'Since the person has committed such and such violation, then according to such and such article, such and such penalty should be meted out to him.' These are the justifications of the verdict. The Arabic word *Al-Haythiyyat* (to refer to justifications or grounds of the verdict) is derived from the conjunction *Haythu* which gives the meaning of 'since' or 'because', that is, since so and so happened, then our verdict is such and such, or since so and so did not happen, then our verdict is such and such. Accordingly,

the grounds and fundamentals of the verdict mean the legal justification that supports the rationale of the judge who passed the verdict.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...obey Allah and obey His Messenger...' It is noticeable that He *the Almighty* does not address all of mankind in this particular verse; rather, He addresses believers only. This means that as long as you (O, believers) have true faith in Allah as the All-Wise, the Creator, the All Knowing and the One Who has the right to command and enact legal obligations upon you, then you have to listen to and obey what He orders you to do. As such, it is clear that He *the Almighty* does not order all of mankind to obey Him; rather, He orders all of them to believe in Him since obedience follows faith.

Thus, the justification for obeying Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* naturally evolves from faith in Him *the Almighty* and in His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is the perfect form of justice since Allah *the Almighty* does not assign anyone to do anything unless he has already attained faith in Him, to the extent that he shall believe that He *the Almighty* is the Only One entitled to command and enact legal obligations upon him. As for those who do not believe in Him, He *Glorified is He* does not order them to 'do' or 'not to do' anything. Rather, He asks them first and foremost to believe in Him and then that will naturally lead to obedience of His Orders and Commands. For this reason, you will notice that all legal obligations enacted by Him *the Almighty* are preceded by His saying, 'O, you who believe.'

Having faith in Allah and His Messenger is the main reason behind obeying Him and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is the most important reason in this regard. Furthermore, it is completely different from enquiring into the wisdom and rationale behind the enactment of this or that particular legal obligation. For this reason, I would like to direct your attention to a very important point, that is, it is wrong to approach the Divine Rulings and Commands by way of investigating and examining so that as long as you are convinced with them, you adopt and follow them, and if you do not, you will not adopt or follow them. As a matter of fact, such behaviour indicates that you have doubts about these rulings and commands.

This is why we have to obey and follow Divine Rulings and Commands since He *the Almighty* addresses you who have believed in Him as the All-Wise. Having said that, does this preclude your mind from inquiring into the wisdom underlying the Divine Ruling or Command? To this question, we respond, 'You may understand some of the deep wisdom, but not all of it. The reason is that it is impossible to restrict the Wisdom of Allah to one particular aspect, so, you may realise an aspect of this Wisdom, while another person realises a different one. For this reason, it is said that the key difference between Allah's Commands to people and people's commands to each other is something very simple, i.e. Allah's Commands to humans are preceded with the underlying cause, namely having faith in Him *the Almighty*. As for humans, when one of them is asked to carry out a particular command, he may respond, 'Why should I do so? Please, give me a reason to.' The main reason behind this human response is that one usually believes that the mind of others is not better than his. Accordingly, he should not do anything unless he is completely convinced of its validity and unless experience has proved the authenticity of the opinion of the one commanding you and that he is not a deceiver.

Therefore, we see that our obedience to Allah is entirely different from our obedience to another created being. We obey Allah since we have faith in Him *the Almighty*. Accordingly, when He asks us to obey Him, we should not inquire into whether this obedience will benefit us or not. If we trust that He created us due to all of His Attributes of Perfection, then we must be certain that He does not want to acquire a new attribute to Himself through this legal obligation. Allah is in no way obligated to create you, yet He *the Almighty* created you by His Power and provided you with the means to support and sustain your existence. Accordingly, when He *the Almighty* commands you to do something, He does so since it is in your interest, exactly in the same way a manufacturer deeply and genuinely cares about his manufactured item. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* wants to boast about His creation, not by forcing and compelling them to obey His Commands but by making them follow them out of their love for Him. He wants us to declare through our behaviour that we love Him as much as He is our Lord. As a matter of fact, man might have chosen to be disobedient to Allah. So, as long as you have the choice to disobey and violate His Commands but you choose, instead, to obey Him *the Almighty* this

definitively proves your love for Him *the Almighty*. In fact, there is a big difference between someone who compels you to obey him and another who, despite being capable of subjugating you, gives you the freedom to choose to obey him or not so that you may do so willingly and lovingly. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* orders us to obey Him, this indicates that He does not ask you to do something that is strange or odd.

