

vol. { 5 }

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد { 5 }



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

vol. (5)

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The Chapter of

an-Nisa'

Continued

He *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ
ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ
الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٦٤﴾

**All the messengers We sent were meant to be obeyed, by
God's leave. If only [the hypocrites] had come to you
[Prophet] when they wronged themselves, and begged God's
forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for
them, they would have found that God accepts repentance
and is most merciful [64] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 64)**

The main purpose of sending the truth to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to teach people the *Shari'a* laid down by Him *the Almighty* as manifested in the course He *Glorified is He* set and to guide them to the true religion. This course involves a set of rules in the form of 'dos' and 'don'ts.' Yet, whatever matter for which there is no explicit commands as to whether or not one should do it, one is thus free to choose whatever suits his case. Indeed, no Prophet brought about legal obligations from his own mind; rather, all legal obligations are decreed by Him *the Almighty*. Thus, a Messenger is only obeyed due to the authorisation granted to him by Allah. Therefore, obedience to Allah is clearly manifested by obeying Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Likewise, he may be authorised by Allah in other matters. This is quite clear in the Divine Order in the chapter of *al-Hashr* in which Allah orders us to accept willingly whatever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives us and to refrain from what he prohibits us: 'whatsoever the Messenger gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it.' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

This clearly indicates that those who truly believe in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have to obey him in light of the authorisation given to him by Allah *the Almighty* to enact laws.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves, and begged Allah's Forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would be found that Allah accepts repentance and is most Merciful', *Zhulm an-Nafs*,

or sinning against oneself, happens when one hastens to satiate a desire without carefully considering the suffering he will afflict himself with. Undoubtedly, 'sinning against oneself' is the most egregious form of injustice one could commit. It is plausible that one may wrong another person, but to intentionally wrong oneself seems rather implausible. Any sinner, who does not fulfil an enacted legal obligation and pursues something prohibited by Allah *the Almighty* may be under the false impression that he has achieved a gratification when, in fact, what he is really doing, is a great injustice to himself. This is why we say to the one who commits sins like refraining from offering prayers and being lazy about performing them, drinking wine or committing any other form of sin: 'You have wronged yourself since you have mistakenly thought that you were gratifying and enjoying it, when in fact, you have incurred by doing it severe and eternal suffering. You cannot thereby be entrusted with yourself.'

The 'self', as we know, refers to the union of the soul with physical form. This union is what causes the human self to be either *Nafsun Mutma'innah*, or a tranquil self, or *Nafsun Ammarah bi As-Su'*, or a self that incites one to do wrong, or *Nafsun Lawwamah*, or a reproaching self. Once the soul is united with its physical form, the human self comes into existence. Before being unified with its physical form, the soul is good by nature, and so is its physical form prior to being united with the soul. In fact, the physical form is subservient and subdued to the Will of Allah *the Almighty* and thus acts according to His Commands. Thus, we shall never differentiate between the soul and its physical form by calling them as follows: 'the material life is such and such, while the spiritual life is such and such.' This is completely wrong.

The physical form is good in an absolute sense, obedient and subservient to Allah *the Almighty* and so is the soul. So, when does corruption ensue? Undoubtedly, when the soul is unified with its physical form and this integration between both of them occurs, we say, 'O, man, who is legally charged! Are you going to eagerly obey the Commands of Allah *the Almighty* and thus acquire a reassured soul? Or will you choose for your soul to be a reproaching one? Or will you choose to show disobedience to Allah and, as a result, acquire a soul which is a persistent enjoiner of evil?

This raises a question, 'Who wrongs whom?' It is your human desire when violating the Rules of Allah that it wrongs the unity of the soul and

matter. As a matter of fact, when one commits a sin, he mistakenly thinks that he has satiated his, yet he did not taken into consideration the fact that by doing this crime, he has caused himself much trouble. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves... Let us then distinguish that there is a difference between someone committing a sin to satisfy his lust and another who wrongs himself. This difference is quite clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *Al-Imran* in which He *Glorified is He* encourages those who commit an act of indecency or an injustice against their souls to remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their souls: 'And those who, when they commit a foul deed or wrong themselves, remember Allah and implore forgiveness for their sins...' (*Al-Imran*: 135).

Therefore, this indicates clearly that committing a shameful deed and sinning against oneself are two different things. By committing a shameful deed, one marginally gratifies himself. However, the one who sinned against himself did not do so; he neither gratified himself nor left it alone, and he did not satiate his lusts in this worldly life, nor did he mercifully protect it from torment in the Hereafter. A (false) witness who gives false testimony so that someone may take the right of another is committing an egregious sin against himself. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is reported to have said, 'Hasten to do good deeds before you are overtaken by tribulations which would be like a part of the dark night. A man would be a believer in the morning and become a disbeliever in the evening, or he would be a believer in the evening and become a disbeliever in the morning. He would sell his Faith for worldly goods.'⁽¹⁾

In addition, one may sin against himself by deferring to the rule of the powers of evil or unjust tyrants. However, when one defers to the rule of a ruler or a judge, he, while doing so, does not know for certain whether the ruler or judge will pass the verdict or the judgement correctly or not.

Therefore, Allah's saying, '...If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves...' indicates that they refrained from going to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, the first step of their repentance is to retract what they have committed, and then they

(1) *Muslim, Sahih*

should seek Allah's forgiveness for their sins. Truly, the sin they committed by not going to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* plainly means sinning against the One Who sent him *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, people say, 'Insulting Prophet Muhammad means insulting the One Who sent him.' It is true that their refraining from going to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a matter that concerns him, but if you carefully reflect on the matter, you will fully realise that it is concerns the One Who sent him, or, namely, Allah *the Almighty*. This is due to the fact that he did not do anything of his own accord. After Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is sufficiently conciliated, he will ask Allah to forgive them. Thus, they must first go to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; second, they must ask Allah for forgiveness and third, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would then ask Allah to forgive them.

He *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse with His saying, '...they would have found that Allah accepts repentance and is most merciful.' This part of the verse clearly indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* will not accept their repentance, nor will He show Mercy to them unless they return to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* instead of turning their backs to him. Then, they are supposed to ask Allah for forgiveness since He *the Almighty* did not send any Messenger or Prophet but to be obeyed by His Leave. Thus, if you ever disagree with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* you should take into account the fact that you have actually disagreed with the One Who sent him, namely, Allah *the Almighty*. Actually, if you have asked Allah *the Almighty* for forgiveness without conciliating Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, He will not accept your repentance. No one can strengthen his relation with Allah *Glorified is He* without improving his relation with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the first place.

When they fulfil all these requirements, which include going to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asking Allah and him for their forgiveness, they will find that Allah accepts their repentance and is most Merciful. The word *Tawwab*, or acceptor of repentance, indicates that their sin was great and major.

Allah *the Almighty* created His creation knowing that their thoughts and desires are subject to change and that desires might flare up in their selves at

any given moment, causing them to slip into sinning. Since our Lord is the Most Merciful, He explained to us the remedy to such forgetfulness. It is inconceivable that He *the Almighty* would abandon His sinful servants. This is why He allowed His sinful servants to return to Him because He *Glorified is He* likes His servants to repent and take refuge in Him even if they sin frequently.

Therefore, He *the Almighty* teaches us how to remove the effects of sins. He thus said: '...If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves...' The remedy for a given sin is to return to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since they were forgetful and careless of the fact that Allah's Commands and His message, along with His Legislation and Rulings, was conveyed to them by Prophet Muhammad and is revealed from Allah. After submitting and returning to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they should ask Allah for forgiveness, along with asking him to beseech Allah for their forgiveness and to support their repentance. If they do so, they will find that Allah accepts their repentance and that He is Most Merciful. He *Glorified is He* and then says:

فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

By your Lord, they will not be true believers until they let you decide between them in all matters of dispute, and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions, accepting them totally [65] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 65)

Thus, we should support our faith by accepting and embracing all what has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, just as much as the hypocrites asked someone else to adjudicate amongst them, despite their ostensibly embracing of Islam, they were banished out of sphere of faith. All believers should heed this example.

We must note that the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'By your Lord, they will not believe...' contains the Arabic particle *La* which indicates negation. It also clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* had sworn by Himself. We know that that hypocrites had deferred to the rule of someone other than Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even though they had professed that he is the Messenger of Allah. So, is it conceivable for them to admit such a testimony, and then seek another judge and refuse to accept his *peace and blessings be upon him* judgment? Allah passed His Judgment on this matter. He *Glorified is He* plainly states that hypocrites, by doing so, can no longer be called Muslims. Thus, if it is confirmed that they testified that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and at the same time, they resorted to another arbitrator beside him, then, they should know that Allah's Judgment on the matter is that they do not merit the honour of professing that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. Allah *the Almighty* then swore by Himself. As a matter of fact, we, human beings, are not allowed to swear except in the in the Name of Allah, but Allah *Glorified is He* may swear in the name of whatever thing He likes and about whatever thing He wills. That is why we find Him *the Almighty* in many verses in the Quran swearing by Mount Sinai (*at-Tur: 1*), *adh-Dhariat*, or winds that scatter the dust far and wide (*adh-Dhariyat: 1*), *at-Tin* and *az-Zaytun*, or figs and olives (*at-Tin: 1*) and the angels (*as-Saffat: 1*).

However, as far as humans are concerned, we find that He *the Almighty* did not swear by anyone except His Messenger Muhammad. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* swears by the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. (*al-Hijr: 72*)

In this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Hijr*, He *the Almighty* swears by the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they were blindly wandering, intoxicated. This means that they are astray inasmuch as they continue in their state of being misguided, and thus, they can never be guided to the truth. He *Glorified is He* also swears by Himself as plainly stated in the chapter of *adh-Dhariyat* in which he *the Almighty* swore by being the Lord of the heavens and the earth. (*adh-Dhariyat: 23*) As a matter of fact, when He *the Almighty* swears by the heavens and earth, this clearly indicates how great these two creatures are, which is a point that is strongly stressed by the verse in which He *the Almighty* states that the creation of the heavens and the earth is indeed greater than that of man. (*Ghafir: 57*) This means that if you, human being, draw a comparison between the creation of the heavens and the earth and your creation, you will fully realise that their creation is greater than yours.

The verse under discussion plainly indicates Allah's Honouring Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Furthermore, it definitively proves the high status and superiority of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, do not think (O, mankind) that when Allah *the Almighty* states that the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of man that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is included amongst the men referred to in this verse. He *the Almighty* explains that this is not the case by swearing in the name of the life of Prophet Muhammad in the same way He *Glorified is He* swore in the name of the heavens and the earth. Undoubtedly, swearing by the fact of being the Lord of the heavens and the earth points out the Absolute and the Ultimate Power of Allah *the Almighty*; He is the Creator, the Lord, the Protector and the Lord.

The cosmic law suffices for the purpose of creating the heavens and the earth and running their affairs properly. However, the creation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* can be interpreted as a supreme goal, meaning that He *the Almighty* wanted to bring him up in a way that encompasses all the graces of prophecy. He *Glorified is He* thus told him: 'By your Lord Who created, fashioned, brought up and qualified you to be the best of His Creation and the seal of His Prophets and to be a Mercy to His entire Creation, they will not truly believe until they let you decide between them in all matters of disputes.' Is it inconceivable after all of this not to let Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* decide in all matters of disputes among you?!

Hakkam is an Arabic verb that is translated by the verbal clause 'to let you decide between them in all the matters of dispute'; it shares the same linguistic root with judgment, arbitration, wisdom and control. All these semantic references are derived from the word *Al-Hakamah*, which is the iron-brace, placed in the mouth of the horse to keep it from going astray and is used by the owner or rider of the horse to direct him to the right or to the left. Similarly, *Al-Hikmah*, or wisdom, is to keep everyone from going astray and appropriating other people's rights. Thus, arbitration, judgment and wisdom are all words that refer to the importance of placing things in their right and due positions.

The verb *Shajara*, which means disagree, is derived from the root composed of the three letters: *Ash-Shin*, *Al-Jim* and *Ar-Ra'*. If you see these three letters

in any given word, then you shall know that it is derived from the word *Shajarah*, or tree, with which you are familiar. In fact, there are certain plants that do not stick to each other. Yet, there are others that stick closely to each other and interweave together. For instance, we see certain kinds of trees that are often intertwined with each other and that have branches closely interlaced to the extent that the beholder will not be able to distinguish which leaves belong to which tree. Furthermore, if the two trees were of the same kind and they bore their fruits, you would not even be able to tell which fruits came from which tree. This means that things have become mixed with each other.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty Shajara Baynahum*, translated as 'disagree among themselves' means that a dispute has flared up, and things have become so intricate and confused with each other. When you try to separate between two intertwined trees of the same kind or distinguish their fruits from each other, you will not be able to do so since you will find that their identical branches have been interlaced with each other. However, if you are mainly interested in reaping the fruits of both trees, it will not make a difference which fruits come from which tree. You will just reap the fruits wherever they are, irrespective of the tree that bore it. Similarly, if you wanted to spend some time under the shade of a tree, you would not mind which tree is casting the shade you enjoy. This is the benefit of blending two equals with each other. However, if one wants a specific leaf, he will carefully choose it because he needs it for a specific purpose.