However, how can we carry out the Divine Command of being obedient to Allah *the Almighty*? We do so by obeying all His Commands. This raises a very important question, 'Did Allah *the Almighty* issue His Commands to only certain individuals?' No, His Commands are directed to all of mankind, whether they are individuals or groups. In addition, He provided them with a natural inclination towards faith that definitively proves that there is a supreme force running the creation of the universe. No one knows the essence of this force, nor does anyone know its attributes or how it will reward those who obey it. Thus, the existence of Messengers and Prophets to inform mankind was an absolute necessity. For this reason, I believe that some philosophers were wrong when they claimed that the human mind alone can realise the essence of religion. To these philosophers, I say, 'No, this is not correct, in spite of the fact that the mind can know about the One we ought to worship, it cannot tell anything about the methodology of religion.'

This is why sending Messengers and Prophets was an absolute necessity, for it is these Messengers and Prophets who would convey the Divine Commands to mankind. We thus say to those philosophers, 'Even though the mind is able to identify this power running the universe, it is meanwhile unable to tell anything about its essence, name and requirements. For this reason, Messengers and Prophets were sent, meaning that they were sent to tell us about this ultimate power. Therefore, this means that this particular and ultimate power in which you believe in due to your natural inclination must have sent to you (O, mankind) someone to tell you of His Names and Commands. This clearly implies that obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is necessary for owing Allah *the Almighty* our absolute obedience to Him.

He *Glorified is He* then says: 'and those in authority among you' We notice that He *Glorified is He* did not repeat the verb 'obey' when He mentioned those

who have been entrusted with authority so that we may understand that we are supposed to obey those in authority only in so far as our obedience to them is in harmony with our obedience to Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Reflecting upon the meanings of Quranic verses clearly indicates that the Divine Command to obey Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has taken three different forms as stated throughout its pages, and they proceed as follows: 1) obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is included in with Allah since both use the same imperative verb 'obey Allah and the Messenger'; 2) the imperative verb is repeated twice, one time with Allah and the other with Prophet Muhammad 'obey Allah and obey His Messenger'; and 3) some verses indicate the order to obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* without including it with a statement commanding obedience to Allah, simply 'obey the Messenger.'

As for the first form, 'obey Allah and the Messenger', we notice that it includes only one imperative verb of showing obedience to Allah and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for the second form, the imperative verb of showing obedience is repeated twice: one to Allah *Glorified is He* and the other to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Concerning the third form, the imperative verb is confined to showing obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only.

There are differences amongst these three forms. As a matter of fact, the first form indicates that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who issued Commands, which were thus confirmed by Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions or tacit approval. As for the second form, it points out that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had explained in detail the general Divine Commands. Regarding the third form, it informs us that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained something to us, for which Allah *the Almighty* did not issue a Divine Command. Truthfully speaking, the fact that obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is indispensable from that to Allah *the Almighty* and is certainly mentioned in the chapter of *an-Nisa'* in which He *Glorified is He* clearly states that whoever obeys Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* indeed obeys Allah *the Almighty*. (*an-Nisa'*: 80). Also, in the chapter of *al-Hashr*, He *the Almighty* orders us to accept willingly

whatever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives us and to refrain from doing anything he prohibited us: 'And whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Severe in retribution.' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

Based on the discussion just mentioned, it becomes clear to us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* contributes to Islamic Legislation in three ways: he decreed and legislated by way of asserting what Allah *the Almighty* decrees; he also legislates by way of spelling out the details of what Allah has already decreed. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* has prescribed upon Muslims the performance of five daily prayers. He also obligated Muslims to pay *zakat*, or alms to the poor. Yet, He *the Almighty* did not explain in detail these particular obligations, thus it was the role of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give the minute details of these general Divine Commands. Accordingly, he told us about *an-Nisab*, or the minimum amount of property or wealth that must be owned by a Muslim before he is obligated to pay *zakat*, and how to correctly perform the five daily prayers. Therefore, we obey Allah's Commands which are further explained to us by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad, out of Allah's Authorisation to him, issues a particular command, for which Allah *the Almighty* did not directly address. For this reason, if someone tells you to support your viewpoint with some verses of the Quran, and you were unable to show him this evidence, you can tell him that there is ample evidence for all the legitimacy of what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Hashr* in which He *Glorified is He* orders us to accept whatever Prophet Muhammad gives us and to refrain from what he prohibits us.