Naturally, the entire creation of Allah *the Almighty* is equal before Him. Thus, they were supposed to share property equally among themselves when they started to mingle and deal with each other. However, due to the fact that the human soul tends to be stingy by nature, people started to fight over property. For this reason, an intelligent judge must say to disputants, 'Do you want me to judge amongst you fairly and justly or based on what is better than justice?' The two may then be taken aback and wonder, 'Is there anything better than justice?' The judge may then answer, 'Yes, grace is better than justice, for as long as the subject matter of dispute is amongst brothers, then the interest of each party cannot be at odds with the interest of the other. Accordingly, there should be no dispute.' However, if there is disagreement, someone has to decisively arbitrate between the two altercating parties.

Who, then, can undertake this mission of judging disputes? It is undoubtedly our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is based and proven by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in which He swore by Himself that they would not be true believers unless they let him (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) decide in all matters of dispute amongst them. Faith is not merely a verbal utterance; rather, one must meet the requirements of faith to achieve this particular function. You, while embracing Islam, must say, 'I profess that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' However, in order for this utterance to be indicative of true faith, it has to be conjoined with action and the performance of action. Furthermore, one's life must be governed by this saying. Consequently, one must firmly believe that there is no one deserving to be worshipped except Allah *the Almighty*. Allah is the Only One Who issues (Divine) Commands. There is no benefactor except Him, and no one is capable of causing harm except Him *the Almighty*. Also, there is no legislator besides Him. Therefore, professing that there is no god but Allah is not merely a verbal utterance that you may completely ignore when you actually face a situation that calls for the application of the principle of faith. For example, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that hypocrites will not believe in the religion of Islam until they wholeheartedly let him (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) be the one to decide amongst them in all matters of dispute. Furthermore, they must find no resistance in their souls to his judgment. Moreover, they must completely accept the judgements and verdicts given by him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Thus, faith is not a mere verbal utterance. Rather, it entails the practical application of such statement by resorting and referring to it for day-to-day life chores and activities. This means that hypocrites do not really believe unless they turn their faith into actual practice, undoubtedly, Allah has chosen the most critical time in the experience of the human soul, namely, the moment of rivalry and disagreement that causes enmity and abets one to deviate from the truth. Then, Allah *the Almighty* emphasises the fact that hypocrites must completely accept the judgement of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He *the Almighty* thus says: 'By your Lord, they will not be true believers until

they let you decide between them in all matters of dispute, and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions, accepting them completely.'

If we reflect carefully upon the three conditions: the first is 'If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves'; the second is 'and (they) begged Allah's Forgiveness', while the third condition is 'and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them', we will find that these three represent the remedy for expiating sins. In the same respect, you are also admitted into the realm of faith upon meeting the following three conditions: the first is 'By your Lord, they will not be true believers until they let you decide between them in all matters of dispute'; the second is 'and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions'; while the third is 'accepting them completely.' Thus, the two statements are about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: one pertaining to the removal of sins, while the other is concerned with faith.

I thus do not exaggerate if I say that I pondered on this saying of Allah for more than ten years, namely, 'If only [the hypocrites] had come to you [Prophet] when they wronged themselves, and begged Allah's Forgiveness, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would be found that Allah accepts repentance and is most merciful.' This statement is an admonition and recipe for salvation that You, Allah, gave to the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, what about those who were not contemporaries of him *peace and blessings be upon him*? What admonition and recipe for salvation would You give them? In fact, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all of mankind. So, how is it conceivable that there is an admonition that this addressed exclusively to only those who were contemporaries of him *peace and blessings be upon him* and of which those who have not seen and lived with him would be deprived?!

This question preoccupied my mind for a long time without reaching any decisive answer. However, I have reached the same conclusion of some scholars before me that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said the following Hadith as a means of comforting and conciliating believers during all times, 'My life is good for you. You will do things and things will be done to you. When I die, my death will also be good for you. Your deeds will be shown to me. If I see that you do good deeds, I will thank Allah for that, and

if I see that you do evil deeds, I will ask Him *the Almighty* to forgive you.⁽¹⁾ Consider the conciliating tone in the following saying of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '...Your deeds will be shown to me (after my death). If I see that you do good deeds, I will be pleased, and if I see that you do evil deeds, I will ask Allah *the Almighty* to forgive you.'⁽²⁾

The fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will ask Allah *the Almighty* to forgive us is thus guaranteed. All what we have to do is to ask Allah *Glorified is He* for forgiveness. In other words, what remains for them is to return to him, or in other words, to adhere firmly to his *Sunnah*. Regarding this, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is reported to have said, 'I have left two matters with you. As long as you hold to them, you will not go astray. They are the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet.'⁽³⁾

As much as the contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to rely to him, we rely on his rulings, tradition and legislation. He thus asks forgiveness for all of us. What is left for us is to ask Allah for forgiveness by saying, 'We seek forgiveness from Allah, the Magnificent, whom there is none worthy of worship but Him, the Ever-Living, the Lord of all existence, and we repent to Him.' We will do so if Allah wills.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...and find no resistance in their souls to your decisions, accepting them completely'; means that they would not find any resentment or hesitancy in their heart when they accept and submit to any obligation or ruling decreed by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Legal obligations, as we know, often assume the form of 'dos' or 'don'ts.' However, verdicts differ in that they are passed when people disagree with each other on a particular matter. This requires us to accept the verdict in any given dispute if it is issued by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, we have to submit completely to what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* decrees, whether it be a legal obligation or a verdict. He *the Almighty* then says:

(1) *As-Suyuti, Sahih*

(2) *Ibn Sa'd, Good*

(3) *Muawtta', Good*

وَلَوْ أَنَّا كُنَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَنِ اقْتُلُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ أَوْ أَخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ مَا فَعَلُوهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ
مِّنْهُمْ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ فَعَلُوا مَا يُوعَظُونَ بِهِ لَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُمْ وَأَشَدَّ تَثْبِيثًا ﴿٦٦﴾

if We had ordered, 'Lay down your lives' or 'Leave your homes,' they would not have done so, except for a few – it would have been far better for them and stronger confirmation of their faith, if they had done as they were told [66] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 66)

In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* equates the command of killing oneself to the command of forsaking one's homeland. Killing signifies the departure of the soul from the body by a coercive force other than natural death. Similarly, the command to forsake one's homeland is a coercive evacuation from one's homeland. Therefore, the process of killing is described as being akin to, or as bad as, the process of being driven out of one's homeland. Both cause suffering; both are difficult experiences for human beings.

The True Lord *the Most High* also mentions these two rulings that were imposed, at one time, upon the people of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and (remember) when Musa (Moses) said to his people, 'O, my people! Verily, you have wronged yourselves by worshipping the calf. So turn in repentance to your Creator and kill yourselves...' (*al-Baqara*: 54).

It was narrated that when the people of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* heard this ruling, seventy thousands of them killed themselves. We also know that the people of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* were driven out of their homes and wandered around in the desert. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Therefore, it (this holy land) is forbidden to them for forty years; in distraction they will wander through the land.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 26) This means that they were forbidden to either enter or possess the holy land. In this respect, the True Lord *the Most High* clarifies that Islam, unlike the ordinances of previous Divine messages, did not rule that repentance should involve killing oneself. These laws were based on the threat of inevitable ruin of the person whose inner self tempts to violate Allah's Law. It is out of Allah's Kindness that He *the Most High* did not impose any such ruling on us. For this reason, our masters, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, 'Ammar ibn Yassir and Thabit ibn Qays *Allah be pleased with them* collectively responded to this verse by saying, 'By Allah, if we were commanded

to do so, we would have done it.' Our leader 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* also said, 'By Allah, if we were commanded to do so, we would have done it, but, praise be to Allah, He did not decree this upon us. This is due to Allah's Kindness. He *the Most High* explains to them that 'If We (Allah) had ordered them (saying), "Kill yourselves" or "Leave your homes"...' (*an-Nisa'*: 66), as He had commanded the people of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* what would they have done then? Instead, our Lord accepted their supplication, 'Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which You did lay on those before us. Our Lord! Put not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear....' (*al-Baqara*: 286)

Allah *the Most High* answered their supplication. So, the question that arises is the following: 'What would you do if Allah had decreed such a ruling for you?' The reason underlying this story was that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a cousin named Az-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwam *Allah be pleased with him* who was one of the Ten Given the Glad Tidings of Paradise. He and another man named Hatib ibn Abu Balt'a *Allah be pleased with him* used to live in Medina. Anyone who visits Medina knows that there is an area there called Al-Harrah where the ground is covered by black stones with a burnt-like appearance. There are also many *Hitan*, or gardens, in this area. People there used to call a garden *Ha'it*, which means wall; it had gotten this name due to the fear of the destruction of their land by floods, they used to build a wall around cultivated lands that would protect it from floods and delineate its borders. Hatib ibn Abu Balt'a *Allah be pleased with him* owned a piece of land that was lower than the land that was owned by Az-Zubayr, *Allah be pleased with him*. So the flood would flow downwards from the land of Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* to the land of Hatib *Allah be pleased with him*. We know that rain falls over a place in a scattered manner; subsequently, water from different directions converges into a rivulet which the Arabs called *Shiraj* and used to irrigate their lands.

When a flood occurred, both Az-Zubayr and Hatib *Allah be pleased with them* wanted to irrigate their lands, which resulted in a dispute between them. The land of Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* was higher than that of Hatib *Allah be pleased with him* who wanted the water to pass through his land first, and then have Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* start irrigating his land. When they asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to arbitrate between them, he passed a verdict in favour of Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* since

justice was on his side. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would never infringe on someone else's right for the sake of kinship. Indeed, there are instances where, in order to gain fame for being just and fair, certain people make erroneous judgements. For example, someone's son may have a dispute with another person, and just for the sake of avoiding people thinking that he is biased towards his son, he may pass a judgment against him. This is unjust. Justice requires that you judge justly, and then ask your son to waive his right by way of favour. True courage consists in judging fairly, even if this judgment is against yourself since truth and justice should be dearer to you than your own self.

This incident is related by Imam Al-Bukhari *Allah be pleased with him* in his *Sahih* as follows: Abu Al-Yaman narrated on the authority of Shu'aib, and he on the authority of Az-Zuhari, who narrated that 'Urwa ibn Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* said that (his father) Az-Zubayr once disputed with an *Ansari* man, who was a participant in (the battle of) Badr, over a stream in Al-Harrah from which they both used to water their date palm trees. They brought their dispute before the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Az-Zubayr, 'O Zubayr, irrigate (your garden) first, and then let the water flow to your neighbour.' However, the *Ansari* man became angry and said, 'O, Messenger of Allah, is it because he (Az-Zubayr) is your cousin?' On that, the face of Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* changed colour (due to anger), and he said (to Az-Zubayr), 'Irrigate (your garden), and then hold the water till it rises up to the walls (the pits surrounding the palms).' Thus, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* allowed Az-Zubayr to take his right in full, although before that he had suggested to Az-Zubair a middle course of action that suited them both. However, when the *Ansari* man made the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* angry, he gave Az-Zubair his right in full, as stated clearly in his ruling. 'Urwah then added that Az-Zubayr said, 'By Allah, I think the following verse was revealed concerning this case: "But no, by your Lord, they can have no faith, until they make you (O, Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them."' (*an-Nisa'*: 65) ⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in the *Book of Sulh (Reconciliation)*; Muslim in the *Book of Fada'il (Merits)*, At-Tirmidhi in the *Book of Ahkam (Legal Rulings)*, An-Nasa'i in the *Book of Qudah (Judges)* and Ibn Majah in *Al-Muqadimah (Introduction)*

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ruled in favour of allowing Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* to irrigate his land and then to let the water flow down to his neighbour, Hatib ibn Abu Balt'a *Allah be pleased with him* disliked this verdict. He objected to it, saying that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ruled this way since Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* was his cousin. It was customary for Arabs to drop a subtle word only and leave the rest of the meaning to the insight of the listener to figure out. It was as if Hatib ibn Abu Balt'a *Allah be pleased with him* meant to say that he ruled in his favour because he is his cousin. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, therefore, became angry on realising that Ibn Abu Balt'a *Allah be pleased with him* did not appreciate the justice of a true verdict. Many of the people who searched for a way to attack Islam claimed that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* initially ruled that Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* should water his land and then let the water flow down to Hatib. However, when Hatib *Allah be pleased with him* was infuriated with the verdict, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* to water his land and to take his right in full, along with taking as much water as his land required, and then letting the water flow down to his neighbour. Therefore, they ask: Why did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* change his verdict?