In fact, this is conclusive and persuasive evidence fervently supporting the legitimacy of all the commands and orders given by him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Someone may still say, 'There is a difference between the *Sunnah*, or the recommended act of worship, and *Al-Fard*, or the legal obligation.' We give the following reply to this person, 'You should make a distinction, for there is a difference between a supererogatory act of worship which, if performed, one is rewarded for and if not, one is not punished, (and a mandatory act of

worship which one must observe and which, if one neglects, he will be held accountable and punished for it).' As a matter of fact, this obligation is commanded by Allah *the Almighty* and is proven by Prophet Muhammad's *Sunnah*. In addition, the legitimacy of different obligations is proven by Prophet Muhammad's *Sunnah*. Therefore, it becomes quite clear nowadays that there is a difference between the obligatory act of worship and the recommended one. So, naturally, this is different from the explanations provided for these obligatory acts of worship in Prophet Muhammad's *Sunnah* and are considered as practical applications that must be followed by Muslims.

As for the command to obey those who have been entrusted with authority, it was associated in conjunction with those to be obeyed (namely Allah and His Messenger Muhammad) without an explicit command related exclusively to this case. This indicates that obeying those who are entrusted with authority is only binding as long as the obedience is in harmony with obedience to Allah and His Messenger. This, in fact, safeguards society against tyrannical rulers who try to humiliate and dominate people by misconstruing the saying of Allah *the Almighty*; they are 'those who have been entrusted with authority', alleging that obeying them is a must. Thus, they would say in response, 'Are we not those who have been entrusted with authority?' Scholars should reply by saying, 'Yes, but you are entitled to be obeyed as long as this obedience is in line with obedience to Allah and His Messenger. So, if obeying those who have been entrusted with authority contradicts obeying Allah and His Messenger, then no obedience is due to them.' This is based on the following rule which states, 'No created being should be obeyed if his commands would lead to disobeying the Creator.' This is actually the same response given by Abu Hazim to Maslamat ibn 'Abd Al-Malik when he (Maslamat) said to him, 'Are we not those who have been entrusted with authority?' In addition, we should take into account the fact that this obedience to those in authority has been abolished by virtue of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger...' Thus, a Muslim ruler is first required to deliver that with which he has been entrusted to their rightful owners, to judge justly amongst people and to always make people's obedience to him in complete harmony with their obedience to Allah and His Messenger. If a ruler fails to fulfil these conditions, he would be judged as a tyrannical ruler.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to Allah and the Messenger...', it means that variance and dispute must be about a matter pertaining to complying to the obedience of Allah *the Almighty*. Furthermore, it must have a proper frame of reference to settle it, which means if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day, you must refer all of your disputes to Allah and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

As a matter of fact, those who know these rulings perfectly well are the well-versed religious scholars. Thus, in case there is a dispute between rulers and their subjects, we should refer the matter to well-versed scholars to inform us of the Divine Ruling concerning this issue. Therefore, if someone argues that 'those who have been entrusted with authority' refers to rulers, we reply to him: 'The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: "refer it (the dispute) to Allah and the Messenger" indicates plainly that a ruler has an obligation to follow the Path and Course set by Allah and His Messenger Muhammad.' Naturally, it is the opinions of well-versed scholars that must exclusively and entirely be relied upon. Scholars are the ones who closely and strictly observe, based on their knowledge of religion, the implementation and adherence to the Rulings made by Allah *the Almighty*. Undoubtedly, Allah *Glorified is He* asks us to refer matters of dispute between rulers and their subjects to Him and His Messenger because He wants to settle disputed issues since disputes cause turbulence and unrest in life. Someone may claim that so and so is correct, while another may refute this and claim or stand by a contradictory view. Thus, issues of dispute must be referred to a supreme authority, i.e. Allah and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Regarding this, He *the Almighty* tells us that if Muslims at times of disputes refer their problems to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to those in authority from amongst themselves, those among them who can search out the knowledge of it would have known it. (*an-Nisa*': 83) This verse explains that 'those in authority' in this context refers to well-versed religious scholars.

Based on what was mentioned, we can clearly state that the meaning of the first verse is general by saying that it associates the obedience due to the ones who have been entrusted with authority to be obedient to Allah and His

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for the second verse which sheds light on *Al-Istinbat*, or legal deduction, it refers to well-versed religious scholars.