Such people do not pay attention to the fact that the land that belonged to Az-Zubayr was high, whereas the land of Hatib was low. If you look at any valley, you will notice that fertility and greenness is often concentrated in the centre of the valley, and not at its periphery. Water always flows from a high ground to low ground. Accordingly, if you allow the owner of the lower land to irrigate his land first, the owner of the higher land will have nothing left for him.

This shows that the first ruling was based on facilitating matters and building tolerance on the part of Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him*. As for the second ruling, it was based entirely on justice and fair dealing. By the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* allowing Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* to exercise his full right and take as much water as he needed, it was as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying to Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with him* that he would deal with him justly without bias or considerations. The True Lord *the Most High* says: 'But no, by your Lord, they

can have no faith, until they make you (O, Muhammad) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission.' (*an-Nisa*': 65)

If this was the order received from Allah, how would you react if such rulings, revealed to the prophets of previous nations, became binding upon you? In fact, when they were ordered to kill themselves or forsake their homelands, only a few, who had a firm and unwavering faith, fulfilled these orders. From this we can learn that Allah never leaves a nation completely devoid of those who adhere to His Laws and Commands and fulfil them as they ought to be fulfilled.

Concerning '...if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them...' (*an-Nisa*': 66), assume that Allah ordered you 'Kill yourself' or 'Forsake your homeland' and people complied with His Order, they would find that their compliance with Allah's Order would bring them much more good than what they expected as opposed to refraining from what they were ordered. People should ask themselves, 'What is the purpose of having faith in Allah, and what is the use of such faith?'

Through out your worldly journey, you are experiencing and utilising the means and causes that Allah created for you. Why should you be upset about proceeding to live with the One Who initiates the cause of all causes? Why should you be upset if Allah said, 'Kill yourself'? He told you so because through death you are transferred back to the One Who initiates the cause of all causes and shall live forever without labour or toil.

The Rulings of Allah are always intended for the elevation of mankind. During our worldly lives, we see people who are given their food, ready to eat, just by ringing a bell. However, no matter how improved and advanced worldly life gets, it cannot reach the extent of having what one desires merely by thinking of it without even going through the trouble of ringing a bell or exerting any effort. So, why should any human who lives depending on means and causes and is about to proceed to live with the One Who initiates the cause of all causes be upset? On the contrary, they should be happy since they will find much more goodness. By comparing your worldly life to the Afterlife, you will discover that your stay in this world is uncertain and finite, along with the pleasure you experience in it being restricted by the limits of your

own capacity. However, when you proceed to meet with Allah, you will cease to be finite, neither in terms of lifetime nor capacity. Rather, you will live eternally and the delights which you will have, will not be by human standards, but according to Allah's Grace and Generosity.

Also, concerning '...if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them and more strengthening (to faith)' (*an-Nisa'*: 66), the goodness brought about will, indeed, be more strengthening to the faith of others since they who see them adhering to the Commands of Allah will learn with certainty that these commands would surely lead them to a much better end than their status quo. Thus, their obedience to Allah strengthens the faith of those who follow them. Or this verse could mean that if they abide by the Command of Allah, which entails following and obeying and complying with Prophet Muhammad's rulings, since he never says anything out of personal bias or interest, this would be for their own good both in this life and the Hereafter and would effectively strengthen and stabilise the faith in their hearts.

وَإِذَا لَأَتَيْنَهُمْ مِّن لَّدُنَّا أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٦٧﴾

**And We would have given them a rich reward
of Our own [67] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 67)**

If they had done what they were advised to do, then 'indeed We (Allah) should then have bestowed upon them a great reward from Ourselves' (*an-Nisa'*: 67). Once you hear 'from Ourselves' (*an-Nisa'*: 67) know that what follows is outside the power or action of any created being and is purely a bounty from Allah. The True Lord *the Most High* reveals to us His Path and Law through His Messengers, yet He *the Most High* explains that He has singled out some people for special bounties and gifted them with special knowledge out of His Grace. He is the One Who says: 'Then they found one of Our servants, unto whom We had bestowed mercy from Us, and whom We had taught knowledge from Us.' (*al-Kahf*: 65)

The previous noble verse signifies that the knowledge that Allah *the Most High* gave to this servant was unknown to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Allah's bestowal of knowledge is determined by His Will, and we already know that good deeds and the rewards for them follow a specific system. Anyone who does

a good deed is granted a tenfold reward in return, but there are certain good deeds that are rewarded without limit. Allah repays such deeds according to His Grace. We encounter instances of this in many of our life's dealings. Let me give you this simple example, and for Allah is the highest and loftiest description. For example, you may ask your son, 'How much will the payment be for this work?' He may answer, 'A hundred pounds.' You may then say, 'Here is a hundred for the work you are doing and an extra fifty pounds from me.' What does 'from me' mean in this context? It means that the extra fifty pounds do not have anything to do with the payment for the work he had done.

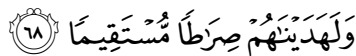
Based on what we have previously discussed concerning the part of the verse: '...if We (Allah) had ordered them (saying), "Kill yourselves"...' (*an-Nisa'*: 66), there is a difference between killing and death. It is true that both of them involve the termination of life, but death is a termination of life without the destruction of the body. On the other hand, killing is a termination of life through the destruction of the body, as when someone breaks the head of someone else or shoots him with a bullet in the heart. This is a destruction of the biological functioning of the body. The soul cannot dwell except in a body with certain characteristics intact. In the latter case, the soul does not depart from the body first; rather, the body has been destroyed first. Once the body is destroyed, it no longer becomes fit to contain the soul. The well-known example is that of an electric bulb. If you throw a small pebble at it, it will shatter into pieces, and the light will go out even though electricity is still available. It can only generate light if it is contained in a vessel with specific characteristics intact. If these specific characteristics are eliminated, the light will go off as well. We thus need to get a new a bulb that has the proper specifications so as to get the light back.

The same holds for the soul; it can only dwell in a body of certain characteristics. If you damage these specific characteristics, the most important of which is the brain, by inflicting a severe blow to it, you will destroy the entire structure of the body. In this case, the soul departs from the body since it is no longer a proper dwelling for it. By contrast, death is a termination of life without bodily damage. The following saying of the True Lord *the Most High* establishes this point: 'Muhammad is no more than a Messenger and indeed (many) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)?' (*Al- 'Imran*: 144)

Accordingly, there are two ways in which life may be terminated: either death by natural causes or by killing. Death is a deprivation of life, and so is killing. However, killing is a deprivation of life through the destruction of the physical container of the soul. It differs from death in that the soul departs from the body without killing. For this reason, we may hear people say, 'This person died on his bed even though nothing had happened to him.'

Our Lord says about the one who dies as a martyr for His Cause: 'Think not of those who are killed in the Way of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive, with their Lord, and they have provision.' (*Al-Imran*: 169) If those who fight for the Cause of Allah will receive great bounties from Allah for having obeyed His Command, what would be the reward of those who kill themselves in compliance with His Order? The true examination of the self is always through the self itself, and not through its enemy.

What is distinctive about our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*? Did the True Lord *the Most High* tell him that He will cause his son to die? Or Did He *the Most High* inform him that another person would kill his son? No. Rather, Allah *the Most High* told him, 'Slay him yourself.' This is exaltation and purification of the human soul. Afterwards, Allah *the Most High* sent a great ram to be sacrificed instead of his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. This signifies that the command to kill oneself must have been for a higher good: '...if they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them and more strengthening (to faith). And indeed We (Allah) should then have bestowed upon them a great reward from Ourselves.' (*an-Nisa'*: 66-67) The True Lord *the Most High* then says:



**And guided them to a straight path [68]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 68)**

This passage proposes two options for us: either they should kill themselves or forsake their homeland. But to whom does the following saying of Allah apply: 'And indeed We (Allah) should have guided them to a Straight Way' (*an-Nisa'*: 68)? Is it addressed to those who were killed or to those who have

forsaken their homeland? Rather, it is addressed to those who have forsaken their homeland because they are the ones who are still alive. Afterwards, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَٰئِكَ رَفِيقًا ﴿٦٩﴾

**Whoever obeys God and the Messenger will be among those
He has blessed: the messengers, the truthful, those who bear
witness to the truth, and the righteous – what excellent
companions these are! [69] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 69)**

The command here is to 'obey', and the one who should be obeyed is Allah and His Messenger. This means that it is a Decree of Allah implemented by His Messenger, meaning, according to the Book of Allah *the Most High* and the *Sunnah*. When you see the word 'Messenger of Allah' associated with Allah through a conjunction without repeating the verb referring to each of them know that the matter at hand is one issue. In other words, it is not that each of them has a separate command. Rather, it is one command. It is an utterance and a decree by Allah and an application by the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* since he is the example to be followed. This is the reason why the True Lord *the Most High* says in another verse: '... they had said the word of disbelief and disbelieved after their (pretense of) Islam and planned that which they were not to attain. And they were not resentful except (for the fact) that Allah and His Messenger had enriched them of His bounty. So if they repent, it is better for them...' (*at-Tawba*: 74).

What this verse says is that it is not that Allah *the Most High* has enriched them in a way appropriate to Him and that the Messenger enriched them in a way that is appropriate to him. Enrichment in this context is from both Allah and His Messenger since everything Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did was in full compliance with the Command of His Lord. It is thus the same matter.

There is another matter which the Book of Allah addressed that preoccupied many contemporaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

No one was denied sitting and convening with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Anyone who came to the Prophet was allowed to sit at any available place. The one who wanted to stay in the company of the Prophet continued to sit, whereas the one who wanted to see him every now and then was allowed to come whenever he wished. Thawban, the freed slave of Prophet Muhammad, loved the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* greatly and had no patience to stay away from him. He once came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* with his face pale and his body emaciated. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw the grief on his face, he asked him, 'What is wrong with you, O, Thawban?' He replied, 'I do not suffer from any sickness or ailment. I simply love and miss you. I know that I can see you in this world whenever I want, but in the Hereafter you will be in the highest level of paradise with the Prophets. If I am admitted to paradise, I will be in a lower degree than yours. And, if I am not admitted, I will not see you at all.'

Following is the text of the Hadith as it was related by Ibn Jarir, according to his chain of transmission, on the authority of Sa'id ibn Jubayr: 'An *Ansari* man came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* while feeling sad. The Prophet asked him, "Why do I see you sad? " The man replied, "O, Prophet of Allah! It is due to something that I thought about." The Prophet asked, "What is it? " The *Ansari* man said, "We come to you day and night, looking at your face and sitting with you. Tomorrow, you will be elevated to the highest level of paradise along with the prophets and we will not be able to reach you." The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say anything, but later Jibril (Angel Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came down to him with the following verse, "And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad) shall be in the company of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His Grace – the Prophets...." (*an-Nisa'*: 69) So the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* sent someone to the man to give him the glad tidings.⁽¹⁾ But how does one come to think so highly? This is a man who was so preoccupied with his love for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and was simply wondering if this bounty of being in the company of Prophet Muhammad *peace*

(1) Narrated by Ibn Jarir.

and blessings be upon him would last. He thought of the different degrees of Paradise and realised how the status of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in paradise would be higher than that of anyone else. Thawban *Allah be pleased with him* only wanted to be assured that the bliss of seeing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not end. He was used to seeing him in this life, but then he thought about what might happen to him in the Afterlife. He might either be admitted to paradise or not. If he would not be admitted to Paradise, he would never see him. And, if he would enter paradise, the Prophet's level would be too high for him to reach. So what should he do?

Just consider how one ought to love the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Most High* is Kind and Merciful towards such a preoccupying love for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that is scarcely experienced by most people. In this regard, the True Lord *the Most High* says by way of assurance to those who strongly love the Prophet: 'And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger (Muhammad)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 69). This saying refers to those who are obedient to Allah *the Most High* and His Messenger and asserts that they '...shall be in the company of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His Grace – the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. And how excellent these companions are!' (*an-Nisa'*: 69)

This issue was related to Thawban *Allah be pleased with him* after having drawn the attention to an issue that may preoccupy the minds of those who strongly love Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He was comforted and assured that he will end up with the one whom he loved. However, the discourse is not limited to Thawban. The inquiry of Thawban was a cause for comforting and assuring all steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. These categories encompass all believers. For instance, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was surnamed As-Siddiq, the epitome of being ever so truthful. Why? It was for his unwavering belief in and affirmation of everything that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said. He never questioned any of the Prophet's actions or sayings. When people once asked Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* 'How come your companion, Muhammad, claims that he visited Jerusalem and returned (to Arabia) in the same night, whereas it takes an onerous journey on camels to get there?' Thus, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*

simply responded, 'If he said so, it must be true.' He wholeheartedly justified the honesty and truthfulness of the statement of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by the conditional antecedent, 'If he said so,' a conditional meaning that if he said so, it must be true. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* believed whatever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* did not wait until Quranic verses were revealed to vindicate the claim of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Also, as soon as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* declared, 'I am a Messenger', he responded affirmatively and immediately embraced Islam. Therefore, he was known As-Siddiq, or the epitome of being ever so truthful.