Therefore, it becomes clear that what is meant by 'those who have been granted authority' in the first verse are the ones who oversee the implementation of the Rulings of Allah, which is the executive authority, while the same phrase in the second verse refers specifically to well-established religious scholars, which is the legislative authority.

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... (If you are in dispute over any matter,) refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 59) indicates clearly that the one who does not refer issues of dispute to Allah and His Messenger Muhammad may cause himself to fall under the category of those who do not believe in Allah and the Last Day. We say to such people, 'Review your faith and belief in Allah and the Last Day starting from the way you receive the Divine Rulings and obligations and down to your faith in the fact that you will be punished for violating such rulings on the Last Day. This is due to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* did not make the worldly life a place for punishment.'

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, 'That is better and fairer in the end.' (*an-Nisa'*: 59) This means that the act of obeying Allah and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by referring disputed issues to Him *the Almighty* and to Prophet Muhammad is best for both the rulers and the ruled. This is due to the fact that the good stems mainly from man's determination to do and pursue what benefits him both in this worldly life and the Hereafter. As a matter of fact, if we consider the benefits to be obtained from any of the worldly desires, we will fully realise that satiating any or all of them only pleases you for a moment and then evil ensues.

Ta'wil is the Arabic word that translates to 'in the end' and means to refer the matter to its actual and original ruling. It is derived from *al-Ya'ul*, which means to return. In this respect, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'better in the end' means the best return and consequence because in the event of one only

caring about achieving his worldly interests, his final destination will undoubtedly be evil and bad. It is therefore better for one to do what will lead him to be admitted into paradise. The phrase “*Wa Ahsanu Ta'wila*” in this context may also refer to the deduction of judgments and rulings since scholars do so based on their understanding of the sayings of Allah and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, you may understand the Divine Commands in respect to your own interests and whims. Therefore, it goes without saying that the proper understanding of the meanings of the Divine Commands and Obligations will keep you from erring and deviating from the righteous path.

Therefore, if you really pursue goodness, you should do so in all times and under all circumstances. One should not consider goodness that only satisfies his interests and serves his desires. Rather, he should pursue the kinds of goodness that results in no evil. If we consider the history of many rulers, we may find that some of them escaped criticism and punishment for what they did due to the oppression and coercion they exercised. However, when they died, their evil doings started to be exposed, and the campaigns against them started to emerge. It is thus the duty of every ruler to consider and learn from the examples of those who ruled before him, those who silenced the mouths and broke the pens of writers. However, after they died, the tongues and pens of their people started to curse them. Therefore, we must make sure to keep in mind the best end we want for ourselves and act accordingly. Whoever is capable of protecting himself during his life through his power and influence may fail to protect his reputation and history, posthumously. After his influence came to an end, people would start to condemn and belittle him even while we are still in this worldly life and before making our transition to the Hereafter. If this is the punishment meted out by the creation, imagine what would be the punishment meted out by Allah *the Almighty*?!

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'that is better and fairer in the end' (*an-Nisa*': 59) means that this is the best destiny one should aspire to. He *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ ءَامَنُوا بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ
قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يَتَحَكَّمُوا إِلَى الظَّالِمِينَ وَقَدْ أُمِرُوا أَن يَكْفُرُوا بِهِ
وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَن يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿٦٠﴾

Do you [Prophet] not see those who claim to believe in what has been sent down to you, and in what was sent down before you, yet still want to turn to unjust tyrants for judgement, although they have been ordered to reject them? Satan wants to lead them far astray [60] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 60)

We explained previously that the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Do you [Prophet] not see...?' is an interrogative expression that basically means 'Have not you learnt or known?' It is usually used if what is known was previously discussed or what is known was obvious enough for you to notice or to understand it. We also know that He *Glorified is He* used this particular expression of 'Do you [Prophet] not see...?' in the reference to addressing issues which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* - the addressed person- was not aware of. He *the Almighty* did so to indicate to us that we have to firmly believe in what He *Glorified is He* says even if it was an act of informing about what had happened in the past. We must truly believe in this in the same way we believe in the actual and real existence of objects upon seeing them with our own eyes. That is due to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is more trustworthy than our own eyes. Without a doubt, your eyes may deceive you, but Allah *the Almighty* would never deceive any of us.