There were preludes in support of the truth of the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the early faith of those who first embraced Islam. The evidence upon which they based their faith preceded the Prophet's reception of Divine Revelation. They had personally experienced the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and knew him. So, when he started to communicate the Message of Islam, they immediately believed in him on the strength of the previous knowledge of and experiences with him, which indicated to them that he was truly a Messenger of Allah. A good illustrative example of this point was the response of Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told her, 'I fear for myself.' That is, he felt that something bad might happen to him, such as having a false vision or experiencing some evil from the devil. Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* said, 'Never! 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 calamity-afflicted ones.'⁽¹⁾ This was the first legal inference in the history of Islam.

This is the meaning of '...shall be in the company of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His Grace – the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous...' (*an-Nisa'*: 69) The martyrs are the ones who died in the Cause of Allah. However, when a believer fights for the cause of Allah, he should not say, 'I want to die as a martyr' and immediately jeopardises his life. Do not ever interpret the meaning of dying for the cause of Allah in this manner. You

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

are defending a Divine message and should fight your enemy without giving him a chance to kill you. If you let him kill you, you will make the Muslims lose one who truly strives in His Path. Just as martyrs enjoy a special status and reward, those who fight for the cause of Allah and survive the battle also enjoy a special status and reward. Islam wants to put forward evidence in support of the truth of its message; this evidence is only furnished by martyrs.

But could we all become martyrs? If so, who will communicate the Message of Allah to the rest of the people? We, therefore, want some people to stay and some to engage in striving and dying for the cause of Allah; each group has its own mission. For this reason, *At-Taqiya* which means concealing or disguising beliefs, feelings, opinions and/or strategies to save oneself from punishment, has been decreed as a legitimate practice. According to the principle of *At-Taqiya*, one may pretend to turn his back on Islam and outwardly show allegiance with disbelievers in order to preserve his life and to continue defending and fighting for the cause of Allah, on the condition that he hates and antagonises disbelieving warriors deep down in his heart. The reason why such a practice was decreed as permissible is that Islam wants to confirm through some believers the certainty of going to a better life if one were to die for the cause of Allah. Such truth is established by the martyrs. For this reason, the True Lord *the Most High* allows martyrs to see their blissful destination when their souls are about to depart their bodies. Martyrs then utter words heard by those who have not been granted martyrdom. For instance, some of them may say, 'Blow wind of Paradise, blow!' Or a martyr may utter a sentence indicating that he is actually looking at paradise so that those around him may hear him. The singular of *Shuhada'*, which is the Arabic word meaning those who with their lives bore witness to the truth, is *Shaheed* which is the Arabic word meaning the one who is killed for a specific cause or principle; alternatively, *Shuhada'* could be the plural of *Shaheed* which is the Arabic word for witness. Thus, *As-Shuhada'* are the ones who bear witness before Allah that they conveyed to their successors the Message of Allah as much as the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* testified that he conveyed the Message of Allah to them.

All these meanings revolve around bearing witness about something that a martyr asserts. Thus, we thus realise that we need two categories of people: those

who are killed for the Cause of Allah and those who survive death, also for the Cause of Allah. The former confirms the certainty of the blissful end and reward awaiting the martyr, and the latter sustains the communication of the Message of Allah; therefore, they are also bearing witness: '... so that (with your lives) you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind...' (*al-Baqara*: 143).

The last category speaks of 'the righteous.' (*an-Nisa'*: 69) A righteous person is the one qualified to undertake the mission of being Allah's vicegerent on earth. The righteous leave everything that is useful and beneficial as it is, and sometimes they increase the benefit that could accrue from it. For instance, water falls from the sky in the form of rain drops. After this, it forms rivers and runs through valleys and is absorbed by the earth to form wells. Were a righteous person to see a well of water, he would leave it and not try to fill it up with earth. The righteous thus leave useful things as they are. However, there may be another righteous person who may try to increase the benefit accruing from this bounty. He may erect a wall around the well to preserve it. This is more righteous since he increased the benefit of what is already useful and beneficial. Another righteous person may think that instead of people becoming exhausted due to having to walk from their homes to obtain water from the well and carry it in containers on top of their heads, he may use his reasoning to enhance the benefit people accrue from the well and devise a way to transport the water directly to them in their homes. He may build high reservoirs and connect them with pipes to deliver water to whoever needs it by simply opening the tap. Whoever does so enhances and eases the lives of people. He becomes a reformer through increasing the benefit of what is already useful and beneficial.

The True Lord *the Most High* closes this noble verse by saying: 'And how excellent these companions are!' (*an-Nisa'*: 69) 'These' in this verse refers to the Prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. Indeed, there can be no better company. A companion is someone who permanently keeps you company, whether in your travels or visits. This is why people recommend that you choose a good companion before you choose your way. You may run into trouble and impediments on your way since you are going to unknown and unfamiliar places. Therefore, you must choose your companion before you chose your way. We know that abstract matters are often copied from sensible, tangible counterparts. There is a companion to our hands which

is the elbow. The word for elbow in Arabic is *mirfaq*, which is derived from the same root as *rafeeq*, the Arabic word for companion. The True Lord *the Most High* says: '... wash your face and your hands (forearms) up to the elbows....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6)

Usually when people are feeling exhausted and their head is weary, they rest their head on their elbow. Also, if they want to sleep and cannot find a pillow, they rest on their elbow. As we can see, all the meanings of these derivatives come from the root *ar-rifq*, or companion, and *rafeeq* is derived from it and *al-marafiq*, or elbows, is also derived from it since it accompanies the body and comforts it. Furthermore, there is *marafiq*, which is the Arabic word for utilities found in every house and often refers to the places designated for food preparation, as well as bathrooms. In addition to these facilities found in a house, rural houses may have a place specifically to accommodate farm animals that serve peasants. The houses of the poor may consist of one room that has a place for dining and another for sleeping. A poor person may tie his donkey to a corner in his house. However if one was affluent, he would supply his house with all the facilities and utilities he would need. This means that his house would have an independent kitchen, a bathroom and a separate barn for animals. He may also have a separate storage room. All these are called utilities or annexed amenities since they are intended to comfort people.

Accordingly, the saying of Allah, 'And how excellent these companions are! (*an-Nisa*': 69) is derived from the root *rifq* which means providing comfort, company and easiness. Those who obey Allah and His Messenger in this sense shall attain all these good qualities by being in the company of the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous.

However, someone may ask, 'How could these different categories of believers share the same the status despite their different deeds in this worldly life? Is not Allah the One Who says: "And that there is not for man except that for which he strives"?' (*an-Najm*: 39) I say to this person by saying, is not a believer's obedience to Allah and His Messenger part of his striving and effort in this world? Obedience and love for Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is indeed part of the action and exertion of any servant of Allah. Accordingly, there is no contradiction between the two glorious

verses because the action of a person is no different than his pursuit. He then becomes entitled to the company of the Prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. To be among such company may be an honour bestowed upon them all so that they may enjoy being together. This interpretation can further explain the saying of Allah: 'And We (Allah) shall remove whatever of ill-feeling is in their breasts....' (*al-A'raf*: 43)

Never think that upon seeing one's status in the Hereafter higher than that of others, one would say: 'My status is higher than theirs.' Since one has given up all worldly causes and means and has chosen to live in the company of the One Who initiates all cause of causes, out of love for Allah, one will love anyone who has listened to and obeyed the Words of our Lord. They would also say to anyone who loves Allah, 'You deserve your status.' They would rejoice if they see others enjoying a higher status than theirs.

Let me give the following example, and for Allah is the highest and loftiest description. Assume that there is a classroom that contains many students. Some of these students just want to pass the course, while others love knowledge for the sake of knowledge. When the students who love knowledge for its sake come across a new, clever student, would they like or dislike him? Surely, they would like him, and seek his help and rejoice in his presence. They would say, 'This student is going to be the top of our class because he does not love himself, but he loves others.' The same holds true for a believer who sees someone else enjoying a higher status in paradise. Do not begin to think that he would feel any jealousy towards others - absolutely not. Rather, due to his love and appreciation for his Lord, he loves whoever obeys Him. He is like the student who attains a high status through his excellence and wants others to excel like him without any envy. We thus realise that the noble verse at hand does not contradict the Saying of the True Lord *the Most High*: 'And that there is not for man except that for which he strives.' (*an-Najm*: 39). The saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He* in this verse could be read in a different way. As a preposition *al-lam* which means 'for', indicates possession and entitlement. It is like saying, 'I do not owe you except such and such sum.' This means that this is the right to which you are entitled. Accordingly, His saying, 'And that there is not for man except that for which he strives' (*an-Najm*: 39) means that this is the right to which a believer is entitled. It

defined justice in terms of giving everyone that to which they are entitled, and not in terms of generous giving. This is the reason why Allah *the Most High* says in another verse:

ذَٰلِكَ الْفَضْلُ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

**That is God's favor. No one knows better than Him [70]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 70)**

Allah's Bounties are obtained through, and in proportion to, the action and effort everyone exerts in this world. Allah's saying, 'And that there is not for man except that for which he strives' (*an-Najm*: 39) defines the right to which you are justly entitled in accordance with the assignments Allah has given you. However, our Lord did not call this bestowal from Him an entitled right and just compensation. Rather, He describes it as a bounty from Him, and definitely Allah's Bounty is the ultimate aim and delight for any believer. No matter how well you do an assignment from Allah, you will never perform it sufficiently proper for Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* explains this further by saying: 'Say: "In the Bounty of Allah and in His Mercy, therein let them rejoice. That is better than what they amass."' (*Yunus*: 58) In other words: Pay attention, for Allah has assigned a role for you that you may work and exert much effort to perform it, but refrain from rejoicing in the rewards this work will allow you to amass. Rather, rejoice in the bounties your Lord will bestow upon you.

Such bountiful gifts from Allah *the Most High* give an answer to the question on why Thawban, or someone who enjoys a lower status than his, may accompany the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. To whomever who wonders about this issue, the response is to ask if his status were lower than theirs, would there not be any bounty from Allah involved in the whole matter? He is receiving this bounty from Allah since his obedience to Allah and His Messenger was superior to all other kinds of obedience. As for his Love for Allah and His Messenger, this is due to his work, exertion and Allah's Support. This generous giving is the highly sought-after joy of any believer: 'Such is the bounty from Allah, and sufficient is Allah as the Knower.' (*an-Nisa'*: 70) We should rejoice in and be content with the Knowledge of Allah *the Most High*. He *Glorified is He* bases His Laws on comprehensive,

all-encompassing Knowledge of all things. Allah knows the truth of the love in everyone's heart, the sincerity of their affection and the veracity of every believer's appreciation for those who enjoy a higher status than theirs. Through the principles stated, the True Lord *the Most High* secured the fundamentals of the Islamic community and the internal relations amongst Muslims. First, we must deliver that with which we have been entrusted, for if we do so, we will not need to litigate. However, if someone becomes forgetful or careless and he fails to deliver that with which he is entrusted, thus a dispute flares, and the judgment will be fair. Subsequently, we are required to refer to the Judgment of Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and never to seek the verdict of evil powers. If the members of every society of believers deliver that with which they have been entrusted to the ones entitled to it, tranquillity shall prevail.

We know that the following phrase, 'that with which you are entrusted', basically refers to the right(s) of others in your custody that you are obligated to fulfil. Everything other than you is someone or something else. Conversely, you are someone else relative to everyone other than you. Accordingly, delivering that with which one is entrusted secures the overall good of the entire society. However, if one fails to deliver that with which they are entrusted, justice must be administered. However, justice requires a judge; and if we should resort to a judge, we should refer to Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and not to evil powers. At the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf represented evil powers. Nowadays, there are some people who are like Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf. There are indeed many evil powers. If you spot a problem in the Muslim world, you should know that it is due to a deficiency in applying Islamic obligations. How can matters proceed correctly if we stray from the teachings and laws of Islam? If matters did not go amiss, this would attest that an Islamic course is not necessary. However, if matters go wrong, this proves the truth and reality of Islamic principles and obligations.