The saying of Allah, 'Do you [Prophet] not see those who claim to believe in what has been sent down to you, and in what was sent down before you...' refers specifically to the hypocrites and some of the people of the Book who purported to have faith in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. *Az-z'am*, or claiming, is the pretext for lying. The hypocrites and some of the people of the Book claim that they believed in what has been sent down to him (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, which is the Quran. They also claim that they believed in what has been sent down before him which are the Torah and the Gospel. Having falsely claimed belief, they ironically want to turn to unjust tyrants for judgment.

At-Tahakum ila As-Shay', or turning to something for judgment, means to seek the help and adjudication of a particular thing to settle and putting an end to the issue of dispute. When we say, 'We have turned to the rule of so and so', this means that we have become fed up with disputes and discord and want to come to a consensus by turning to the rule of someone. As a matter of fact, any two litigating parties would not agree to turn to the rule of a particular system or person unless they are really tired of disputes and arguments. This means that they must be in disagreement on a particular matter or issue, and they are exhausted of arguing about it.

We previously explained that the word *At-Taghut* refers to a person who is enticed and lured into becoming more unjust and tyrannical; the more people submit to and obey him. There are indeed tyrants who immensely enjoy wronging people so much so that they realise others fear them. This point is definitively proven by the Saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *az-Zukhruf* in which He *Glorified is He* explains that when Pharaoh incited his people to levity, they obeyed him. (*az-Zukhruf*: 54)

The one who does so is thus called *Taghut*, or an unjust tyrant, to show how extreme his injustice is. This word in question, *Taghut*, is used mainly to refer to the one who does injustice frequently. It also refers to those who are falsely worshipped beside Allah and who have enacted legislations including commands and prohibitions; it may refer to Satan who tempts people or even to a tyrannical ruler whom people greatly fear his tyranny. Any of these forms squarely falls under the category of *At-Taghut*. Arab grammarians still hold the position that this particular Arabic word *At-Taghut* is used to indicate the singular and the plural forms of the noun; this point is proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in which He *Glorified is He* plainly clarifies that He is the guardian of those who believe and that He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are *At-Taghut* who take them out of the light into the darkness. (*al-Baqara*: 257). In this aforementioned verse of *Al-Baqara*, the word *Taghut* is used to indicate the plural even though it is in the singular form. The same word in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *an-Nisa'*: '... though they were commanded to deny him' is used to refer to the singular.

Thus, it is quite clear now that this particular word, *At-Taghut*, may be used either in reference to a singular or a plural noun. Undoubtedly, all the rulings of the Quran may have particular causes of revelation; thus, it is not right to confine or restrict the ruling to a particular case for which it was revealed. Rather, we can apply it and extend it to other matters if they share the same condition and reasons. This is based on the following maxim which states, 'It is the generality of the subject matter of the ruling that should be taken into account, and not the specificity of the situation wherein it was revealed.'

This verse was revealed in connection with an incident that occurred with a hypocrite called Bishr. A dispute flared up between him and a Jew, and the Jew wanted to defer to the rule of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, the hypocrite wanted Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf to arbitrate. The Jew, from his perspective, was certain that he would be entitled to win the dispute, so he did not ask for the judgment of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* out of love for him, but rather, out of love for his justice. For this reason, he preferred the one whom he thought would judge justly. He thus asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to arbitrate their dispute, while the hypocrite who allegedly declared to be a Muslim, while concealing his hatred towards Islam, asked to refer the dispute to Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf. This proves the verity of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in delivering and carrying out the Divine Order to judge amongst people justly.

In fact, the fact that the Jew wanted to defer to the rule of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clearly indicates the Jew's absolute confidence that the Prophet would never dissipate his right. He did not even ask to defer to the rule of one of the leaders of the Jews the like of Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf since he knew that Ibnul Ashraf used to take bribes.

Allah *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse with His saying, '... Satan wants to lead them far astray?' As a matter of fact, if they deferred to the rule of an unjust tyrant, like in this case Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf, and he judged in favour of the one who had no right, such a judgment would entice everyone who wanted to commit injustice to go to this unjust judge and to defer to his rule. Allah *the Almighty* describes this act as leading them far astray since injustice will subsequently ensue. Thus, the unjust judge would bear the sin of every

case in which he passes a false judgment. This is actually the true meaning of *Ad-Dalal Al-Ba'id*, or leading them far astray. He *Glorified is He* then says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَىٰ الرَّسُولِ رَأَيْتَ
الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنْكَ صُدُودًا ﴿٦١﴾