After Allah *Glorified is He* has assured us about the destiny that awaits believers in the Afterlife with the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous, He emphasises the particular role of every Divine message sent from heaven to earth in combating corruption and eradicating its spread on the

earth. The human soul must practise self-restraint against errors. For example, it may intend to commit a sin, but instead reproaches itself and returns to the Path of Allah, in which case it develops an immunity (from the effects of evilness) that is self-generated. Or the immunity of the human soul may evolve from the surrounding environment rather than being self-motivated. For instance, we may find someone who is incapable of controlling himself. Nonetheless, there may be someone else who tells him, 'What you are doing is wrong and inappropriate.' This means that the surrounding environment is still good. The previous nations became totally devoid of immunity and became a single form that followed a single path. This is what the True Lord *the Most High* depicts in His saying: 'They used not to prevent one another from the wrongs they used to commit....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79)

In the previously mentioned case, self-immunity was corrupted, and the society became void of any immunity towards evilness. Thus, the Lord of the Heavens had to intervene. However, the True Lord *Glorified is He* privileged the followers of Islam over other nations with its immunity always being consistently found in its individuals. Therefore, if it is no longer in the individuals making up the society, then it is in the community. This way, any society based on faith will never lack someone who does not say, 'No' (to evils). This is the reason why no messenger will come after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If a disaster should happen that would lead to the corruption of the entire society, and we would no longer find anyone who would say, 'No,' then it would be time for a messenger to be sent. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Final Prophet, and Allah *Glorified is He* distinguished the followers of Islam by making the restraint against evil and the desire to do good always existent either in the individuals themselves so that everyone exercises self-restraint against evil and spontaneously turns to self-reproach, or in the society itself so that everyone would recommend the good for everyone else. Read the words of the True Lord *the Most High*: 'By the time! Verily, mankind is in loss, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and exhort one another to the truth and exhort one another to patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3)

However, why should humans exhort one another to hold fast to truth and patience? This is due to the fact that the human soul is always in a state of

flux. For example, my own self may, at one time, be tempted to deviate from the Path of Allah, and then someone may admonish me to refrain when I am about to commit a given sin. I may, in return, do the same for him and try to guide him to the righteous path, or I may guide another person who committed a mistake. Therefore, the saying of Allah: '...exhort one another to the truth...' (*al-'Asr*: 3) means that every one of you should admonish others and, likewise, accept admonition from others. Each and every one of us observes and watches over others. This way anyone who has a weakness in a particular aspect will find someone who can help straighten him up. There will never be a time where there is no one in the followers of Islam who do not admonish others to do good or there being one who is being admonished to do good. It may also happen that the same person, under some situation or circumstance, admonishes others, and under some situation or circumstance is one being admonished by others. Therefore, one should not be too arrogant to accept admonition from others because under certain situations, he could have admonished others, and they may not have found it debasing or demeaning to accept his admonition. As people often say, 'May Allah have mercy upon the one who guides me to my defects.'

After having completed the construction of the faith-based environment through the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and you being the last of nations, the True Lord *the Most High* assures us that evil will never completely prevail or take over our communities since there is a faith-inspired immunity in our societies. Thus, even if not everyone adheres to the Path of Allah in their behaviour, at least some will. Accordingly, if the Lord of the Heavens did not intervene to introduce a righteous system, the world would fall into troubles and ailments. However, how can the world suffer troubles and ailments? The world must ail if the laws set by Allah Who established us as His vicegerents on earth, were suspended. Consequently, all sorts of evil and tyranny would prevail over the different aspects of life, and everyone would be under the control of their desires.

In our contemporary world, we notice that even countries that do not believe in God do not leave its peoples to be governed by their own discretion and inclinations. Rather, they organise life according to laws and legislations which may eventually lead to their suffering. Non-religious countries have

devised for themselves a system that allows them to control the inclinations and desires of the human self. However, we must tell them that their policies are commensurate with their knowledge and conception of the characteristics of human nature. They are making laws for something that they have not created, and so they have overstepped their bounds since they are not completely aware of the nature of the soul.

The fundamental principle for decreeing and enacting any law is to make it for something you have created. As we have said before, the one who ought to develop a maintenance program for any machine is the one who manufactured it. The one who made a television set should not let a butcher devise the system of its maintenance. Only the one who made the television set should be the one who devises its maintenance system. We can imagine, by analogy, the case with our Creator? He is the One Who puts the laws and rules for my maintenance through a guide of 'dos' and 'don'ts' that He provides for me. We, humans, control things according to the inclinations of some of us; then, we say do so or do not do so. On what basis do we find our knowledge of the evils that may ensue from the violation of these laws and rules? Did we ourselves create the human soul, and do we know full well its powers and capacities? No, certainly we did not. The evidence is that we always amend our laws, and such amendments happen—as we said—because the lawmaker or legislator recognises a mistake, and thus, he tries to fix it. The human lawmaker or legislator commits mistakes since he tries to put laws and rules for something that he did not create. Accordingly, if we do not want any mistakes, we should leave legislation and law-making to the One Who created us, namely, Allah.

Human history demonstrates that corruption prevails when the law revealed to us from the Heaven is suspended and is no longer followed. The Lord of the Heavens affects our lives through the revelation of a Divine message. Every message that came was opposed by adversaries, namely, the controllers and manipulators of mankind. Such people will never allow the Law of Allah to prevail and will strip them of their personal dominion by dictatorship, tyranny and despotism, and will profit from evil. They, therefore, fight the Divine messages. Our True Lord *Glorified is He* directs our attention to the fact that evildoers, non-followers of the Divine Law, and irreligious people will

cause us troubles. Thus, after you have firmly ground yourselves in the principles of faith, you should pay attention to the enemies and adversaries of Allah. The True Lord *the Most High* says regarding this issue:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا خُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ فَانْفِرُوا ثُبَاتٍ أَوْ اَنْفِرُوا جَمِيعًا ﴿٧١﴾

You who believe, be on your guard. March [to battle] in small groups or as one body[71] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 71)

'Take your precautions' would not be said unless there was an enemy waiting to attack you. Therefore, the call to 'take your precautions' (*an-Nisa'*: 71) indicates that such preparation is like arming oneself, like when someone tells you to take your weapon or your staff. In other words, you should use these tools to confront your enemies and protect yourself against their plots. You should not wait until you are caught up in their ambushes and mischief. Rather, you should prepare yourself beforehand in case there is a chance of inattentiveness or heedlessness on your part. This is the gist of the warning 'take your precautions.' It is also the reason why the True Lord *the Most High* says in another verse: 'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy...' (*al-Anfal*: 60). This instruction means that you should not wait until they transform their feelings of enmity into actual aggression against you since they may attack you unexpectedly, in which case you will not have any time to confront them. So, believers should take precautions and be fully prepared since he has enemies who do not want to see the Law of Allah obeyed and prevailing on the earth. Therefore, if the Law of Allah is supreme and in control, they will not have any chance to tamper with the destinies of people. Furthermore, those who take advantage of their authority and enforce their interests to exploit mankind would not have a chance to impose their control over others.

The part of the verse that says '...either go forth (on an expedition) in parties, or go forth all together' (*an-Nisa'*: 71) means that the act of setting forth should be proportionate to your level of preparedness and caution. 'Parties' in this verse means group after group and expedition after expedition, and 'all together' means the case when all of you proceed to confront the enemy.

Accordingly, we should be prepared in proportion to the evil we may confront. So, if we are attacked by a small group, we should do as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to do when he sent forces based on the level of the confronting danger. By contrast, if the situation is graver than this and needs public mobilisation, all of us must go forth to meet the enemy. Notice that the True Lord *the Most High* addresses believers and knows that they experience fluctuating emotions even though they are believers. The soul may weaken when facing a difficult situation and dealing with it, in spite of faith and belief in Allah.

Therefore, the True Lord *the Most High* says in the chapter *al-Baqara*: 'Have you not thought about the group of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Musa (Moses)? When they said to a Prophet of theirs, "Appoint for us a king and we will fight in Allah's Way." (*al-Baqara*: 246) The children of Israel used to ask Allah *Glorified is He* to allow them to fight in His Cause. Since they asked for it, they should rejoice when the command of fighting comes from Allah *Glorified is He*. However, Allah knows His servants best. Therefore, He further says to them: '...would you, perhaps, refrain from fighting if fighting were prescribed for you?' (*al-Baqara*: 246)

The True Lord *the Most High* clarified to them that they should remember well that they were the ones who asked to fight in His Cause; therefore, they should not refrain from fighting when Allah decrees that they should fight. After all, He did not originally decree it upon them; rather, they were the ones who asked for it. Since the discourse was still on the theoretical level, they wondered as follows: '...and why should we not fight in the Cause of Allah when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?' (*al-Baqara*: 246)

The children of Israel deplored not being able to fight in the Cause of Allah, especially in the respect that they had all the reasons for fighting, specifically being driven from their homeland and abandoning their children. But what happened when Allah decreed fighting upon them? The answer is the following: '...but when fighting was ordered for them, they turned away, all except a few of them. And Allah is All-Aware of the wrongdoers.' (*al-Baqara*: 246) The majority escaped, and only a few believers remained. Also, this was the initial excuse put forth by those who escaped fighting in

response to their Prophet when he told them that Allah had sent Talut (Saul) as their king: "They said, "How can he be a king over us when we are better fit than him for the kingdom, and he has not been given enough wealth? '" (*al-Baqara*: 247). This was the first sign of wavering from accepting Allah's Decree. The True Lord *the Most High* then explained to them the wisdom underlying the selection of Talut (Saul): he was a man of physical strength, and winning a struggle requires strength. Furthermore, he was knowledgeable, and administering a struggle requires someone capable of accurate planning. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, Allah has chosen him above you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature....' (*al-Baqara*: 247)

When they were about to start fighting, the True Lord *the Most High* wanted to test them to sort out the weak from the strong. Thus, Talut (Saul) said to them, "'Verily! Allah will try you by a river. So whoever drinks thereof, he is not of me, and whoever tastes it not, he is of me, except him who takes (thereof) in the hollow of his hand." Yet, they all drank thereof, except a few of them. So, when he had crossed it (the river), he and those who believed with him said, "We have no power this day against Jalut (Goliath) and his hosts." (*al-Baqara*: 249)

This test was intended to make evident those who were capable of controlling themselves and the endurance power that each striving one had to possess. Each was only allowed to scoop and drink a single handful of water from the river. Nonetheless, all except for a few of them drank their fill of it. Thus, the True Lord *the Most High* wanted to further sift them. When they saw the army of Talut (Saul), they said, 'We have no power this day against Jalut (Goliath) and his hosts.' (*al-Baqara*: 249)

However, what was the point of this selection and sifting processes? Obviously, Allah wanted only the true believers to undertake the defence of the law and path He set on earth. These were the ones who said, 'How often a small host has overcome a mighty host by Allah's leave!' (*al-Baqara*: 249) Allah *the Most High* says: 'So, they defeated them by Allah's Leave.' (*al-Baqara*: 251)

Why does our Lord give us such glimpses into this process of sifting and selection? This is in order to understand that the human psyche may take a different stance when confronted with a ruling on the theoretical level than when it is faced with it on the practical level. Anyway, just a select few

among a few people were granted triumph by Allah. Thus, Allah *the Most High* wants to ingrain in our psyches the truth that He *Glorified is He* is the One Who is capable of causing defeat or triumph. Indeed, this is in line with what the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'Fight against them! Allah will punish them by your hands....' (*at-Tawba*: 14)

Accordingly, the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains that He gave them the order to go forth to struggle either in small groups or collectively and that the nature of the human soul is the same; it will always be susceptible to fluctuations when it tries to implement rulings in real life situations. This is the reason why the True Lord *the Most High* also says:

وَإِنَّ مِنْكُمْ لَمَنْ لَّيَبْتَئِنَ فَإِنْ أَصَابَكُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا قَدْ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْنَا إِذْ لَمْ أَكُنْ مَعَهُمْ شَهِيدًا

Among you there is the sort of person who is sure to lag behind: if a calamity befalls you, he says, 'God has been gracious to me that I was not there with them' [72] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*': 72)

Some men, when called upon to participate in a battle, would be lazy and linger behind. Allah *the Most High* says in another verse: 'O, you who believe! What is the matter with you, that when you are asked to march forth in the Cause of Allah you cling heavily to the earth?' (*at-Tawba*: 38) The part of the verse saying 'you cling heavily to the earth' (*at-Tawba*: 38) indicates that there are some who pull themselves downwards to the earth entirely of their own accord and will. We must distinguish between the one who drops down just due to gravity and the one who lets gravity pull him down. 'Cling heavily to the earth' means that the person intended to intentionally show sluggishness and inaction, which is evidence that he did not want to take the initiative and fight. Furthermore, not only were they sluggish, but they also swore to act like this. Some of them used to dissuade others and discourage them from fighting as the hypocrite 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy used to do.

The part of the verse saying 'And indeed, there is among you he who lingers behind...' (*an-Nisa*': 72) means that we must understand the situation and safeguard against those who may impede the spread of the message before the battle even begins. If we do so before the battle should start, we

will have an accurate assessment of our power and be able to prepare ourselves based on the number of the truly strong ones who earnestly strive, not those who tend to lag behind and show inaction. There are some people who even rejoiced in surviving by not joining the battle, especially if Muslims were defeated and some were killed. The True Lord *the Most High* gives us an example of this attitude, saying: '...and if disaster strikes you, he says, "Allah has favoured me in that I was not present with them."' (*an-Nisa'*: 72) The person referred to by this verse lingered and stayed behind, and also, if calamities such as defeat or killing should befall Muslims, such a person would say, "I thank Allah that I was not with them." This shows that tardiness and inaction with regards to joining the battle was deliberate and intentional on the part of such a person. This is utmost insolence. For although he disobeyed the Command of our Lord, he said, 'Allah has favoured me.' (*an-Nisa'*: 72) When making such a statement, he is acting like a thief who steals and then says, 'Allah protected me and did not expose my deed.' Such is the language of those who fail to comprehend the principles of faith. These types of people would say: '...if disaster strikes you, he says, "Allah has favoured me in that I was not present with them."' (*an-Nisa'*: 72) They thus considered not taking part in the battle and staying alive as a bounty from Allah. For this reason, some knowledgeable people say, 'By making a statement like this, one would be ascribing partners to Allah since calamity to them is either getting killed or defeated.' Yet what would be the stance of the one lagging behind upon collecting the spoils of war and at the time of victory? The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَيْنَ أَصْبَحْتُمْ فَضْلٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ لَيَقُولَنَّ كَأَن لَّمْ تَكُنْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُ
مَوَدَّةٌ يَلَيْتَنِي كُنْتُ مَعَهُمْ فَأَفُوزَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٣﴾

yet he is sure to say, if you are favoured by God, 'If only I had been with them, I could have made great gains,' as if there had been no ties of affection between you and him [73] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 73)

The reason behind His saying 'If only I had been with them' (*an-Nisa'*: 73) is not that the person is retracting and recoiling from his original intent; it is rather an expression of regret over missing the spoils of war. In this verse, the True Lord puts forwards a parenthetical phrase in order to provide us with a

glimpse of faith: 'But if good fortune comes to you from Allah, such a person is sure to say, just as if there had been no ties of affection between you and him, "If only I had been with them, and thus had a [share in their] mighty triumph!"' (an-Nisa': 73)

The parenthetical phrase is when He says: 'just as if there had been no ties of affection between you and him.' (an-Nisa': 73) It is as if affection on the basis of faith were worthless to him. Indeed, had he had the slightest appreciation for it, he would not have said previously: 'Allah has been Gracious to me that I was not there with them' (an-Nisa': 72), and he would have accompanied the Muslim fighters. So, he is only interested in material gain and the spoils of war, but if defeat befell Muslims or if a huge number of them were killed as martyrs, he would have detached himself from them.

Thus, the True Lord exposes to us the stance of those who lag behind, explaining that to be aware not to be influenced by those when you march to battle in small groups or together, Also, know that there are people amongst you who dissuade their peers from fighting in the cause of Allah—laggards and those who cling heavily to this worldly life. All what they care for is to reap their share of the spoils of war. For this reason, they would thank Allah that they were not with you, if you were defeated, and would crave for their share of the spoils of war, if you achieved any victory, even if they were not present by your side in battle. Therefore, do not be influenced after having been granted such immunity so that you would not be taken aback by their stance towards you, and so that you would always be aware of their real intentions. Immunizations are but a kind of education directed to the body, whether it is material or in an abstract and moral sense. If something wrong happens, you will have the background upon which to build your response.

When we are attacked by a particular microbe, we use the same microbe, but in a latent state, to make a vaccine to immunize people against it. In this manner, the body becomes aware and develops immunity within itself. Accordingly, if a microbe actively attacks the body, the defence forces inside the body immediately fight back and engulf the microbe. It is as if giving immunizations were like training and activating the body resistance, which Allah has put in your blood so that it carried out its protective mission. The same holds true for moral

immunization. The True Lord explains that there will be those among you who will do wrong things; hence, you should be prepared to deal with these attacks and you should not be surprised by them because if you got surprised, you might collapse completely. So, do not be influenced by such wrong attitudes. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

فَلْيُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَشْرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا بِالْآخِرَةِ
وَمَنْ يُقَاتِلْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيُقْتَلْ أَوْ يَغْلِبْ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٧٤﴾

Let those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come, fight in God's way. To anyone who fights in God's way, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward [74]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 74)

The root *shara* and the verb *ishtara* [translated as 'trade' in this verse] refer to exchanging and bartering. You may say: 'I have bought this dress for a *dirham*,' this means that you have bought the dress and paid a *dirham* for it. Further, *shara* may be used in the sense of selling, as when the True Lord says: 'And they sold him for a reduced price—a few *dirhams*—so little did they value him.' (*Yusuf*: 20)

The group of travellers who found Yusuf (Joseph) *Allah be pleased with him* in the pit considered him to be of little value. Subsequently, they sold him for a reduced price. Thus *shara* is among the verbs that could be used both in the sense of buying and in the sense of selling because what is bought and what is sold have the same value. In the old days, people used to depend on bartering to exchange commodities. There was no money at that time. For instance, someone may give you some grains in exchange for some dates. Thus, someone buys dates and another buys grains. What makes the process take the form of buying and selling is the existence of goods that are bought and sold.

What is the difference between commodities and money? The former are a direct form of livelihood, whereas the latter is an indirect form. For instance, you may eat a loaf of bread that costs five piasters (Egyptian currency). However, if you have a mountain of gold, and the loaf of bread you need is not available, will the mountain of gold feed you? Thus, the loaf of bread is a

direct form of livelihood because you will eat it, whereas gold is an indirect form of livelihood, as one uses it to purchase what he needs. In this manner, we can distinguish between the different forms of livelihood. The thing from which immediate benefit may accrue is a direct form of livelihood; we pay its price using something from which we do not get any immediate benefit. The True Lord wants to strike a bargain with the believers; you know that a seller sells the goods at a price, and the purchaser pays the price for them. Similarly, the True Lord says: 'Hence, let them fight in Allah's cause—those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come.' (*an-Nisa*: 74) In this verse, the believer gives up this world in exchange for the hereafter, as it is represented in the reward of heaven and the special status intended for the martyrs. For this reason, the True Lord says in another verse: 'Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties, [in exchange] for that, they will have Paradise.' (*at-Tawba*: 111)

Subsequently, the True Lord says: 'Rejoice, then, in the bargain which you have made with Him.' (*at-Tawba*: 111) This is the deal that the True Lord makes with the believers. Allah wants to provide us with a clue to help us recognise profitable bargains. Everyone in their life wants to conclude a profitable deal by giving away something and taking something bigger in return. For this reason, The True Lord says in another verse: '...may hope for a trade that will never decline.' (*Fatir*: 29) Trading is involved here as well. When you strike a deal, you have to compare the thing that you give up with the thing that you take in return to see the difference between them and decide which one is worth being sacrificed for the other.

The True Lord describes our life '*dunya*' as the lowest form of life. There is not a more inferior description. He, then, explains that you give up the lowest form of life in this world in exchange for the afterlife. If what you take is more than what you give away, be sure that the deal is profitable. Indeed, no matter how life in this world may last, it has to come to an end. Accordingly, do not ever ask about the length of the present life because it should not concern you if the length of the present life were, for instance, one thousand centuries. The length of life for every human being is the amount of time he spends living; because even if the world lasted longer for someone else, how would that be of any benefit to me?

Thus, the true value of the present life lies in the amount of time you spend in it, and this amount is uncertain. Despite the fact that the average life expectancy has risen in the twentieth century—for instance, in the USA, the average life expectancy is between sixty and seventy—this does not prevent death from taking anyone's life, be it a child, an adult or an old man. The length of the present life for any human being is measured in terms of the span of his own life; that is, how many years he has lived. Accordingly, do not ever measure it in terms of others' existence in it. Rather, measure it in terms of your own existence. Further, even if you assume that you are bound to live for seventy years—no matter how great your enjoyment and gratification is—it will still be limited.

Every one of us is brought up until they reach puberty. Once they reach puberty and start to have a personal life, they will cease to be subordinated to their parents, even though they used to be totally dependent on them. Their parents used to buy clothes and food they needed, in addition to giving them the proper upbringing. However, once they start to be independent, they may say to their parents: 'I do not like this colour,' 'this kind of food does not appeal to me,' or 'I won't enrol in this college.' Man does not develop a personality unless he reaches a stage in his life at which he can reproduce. At that stage, we will tell him that he has reached maturity, and it is maturity that gives him personal worth.

If you grow a watermelon plant, you will have to nurture, irrigate, fertilize and trim it when it is still young so that it does not grow up twisted. Once the fruit ripens your concern and interest immediately shifts from the tree to the fruit, that is, the watermelon itself—which has acquired its own identity. The reason is that if you, by now, cut and eat it, you will find seeds which will sprout and grow into a new plant (if you plant them in the soil). However, if you pick the watermelon before it is ripe, the white seeds inside will not be mature enough to be planted and cultivated. If the seeds inside the watermelon are half white half black, it indicates that this watermelon is not fully ripe, whereas, if the seeds are completely black, then, they are ready to be planted. You will also find that the sweetness of the watermelon is commensurate with how ripe the seeds are. Thus, had the nature of the fruits been such that they would ripen before their seeds, Allah would have prompted us to eat the fruits before their seeds would grow. Were it the case, such species of plants would be doomed to extinction. For this reason, our Lord has decreed that the plant

will not be sweet unless its seeds are mature. The same holds true for human beings. The True Lord says: ‘When your children reach puberty, they should [always] ask your permission to enter, like their elders do.’ (*an-Nur*: 59) We often let children play and wander around any part of the house freely. However, once they grow up and reach puberty—which indicates that their bodies are fully ready for reproduction—they have to ask for permission before they walk into any closed room. At this age, the person’s independence forms. Let us assume that a person would live fifty five years of age after reaching puberty, being capable of reproducing and acquiring an independent personality. That person would have spent his teen years learning, until he becomes capable of earning his own livelihood and enjoying his life. At this point, we may wonder how long he will actually enjoy living. We will discover that there are only a few years to enjoy life. Life is therefore finite, and its gratification and pleasure depend on the person’s means—one may live in a two bedroom flat, a three bedroom flat or even in a big house or castle; also, one may drive a car or walk to move around. In brief, everyone enjoys life based on their own capacity and available means, whereas, in the Afterlife, it is totally different; one submits to a life of infinite length. If we compare between the finite and the infinite, we will find out that the Afterlife is bound to outweigh the present life because it is certain, and its pleasures are proportional to Allah’s Grace and His capability. Therefore, it is better for us to sell the present life in exchange for the Hereafter. This is indeed the profitable, never-failing deal.

Why does Allah want His servant to engage in this transaction? The reason is that before the True Lord offers you to participate in this transaction that exhausts you—that if you did not either kill or get killed in the cause of Allah—He has to explain to you how to attain the gratification and reward of the afterlife. You will not attain such gain just by uttering words. You have to understand the path and purpose for which you are fighting; in essence, your goal as a believer consists in establishing a society wherein each will perform his task and deliver what he has been entrusted. This should only disappoint those who want to exploit others and build their success on the toil and exhaustion of others. Find a society that does not have faith in Allah and tell its people: ‘we want each of you to deliver that with which he has been entrusted; we want each of you to judge justly.’ If you do so, rest assured that

these people will rejoice in relief. Any people of sound disposition and good understanding would not reject the religion of Allah, for it only enjoins on everyone to fulfil the mission, he is brought to life for and calls for justice to be established on earth. We are commanded to submit to the One God worthy of worship. In this way, we would not be confused and torn apart trying to submit to the will of more than one god. Subsequently, Allah has admonished us to treat well our parents, our kinsfolk, the orphans and the needy. By Allah, tell me: were not this religion a Heavenly revelation, rather a human legislation, would it be possible to find anything more perfect and just?

Man ought to defend the implementation of such a path that ensures safety for everybody. Before Allah has enacted upon us to fight in His cause, Allah clarified that this was the model of society for which we would fight. Therefore, you should realize that when you go fighting in the cause of Allah, the furthest ahead that could happen to you would be to get killed and then enjoy the benefit of a profitable transaction—the reward of the Afterlife. This way, the distance between you and your ultimate purpose would diminish—since everything is measured in terms of the time required to achieve the final destination. Thus, if you got killed, the time you need to achieve your purpose would diminish, so you would reach paradise. Foolishness befalls people when a dear one is killed and they get lost in grief. We tell them: If we are all bound to the same destiny, why would we be lost in grief?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* rewards the one who fights in the cause of Allah with life and livelihood in the Hereafter. Some people think that if they open the grave of a martyr, they will find him alive and enjoying the livelihood Allah has promised him. To these people, we say that the True Lord does not say that martyrs will be alive among you, but with Allah in the world of the unseen. The True Lord asks those who endorse Islam to spread it and to judge justly among themselves so that their conditions would improve and so that they would confront the evil people who only know the outer surface of this present life.