When they are told, 'Turn to God's revelations and the Messenger [for judgement],' you see the hypocrites turn right away from you [Prophet] [61] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 61)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Turn to...' infers the meaning of calling upon them to come to Him. It is noteworthy to mention that He *the Almighty* did not use the verb *A'qbilu* since it means that one is going to someone who is equal to him. However, the word *Ta'alaw* means 'to go to someone who is of higher rank and who is more exalted.' To further this point, it is of great importance to note that laws enacted and made by human mind are lower in rank than those enacted by Him *the Almighty*. It is taken for granted that such laws made by human mind and those which pertain to the protection and preservation of societies assume legislators' good intentions and sincerity are clearly shown and are always commensurate with their level and capacity to deduce conclusions and correctly reading the circumstances surrounding them.

However, laws enacted by Allah *the Almighty* are naturally more superior to those made by humans since He *Glorified is He* does not miss any particular aspect no matter how small it is. Human legislation, on the other hand, is always associated with a particular situation which may change as events develop. Human laws thereby fall short of assimilating and dealing with what is new. This is due to the emergence of new developments and events that were not taken into consideration by the one who enacted the laws and who, at that time, assumed that they were capable of preserving society. In other words, the mind of the one who enacted the law was thus incapable of conceiving such new developments or anticipating them at that particular of time of making them. Furthermore, most laws are amended only after the legislator fully realises their bad effects on society, the effects which result from the original state of the law made by him. Thus, when new events came

into existence and such a law became unable to address their situation, there was a dire need to amend it.

As for Allah's Legislation, it fully protects society by precluding these events from happening from the very beginning. This is the difference between human legislation and laws that are often introduced to save us from provisional and transient events and the Divine Legislation that is intended to safeguard us against the very possibility of such events. Therefore, we can clearly state that laws made by humans look like treatment given to a patient, whereas Divine Legislation is like protective medicine. It is taken for granted that protection is always better than treatment.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* revealed a number of legislations that protect us from and immunise us against the evil that may evolve from the occurrence of certain events. Thus, He *the Almighty* by virtue of these Divine Laws fully safeguards man from being afflicted with any harm. Therefore, the Mercy of Allah *the Almighty* decrees that some people will surely be kept away from being inflicted with any harm. Manmade laws, on the other hand, always leave behind victims. Only upon seeing these victims, do the hearts of legislators feel compassionate and sympathetic and decide to change the law they have previously set.

Regarding laws of a positive nature, some people are often obligated to bear the brunt of injustice more than others since these laws are incapable of protecting and preserving man from a comprehensive perspective. By the passage of time, legislators find themselves forced to interfere by amending their previously set laws. Thus, certain group of people will have to suffer from injustice till these laws are modified and amended. As for the Creator *Glorified is He* He knows His creation quite well. For this reason, He *the Almighty* did not commit any injustice to anyone of His creation at the expense of the other. He laid down His Divine Legislations in a just manner. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* strongly stresses the point that He *Glorified is He* reveals of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers. (*al-Isra'*: 82)

The Quran gives us healing for diseases that may afflict and befall us due to carelessness. Furthermore, it is viewed as a mercy, thus fully preventing afflictions and disease. Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'When they are told,

"Turn to Allah's Revelations and the Messenger [for judgement]", you see the hypocrites turn right away from you [Prophet]' completely exposes and unveils the acts committed by hypocrites, and, as a result, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the entire society will be fully aware of them.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...you see the hypocrites turn right away from you [Prophet]' means that they turn their backs right away from you, Prophet Muhammad because they are hypocrites. In truth, every hypocrite suffers from two main problems: a problem related to his tongue and another related to his heart. Verbally, using his tongue, he declares his faith in Allah and His Messenger, Muhammad. However, his heart, meanwhile, is full of contradictory and ambivalent attitudes. This is entirely different from the case of a true believer and even one of a disbeliever. As for a true believer, his faculties are in harmony with each other since his heart has decided to believe and guide him towards the righteous path. Similarly is the case of a disbeliever who is led to the way of destruction and not in harmony with his faculties. The hypocrite, on the other side, disperses his energy and faculties. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* states clearly that hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the fire. A disbeliever is consistent with himself; he does not declare faith since his heart is not convinced. He could have pretended to have faith, but he did not verbally claim what his heart opposes. His antagonism towards Islam is thus obvious. However, a hypocrite apparently claims to have faith in public only to attain his goals or in order to take advantage of the rulings of Islam. Yet, he would eagerly seize any opportunity to give up or attack Islam; this point is strongly stressed by Allah *the Almighty* in the following verse in which He *Glorified is He* states:

فَكَيْفَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ
جَاءُوكَ يَحْلِفُونَ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَا إِلَّا أَحْسَنًا وَتَوَفِّيْنَا

**If disaster strikes them because of what they themselves
have done, then they will come to you, swearing by God,
'We only wanted to do good and achieve harmony' [62]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 62)**

Thus, the hypocrites are faced with the following question: 'Why did you defer to the rule of unjust tyrants instead of resorting to Prophet

Muhammad?' The answer they are expected to give is the following: 'O, Prophet Muhammad! We only wanted to do well and not to burden you with our problems. Furthermore, we wanted to settle our problems and disputes not involving you so that you would not worry yourself about our problems. As a matter of fact, we never intended by acting as such to disobey you, nor were we disappointed with your judgement.' Truthfully speaking, they claim so after they had been exposed before people by Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'If disaster strikes them...' the word *Musibah*, or calamity is the disaster that causes harm to a person. Since they are hypocrites, they wanted to keep their hypocrisy secret. Thus, when an event results in revealing this secret, it is considered a calamity even though the event itself is not a disaster. As a matter of fact, when we identify hypocrites and expose them before themselves and others, we thus protect ourselves from their evil. However, this exposure is a calamity for them since they wanted to use such hypocrisy to attain personal goals

Thus, revealing their hypocrisy is a disaster for them. They believe that hypocrisy is useful for them as they benefit from the rulings of Islam and its implementation. However, when their hypocrisy is revealed, they are struck with a calamity, exactly like someone who went out to steal and was surprised upon entering the site of his crime to see the police waiting to arrest him. Undoubtedly, when the police arrested this thief, this would be considered something good for him since the act of arresting prevented him from committing the crime of theft. Yet, the thief himself would think that he had been struck with a disaster.

When hypocrites are struck with a disaster, they make false oaths in the Name of Allah, and then try to apologise for what they did. They actually do so since they want to remain in permanent hypocrisy. Therefore, they swear to Allah that they deferred to the rule of unjust tyrants since they only wanted to settle their disputes and to achieve harmony with their adversaries. However, Allah *the Almighty* stresses this fact in the following verse in which He states:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ
وَعِظْهُمْ وَقُلْ لَهُمْ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَوْلًا بَلِيغًا

**God knows well what is in the hearts of these people,
so ignore what they say, instruct them, and speak to
them about themselves using penetrating words [63]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 63)**

How great is the Knowledge of Allah *the Almighty*! He *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that had He so willed, He would have made him know them so that he would certainly recognise them by their marks, and most certainly he can recognise them by the intent of (their) speech. (*Muhammad*: 30)

This means that had Allah *the Almighty* so willed, He could have informed him *peace and blessings be upon him* of the hypocrites so that he could easily and clearly identify them. However, He *Glorified is He* concealed them in the hope that they would repent. He *the Almighty* then told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he would be able to identify them through their style and discourse.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Allah knows well what is in the hearts of these people...' The hypocrites resorted to unjust tyrants for arbitration. They did so because they knew that they were not right. In addition, they knew that if they referred the dispute to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he would judge justly. However, these hypocrites are really annoyed with the application of justice. So, the question to be asked here is the following: 'Did they really want to do well and to bring about harmony? Or did they not want to seek the truth and Justice?' They sought false judgment.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ignore what they say since he (Prophet Muhammad) punished them, which means that he took revenge on them. However, Allah did not want him to do so since He *the Almighty* wanted to retaliate on his behalf. In addition, he (Prophet Muhammad) did so since He *Glorified is He* wanted their true intentions to be gradually revealed and exposed to the society of believers. This way, believers would know that there were people who infused themselves subtly

into their community. For this reason, you (O, Muslims) have to be careful and cautious. Furthermore, if you leave them alone and turn away from them, you will no longer occupy your mind with calling them to Islam.

He *the Almighty* then tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to 'instruct them.' This means the following: 'Tell them (O, Prophet Muhammad) to be ashamed of their deeds.' He *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse with His saying, '...and speak to them about themselves using penetrating words.' This part of the verse implies an order to Prophet Muhammad to call them in such a way that would reveal to them the ultimate objective and purpose of the human soul and which, meanwhile, would achieve the goals of admonition.