Allah has not decreed fighting before the advent of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The messenger mentioned here was one of the messengers *peace be upon them* who were sent before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and was only required to deliver the Message of

Allah to his own people. The Messengers have been sent down to their own people to deliver the Message of Allah: whoever believed was rewarded, and those who did not believe were punished by Allah; such punishment was in the form of a fierce wind, an earthquake, a shriek, being swallowed by the earth or being drowned. Fighting was only decreed when the people themselves suggested it, like the people of Israel. The True Lord says: '[Prophet], consider the leaders of the Children of Israel who came after Moses, when they said to one of their prophets, "Set up a king for us and we shall fight in God's cause."' (*al-Baqara*: 246) They were the ones who suggested that Allah should enact fighting upon them. But the fighting—that is truly intended to establish the principles and spread the religion in order to exalt the word of Allah and establish the dominion of the caliphate (rule) based on ensuring security as well as faith on earth—was only decreed at the time of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah has entrusted Muslims with the mission of calling all other nations to the true religion—a mission to which He has assigned no other nation. It is as if Allah did not entrust any nation with other nations except the Muslims; that is, Allah chose the Islamic ummah to be a guardian and a trustee. Allah has entrusted you with the responsibility of disciplining and rectifying violators. Thus, you have been granted a high status as far as the religion and the message are concerned. Allah ennobled His prophet as He says: 'But Allah would not send them punishment while you [Prophet] are in their midst' (*al-Anfal*: 33) Thus, fighting was decreed, and the Muslims—even when they were weak—fought in the cause of Allah against other strong but corrupt societies. The poet says:

Those who are strong and aberrant are settled in the land they occupy.

And a herd of weak ones are following and siding with them.

If fighting did not come through religion, would faithless nations not set out for war in order to reform their affairs? Indeed, they do fight. So why is it legitimate for all nations to fight for the sake of establishing their principles, and when religion decrees fighting, they say 'No. This is a religion that was spread by the sword!' To these people, we ask: by Allah, why then do nations fight? We see nations that fight each other, and tyrants who fight each other. Yet, when justice is there to eradicate injustice, why do we stand in its way?

No! This should not be the case. So, we should know for certain that fighting here is a Heavenly message, not the oppression of some tyrants who gathered and conspired to bring about a revolt through which they can dominate people.

When Islam came about, the weak ones who did not have the means to fight, embraced it. They were not even capable of defending themselves. This is to prove to us that when truth manifests, it comes about, not by the hands of the strong, but rather by the hands of the weak ones who struggle and persevere to spread the faith and establish it firmly on earth. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called for Islam in Mecca, but it did not prevail as a religion except in Medina. Mecca is the home town of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and his tribe, the Quraysh—a tribe accustomed to sovereignty over all the peninsula, which no one could threaten and no power would dare to intercept its trade caravans in the north or south.

All tribes went to the Quraysh during the pilgrimage season. They feared attacking Quraysh caravans lest the Quraysh would take revenge. Accordingly, if the religion of Islam, that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called for, had triumphed in Mecca, people might have said that the Quraysh was a tribe that loved ascendancy, and the Arab nation submitted to its command, so what would stop it from aiming to dominate the entire world?

The True Lord wanted the Quraysh to be the first party to oppose and persecute the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and decreed that the weak were the first to follow him. Then, the victory for Allah's religion came from a distant place, far from Mecca—Medina—so that the entire world would testify that people believed in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because of the Message he had brought and not because of ties of kinship and love for a fellow tribesman. The Prophet's Companion 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was listening to the words of Allah *the Exalted*: 'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee' (*al-Qamar*: 45). He, then, said: 'What forces would be defeated by us, if we are even incapable of defending ourselves?' The True Lord says: 'We shall brand him on the snout' (*al-Qalam*: 16). 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* then exclaimed: 'How could this be possible if we cannot defend ourselves?' Afterwards, the battle of Badr took place and vindicated the truthfulness of that statement for

‘Umar. It is indeed astounding that the verse was revealed at a time when Muslims were incapable of defending themselves. Thus, no one can say that there were preludes that made it easy to predict the end result of the battle. The preludes did not suggest that any victory was forthcoming; it was only that our Lord foretold its occurrence, and people did see that Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira was hit on his nose, and the strike left a mark on it. This was because the One said so is capable of bringing about what He said, and no force is capable of precluding Him from fulfilling what He promised. This was an indication that adhering to the basics is put to the test.

You will always find that those who truly believe in the basics are those who are most willing to make sacrifices for their cause. They may sacrifice their wealth, their homes (by forsaking them) or even sacrifice their lives and get killed. All of this is done for the sake of the basics in which they believe. But this is different when it comes to false principles; those who choose to embrace them collect the price before they do. Those who promote such principles tell those whom they try to delude: take this money, live your life, enjoy it and wear the best of clothes.

By contrast, those who embrace the principles of the truth are often the poor who pay the cost dearly. Yet, they are justified in paying a dear cost because the One who set the price is Dear. However, those who embrace falsehood have no knowledge of the One Who set the price. Anyone who considers the destructive principles will realize how their leaders live, while their subjects languish in misery. Every one of them says to himself: I have to take the reward in advance. The case of the believers is totally different; they are the ones who pay the cost so that they enjoy the reward in the hereafter.

When the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* enacted fighting on the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, He did so for the purpose of defence at first. People used to ask the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O Messenger of Allah, allow us to fight as much as we can afford.’ The Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, would then answer: ‘Be patient; I have not been commanded to fight as of yet.’⁽¹⁾

(1) *Al-Kafi Ash-Shafi fi Takhrij Ahadith Al-Kashshaf* by Ibn Hajar

Subsequently, fighting was decreed so that the community of believers could defend itself after Muslims had immigrated to Medina. We know that fighting is a necessity of life. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'If Allah did not drive some back by means of others the earth would be completely corrupt.' (*al-Baqara*: 251)

Further, He is the One Who also says: 'If Allah did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where God's name is much invoked, would have been destroyed. Allah is sure to help those who help His cause— Allah is Strong and Mighty.' (*al-Hajj*: 40)

Thus, Allah repels some people by means of others because this is a necessity entailed by the reality of human life. When Islam is criticised for the decree of fighting, we should say: The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* decreed fighting to confront the forces of injustice that consistently tried to preclude the implementation of one of the well-known paths of justice, which no one could question. If justice did not come from the Heavens, there would be no appropriate system to rule people. Accordingly, if Allah wants to establish justice through a path that He reveals, why should someone try to impede the implementation of this path and say to the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'you have come to force people to believe in your religion'? True Lord clarifies the purpose of the path of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: he was sent to assert the dignity of the human being as the master of everything else in the world; all inanimate objects are subservient to him, and so are all the plants and animals. None of these of beings have the freedom of choice to say: 'I will do this and not do that.' No other species is granted will and choice except for humans. The True Lord says about the responsibility of having a choice: 'but they refused to bear it...' (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

But what is it that distinguishes human beings from other species? It is reason. Reason means to choose and distinguish between alternatives. However, if there is a situation that has no alternative, reason will be useless.

A good illustration of this point is the following: you may want to go someplace. Then, someone may explain that there is no route to the place you want to go except a particular one, so would you even think of taking another

way? Of course you would not. Thus, reason does not have any other function except choosing among different alternatives. Were there no alternatives, reason would not have any function. If reason main purpose is to choose among different alternatives, should it be granted freedom or should its freedom be restricted? If you restrict reason's freedom of choice by coercion, you would be taking away the bounty you have granted it, and you would be making it subjugated, subservient and coerced. For this reason, we say that the one who is forced to do something does not have independent judgment; he is rather subjugated and coerced.

As long as you say that reason is the faculty that chooses among alternatives, the right to choose freely must be secured for every rational being; reason and free choice entail each other. Thus, if one suffers a deficiency in his reason, like being insane, he may not be able to choose. Further, if reason exists, but has not yet matured, we would also say that this person does not have any choice. Thus, reason must be both sound and mature in order for it to properly choose from among several alternatives, enabling the human being to choose freely. If reason is not sound, this means that the person is mentally ill and, subsequently, is incompetent to be entrusted with assignments from Allah—Allah has divested the insane of the dearest and most valuable distinguishing feature he has given to humans that is reason. However, Allah has also absolved the insane of all responsibility; so no one should hold him accountable for anything. Thus, the insane may do anything unaccountably. Divine assignments are only enacted upon those who have sound, mature minds; similarly, there is no fulfilling of obligations before reaching puberty.

Therefore, Islam came about to preserve the dignity of the human being and his right to freedom of choice; similarly, it gives you the choice to either believe or not. Those who carried swords and fought did not do so to force anyone to embrace Islam. They rather did it to combat the conspiracy and the sedition of those who wanted to coerce people. The *jizya* (the amount of money non-Muslims pay as taxes in Muslim countries) was decreed to absolve non-Muslims of the responsibility to fight. If Islam were to impose belief on people in the countries it took over, we would not find followers of any other religions in such countries. This is an attestation in favour of Muslims. Islam did not come about to impose itself as a religion; rather, it came to protect

man's freedom to choose his religion. To those who claim that Islam was spread by the sword, we say that they need to understand things properly; early Muslims were weak and continued to be so for a long time. The countries conquered by Muslims still include non-Muslims. This is evidence that Islam came to protect freedom of faith: 'Say, "Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so."' (al-Kahf: 29)

We now turn to another point, namely that Islam only decreed the *jizya*, because the non-Muslims would enjoy all the good of the Muslim countries, when the Muslims who undertake the mission of defending the country pay *zakat*—the obligatory alms: annual payment on certain kinds of property used for charitable and religious purposes and one of the Five Pillars of Islam—and *kharaj*—type of individual Islamic tax on agricultural land and its produce. Thus, it is thereby a matter of justice; the justice of the path of Allah. Against this background, one ought to understand the saying of the True Lord: 'Hence, let them fight in Allah's cause – those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come. To anyone who fights in Allah's cause, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward.' (an-Nisa': 74)

Fighting was decreed so that the courses set by Allah may dominate. Allah the Exalted says: 'Hence, let them fight in Allah's cause...' (an-Nisa': 74) indicating that fighting could be for causes other than Allah's. For instance, one may fight out of prejudice or to show off his courage. So, fighting always depends on its intention. For this reason, some people wondered: who is a true martyr? To this question, scholars responded that he is the one who fought so that the word of Allah would be the greatest and most exalted. Thus, fighting could either be for the cause of Allah or for the cause of self, or even for the cause of Satan. The True Lord says: 'Hence, let them fight in Allah's cause – those of you who are willing to trade the life of this world for the life to come. To anyone who fights in Allah's cause, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward.' (an-Nisa': 74)

Accordingly, the one who engages in fighting has one of two choices: he may either be killed by enemies or he may triumph. This is the dialectical issue that is often in dispute between the camp of faith and camp of disbelief. The fighter from the camp of faith says to his counterparts in the camp of

disbelief: I fight to attain one of the two best things: I may either be killed, become a martyr and enjoy a life better than the one I used to lead in this world, or triumph. So why are you even lurking for us, you disbelievers?

The believer has faith that he is the winner in all cases. If he is killed, he will go to paradise, to a better life than worldly life. Alternatively, he may live and triumph. Both cases are equally good.

Allah has ordained matters to be like that in order to demonstrate that His divine course deserves shedding blood for it. Further, it is a testimony that this religion is correct. Otherwise, no one would fight unless he is truly convinced of the rightness of this religion. Every one ultimately works and toils for his life and interests. Man assesses everything in terms of its advantageous value, even religion. For this reason, they say: do not choose bad selfishness, which is concerned with what is low and cheap; rather, choose good selfishness, which is concerned with what is high and worthy. Religion is a practice of an exalted form of good selfishness.

Let us give an example to illustrate this point—and to Allah pertains the highest and most exalted example. Assume that someone has only one pound of which he is in need; upon seeing that another person is in dire need of money, the true believer would say to himself: 'I have eaten and it could be the case that person has not eaten yet.' Then, he may give the other person the only pound he has. By Allah, does he love the one to whom he gave the pound more than himself? No. He loves himself, but it is a refined and exalted form of selfishness. We have previously said that the one who sees a beautiful woman and still shies away from looking at her is different from another who stares at her. Which of the two men likes beauty more? It is the one who keeps away from looking at the beautiful woman because he does not want her provisionally; he wants her permanently.

Not to mention the one who sells the worldly life and gets killed in the cause of Allah in exchange for the hereafter; that does not involve any killing or anything that may cause vexation. This is form of selfishness. The True Lord also deals with us according to a pragmatic law. However, it is a refined form of pragmatism and not a cheap short-term one. He thus bids us to sell what is cheap in exchange for what is dear and more exalted.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw, on the night of 'Isra'a and Mi'raj', those who died fighting for the cause of Allah and witnessed their status—the night when Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was elevated to the heavens. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw a group of people cultivating and harvesting the fruits immediately after sowing the seeds because the one who gets killed in the cause of Allah did so for the elevation and ennoblement of the word of Allah. Therefore, he will never cease to harvest the fruits of the effort he exerted; and his life will extend through the lives of millions of people. Allah says: 'To anyone who fights in God's way, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward.' (*an-Nisa'*: 74) We know that every believer who fights in the cause of Allah says to the camp of disbelievers what the True Lord has revealed in His saying: 'Say, "Do you expect something other than one of the two best things to happen to us? Well, we expect God to inflict punishment on you, either from Himself or at our hands. So wait; we too are waiting."' (*at-Tawba*: 52) The believer knows that he will either be killed—and become a martyr—or he will defeat the camp of disbelief. Hence, he waits for Allah to inflict chastisement upon the disbelievers from Himself or by the hands of the believers. Thereby, the believers are bound to win, and the disbelievers are bound to lose in all cases.