In other words, Allah *the Almighty* orders Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to warn them (hypocrites) in a way that terrifies, deters them (from the evil consequences of hypocrisy) or even exposes what they have concealed in their hearts so that they would know that Allah has revealed to him (Prophet Muhammad) what they hide and veil in the hope that they might be ashamed of what they do and thus refrain from doing it. Their intentions should be exposed to them, but not publicly because if he were not exposing them in public, they may feel shy enough to quit their hypocrisy. Furthermore, he should do as such since any admonition will achieve a good effect if the admonisher puts forward his admonition privately. In reality, exposing the one to be admonished in public may provoke his stubbornness. But if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* admonishes him privately, he would realise that he is still merciful towards him, by dealing with him in a good and lenient manner.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'instruct them, and speak to them about themselves using penetrating words' thus indicates that if he (Prophet Muhammad) were to do so (expose them) in public, he will set this as an example for others to follow. Allah has already revealed solely to him the disbelief in the hearts of disbelievers. Indeed, He *the Almighty* did not reveal such secrets to anyone but him (Prophet Muhammad). As a matter of fact, there are some people who are falsely accused of disbelief. This happens in spite of the fact that our *Shari'a* tells us to ward off legal punishments when there is doubt and uncertainty involved.

A case in point is when a thief is caught, but there is still doubt as to whether or not he was the perpetrator of the crime in question. This doubt consequently should be interpreted in the interest of the defendant. Thus, we should avoid the administration of the penalty due to the existence of doubt. It is indeed not in the interest of Muslims to say daily that the hand of a thief has been cut off or that an adulteress has been stoned to death. However, if a crime is discovered and there is no doubt about the identity of its perpetrator, then the proper penalty should be administered and imposed. We avoid administering penalties so that we avoid harming an innocent person. Yet, we administer the penalties to deter everyone whose inner self may feel tempted to do something prohibited by Allah *the Almighty*. In fact, when a penalty is administered in a given community, it is only carried out for a short period of time until the rate of crimes shrinks, to the extent that there are no longer thefts or fornications being committed.

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'instruct them, and speak to them about themselves using penetrating words' carries an order to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to seriously threaten them so that they would be deterred from doing wrong. It may also indicate that he (Prophet Muhammad) is supposed to reveal and expose to them their concealed flaws and mistakes, yet he should do so privately since this is more likely to make them accept his admonition and refrain from being stubborn.

Index

Chapter of *al-Imran* (Continued)

Verse 163	7
Verse 164	8
Verse 165	19
Verse 166	24
Verse 167	25
Verse 168	28
Verse 169	30
Verse 170	31
Verse 171	32
Verse 172	33
Verse 173	35
Verse 174	37
Verse 175	42
Verse 176	44
Verse 177	52
Verse 178	55
Verse 179	58
Verse 180	66
Verse 181	70

Chapter of *an-Nisa'*

Verse 1	148
Verse 2	160
Verse 3	162
Verse 4	175
Verse 5	177
Verse 6	178
Verse 7	181
Verse 8	182

Verse 182	76
Verse 183	79
Verse 184	84
Verse 185	88
Verse 186	93
Verse 187	98
Verse 188	101
Verse 189	108
Verse 190	110
Verse 191	118
Verse 192	124
Verse 193	124
Verse 194	128
Verse 195	128
Verse 196	130
Verse 197	132
Verse 198	132
Verse 199	133
Verse 200	134

Verse 9	183
Verse 10	187
Verse 11	188
Verse 12	195
Verse 13	201
Verse 14	211
Verse 15	223
Verse 16	232

Verse 17	236	Verse 41	437
Verse 18	243	Verse 42	441
Verse 19	246	Verse 43	444
Verse 20	254	Verse 44	450
Verse 21	257	Verse 45	468
Verse 22	261	Verse 46	469
Verse 23	264	Verse 47	475
Verse 24	283	Verse 48	489
Verse 25	308	Verse 49	495
Verse 26	308	Verse 50	501
Verse 27	309	Verse 51	502
Verse 28	314	Verse 52	506
Verse 29	316	Verse 53	507
Verse 30	326	Verse 54	511
Verse 31	327	Verse 55	520
Verse 32	364	Verse 56	524
Verse 33	374	Verse 57	532
Verse 34	375	Verse 58	543
Verse 35	386	Verse 59	555
Verse 36	390	Verse 60	565
Verse 37	409	Verse 61	568
Verse 38	417	Verse 62	570
Verse 39	425	Verse 63	572
Verse 40	429		