Al-Ma'arri (a great medieval Arab poet and philosopher) said, before Allah guided him to His path, when he used to be an agnostic sceptic:

Days shatter us asunder as if we were glass

Though, unlike glass, we can never be reassembled.

Some interpreted this verse to be a denial of resurrection because he likened humans to broken glass that no one can return it to its former condition. He said that when his life was full of vanity, on the days when he was self-absorbed. However, the events developed in a way that altered him and strongly changed his way of thinking, until he ended up being a believer. But was he sure that he would live until he believed? Why had he not ridded himself of the bitterness of doubt? Yet, after he had believed, he said: 'Here I am dying a follower of the creed of the old people of Nysabur. Our Lord is the Truth and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing. Then, he added:

The astrologist and the physician both claimed
That bodies cannot be resurrected;
To them I respond: were your statement true, I would not be a loser,
And were my stance true, you are the losers.'

This means that even if you were you right in claiming that there is no resurrection, and I still did good deeds, what loss would I have incurred in this case? I would not have lost anything. By contrast, were my claim true, and you were surprised by the Hereafter and resurrection, I would be the one who won, whereas loss and torment would be for you. Therefore, if my faith does not benefit me, it will not harm me. Your claims whether they were correct or not correct, they would not harm me.

The True Lord says: 'To anyone who fights in Allah's cause, whether killed or victorious, We shall give a great reward.' (*an-Nisa*: 74) Here, Allah prolongs the time of giving. Consider the precise articulation of the Quran due to the fact that the One speaking is Allah; let us look at how an action depends on another. When I say for instance: come to me and I will treat you generously and once you come, generous treatment ought to happen. But if you say: if you come, I will treat you generously in a while, this means that there may be a time lag between your arrival and the occurrence of the generous treatment. You will not be treated generously as soon as you come. You have to come to me first, and after a short while, you enjoy my generous treatment. Further, if I want to extend the time a little more, I may say: 'If you come to me, I will treat you generously after a while.' Thus, there are three stages of extending a reward based on an act: a reward that follows immediately once the condition is fulfilled, a reward that follows a short time after the condition is fulfilled and a reward that follows after a longer time.

The True Lord does not say to anyone who fights in Allah's cause: 'we shall immediately give a great reward.' Further, He does not say: 'we shall, after a while, give a great reward.' Rather, He says: 'we shall, in time, give a great reward.' This indicates that the complete fulfilment of this promise will take place on the Judgment Day. For this reason, the future (indicated by *sawfa*) had to be used in this context. This is evidence that it is a continuous reward that is neither disturbed nor forbidden.

Thus, we notice the precision of the phrasing of the Quran, when the True Lord talks about Himself using various styles. He once uses the plural form because, as we learnt in Arabic grammar, the letter *nun* is for majesty as in His saying: 'We have sent down the Quran Ourselves, and We Ourselves will guard it...' (*al-Hijr*: 9). Allah does not say 'I sent down', for everything is ultimately due to an action taken by Allah. Rather, He uses the plural form for majesty and glorification because when Allah does something for His creation, whether in the form of bounty or gratification, He intends to manifest a manifold of His attributes including accentuating His power and His knowledge in arranging and organizing His Bounty and His Wisdom. Thus, He says, 'We shall give a great reward' (*an-Nisa'*: 74) because different divine attributes cooperate to create the good.

But when He talks about himself apart from His actions, Allah uses the 'I' that refers to His Oneness, as in the saying of the True Lord: 'Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me.' (*Ta Ha*: 14) This style also recurs in the saying of the True Lord: 'And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed [to you].' (*Ta Ha*: 13) When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about Himself, He uses His Oneness; we do not say individual or singular form, out of politeness and courtesy towards Allah, for He does not have a partner or a counterpart.

When Allah talks about His actions, He uses 'We.' This style of address solved a lot of problems for us because it happened when we read the saying of the True Lord: 'Have you [Prophet] not considered how Allah sends water down from the sky and that We produce with it fruits of varied colours; that there are in the mountains layers of white and red of various hues, and jet black.' (*Fatir*: 27) Allah *the Exalted* says: '...Allah sends water down...' It would have been (seemingly) suitable to follow this with 'and produce with it...'. But He says 'We produce with it fruits of varied colours' (*Fatir*: 27); then, why does He use 'Allah sends' in the first case and 'We produce' in the second? The reason is that when He says: 'We send water down from the sky' (*Luqman*: 10), none of his creatures, with or without means, has anything to do with it. But once the rain fell, someone may plough the land, another may sow the seeds and a third may irrigate the land. All of these are causes and means Allah has created for His creatures. Accordingly Allah does not marginalize or ignore the efforts of His creatures. He thus says: 'Allah sends water down from the sky.' (*Fatir*: 27) Afterwards, He says 'I and my

creatures, through what I have supplied and provided them, bring forth fruits: “produce with it fruits of varied colours”.’ (*Fatir*: 27) Therefore, we ought to pay attention to the significance of the ‘I’ form versus the significance when it is used the ‘We’ form. The words of Allah: ‘We shall give a great reward’ (*an-Nisa*: 74) draws our attention to the fact that every action is an event commensurate with the one who undertakes it in terms of both its potential and influence. When a child slaps one of his classmates, his slap might not be as strong as that of a youth or a grown up man. Accordingly, if the one who dispenses the reward had a counterpart, he would give in proportion to the amount his counterpart may give. But if the dispenser is our Lord, He gives in proportion to His Worth. Hence, the reward must be great; the reward is what one receives in return for a service.

There is a difference between a reward and a price. A price is the specific value paid in return for goods or service. By contrast, a reward is what is given in return for a particular benefit or service. When I say: ‘I have bought this’, this means that I have paid its price. But if I rent something, it is still the property of the owner, and I just enjoy its benefit. In this vein, would Allah’s reward for the one who gets killed for His cause be deemed as a reward or a price? We notice here that the True Lord explains that He does not set a value for the one who dies for His cause; rather, He considers his action. He, thereby, reckons the effect of his action and grants him, in return, a ‘mighty reward.’ (*an-Nisa*: 74) Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ
وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ
لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

Why should you not fight in God’s cause and for those oppressed men, women, and children who cry out, ‘Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! By Your grace, give us a protector and give us a helper!’? [75] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 75)

The verse starts with an exclamatory expression. The reason is that, after clarifying the kind of compensation granted for fighting and dying for the cause of Allah, He had to show how this fighting is in line with humans’ natural inclination. In our day-to-day lives, we say: ‘Why do you not do such

and such?' It is as if we are wondering about the reason behind refraining from doing something that matches the person's nature and mindset. Accordingly, if one does not do so, it is considered weird and strange. After Allah has explained the marvellous outcome of fighting for His cause, He goes on to say that whoever refuses to fight when it is demanded by Allah, his refusal will be regarded peculiar and strange. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'Why should you not fight in Allah's cause...' (*an-Nisa'*: 75) which means, 'How could you not fight for the cause of elevating the word of Allah?' On certain occasions, the believer may fight to support the weak ones who have been hurt and harmed due to their religion. This is also another form of elevating and exalting the word of Allah.

Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Why should you not fight in Allah's cause and for those oppressed men...' (*an-Nisa'*: 75) meaning that fighting can be in the cause of Allah as well as in the cause of saving the oppressed. This is a way of arousing and exciting human zeal and ardour so that one would be resolute in fighting, even on humanitarian grounds, for the cause of relieving the weak of the torment and pain to which they have been subjected—because, as long as they tolerate pain, while still keeping their faith, they will be demonstrating the strength of their faith. Therefore, they are the ones who deserve the most to be defended and rescued from pain and torture. Allah *Glorified is He* uses an exclamatory style to express this point: 'Why should you not fight in God's cause and for those oppressed men' (*an-Nisa'*: 75). Reason, passion and religion all dictate that fighting is necessary, so refraining from fighting is what should arouse suspicion and wonder. When our Lord poses this issue, He does so based on the fact that everyone will be equally astounded and surprised by it. It is like the saying of the True Lord: 'How can you disbelieve in Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 28) This means: how can you abjure your faith in our Lord, you disbelievers? This is a strange stance that no reasonable person could easily conceive; for this reason, the verse says: 'How can you disbelieve in Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 28).

'Why should you not fight in God's cause and for those oppressed men...?' (*an-Nisa'*: 75) The word 'oppressed' is followed by 'men', but men are supposed to be strong. This draws our attention to the condition that would make a man helpless, and make those who followed, 'women and children', even more helpless. '...For those oppressed men, women and children who cry out, "Lord,

rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! Give us, out of Your grace, a protector and give us one who will bring us succour!” (*an-Nisa'*: 75) The disbelievers persecuted the believers to the extent that it made the latter invoke Allah to lead them forth to freedom, out of the land the people of which are oppressors. The land of oppression they refer to here is Mecca.

The story here is about a group of believers who were incapable of migrating out of Mecca after the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, had emigrated. They were forbidden to emigrate; yet, they kept their faith, so they became utterly helpless men, women and children. The persecution to which they were subjected by the disbelievers was too fierce to exempt even young children. In this vein, the True Lord says to the believers: ‘Why should you not fight in God's cause and for those oppressed men, women, and children...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 75).

What did these people say when they became utterly helpless? They said: “‘Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! Give us, out of Your grace, a protector and give us one who will bring us succour!’” (*an-Nisa'*: 75) The articulation of the supplication itself indicates that they will not go out. Rather, some of them trusted that a believer from the Muslims would come and rule over them. It is as if this part of the verse suggested that the Muslims would conquer Mecca, which came true.

Allah raised for them, out of His grace, a protector and a Sustainer: Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who took charge of them in the best way and led them to the greatest victory.

Maslama ibn Hisham⁽¹⁾ was in the group of the utterly helpless who could not emigrate along with Al-Walid ibn Al-Walid, Ayyash ibn Abu Rabi'a, Abu Jandal ibn Suhayl ibn 'Amr and our Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* who said: ‘My mother and I were among the oppressed women and children, and they used to restrict our movement so that we could not leave Mecca.’ Thus, they needed to be supported and helped. For this reason, Allah made their believing brethren feel pity and sympathy in order to motivate them to fight for their cause since the disbelievers’ injustice towards them was ferocious and did not distinguish among men, women or children in the torture they inflicted.

(1) *The story of Maslama ibn Hisham and the group of poor people who could not emigrate*

‘Who cry out, “Lord, rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors! Give us, out of Your grace, a protector and give us one who will bring us succour!”’ (*an-Nisa'*: 75) The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Muslim followers were their succour. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ
الطَّاغُوتِ فَفَعِلُوا أَوْلِيَاءَ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّ كَيْدَ الشَّيْطَانِ كَانَ ضَعِيفًا ﴿٧٦﴾

The believers fight for God’s cause, while those who reject faith fight for an unjust cause. Fight the allies of Satan: Satan’s strategies are truly weak [76] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 76)

We have previously learnt that the powers of evil refer to those who do injustice and wrong others in an extreme way. It can be used to refer to singular, dual or plural nouns. Thus you may say *taghut*—evil power—in reference to one, two or more than two men who wrong others in an extreme way. The True Lord says: ‘Allah is the ally of those who believe: He brings them out of the depths of darkness and into the light. As for the disbelievers, their allies are the powers of evil.’ (*al-Baqara*: 257)

Thus, the word *taghut*—powers of evil—may refer to singular, dual and plural nouns. But could the evil power be the devil? Yes, it could be. Could it also refer to the despotic tyrant who is enticed to do more injustice through people’s submission to him? Yes, it could also assume this meaning. Could it also refer to the one who impose evil on people to the extent that people would fear his evil? Yes, the word could also refer to this person. All of these are possible meanings of the word *taghut*. The style of the Quran varies significantly. Thus, it may in one instance say: ‘You have already had a sign in the two armies that met in battle, one fighting for Allah’s cause and the other made up of disbelievers.’ (*Al-Imran*: 13) Consider the contrast in this context: ‘The believers fight for Allah’s cause, while those who reject faith fight for the cause of the powers of evil’ (*an-Nisa'*: 76). On the one hand, there is the contrast between ‘the believers’ and ‘those who reject faith’; on the other hand, there is the contrast between the ‘Allah’s cause and the ‘cause of the powers of evil.’ This is to let us grasp the significance of the phrasing of the

statements that our Lord intersperses throughout the Quran. We have to realize the miraculous dimension they involve. In this verse, He says: 'The believers fight for Allah's cause, while those who reject faith...' (*an-Nisa'*: 76). The reason is that it can be easily inferred that the disbelievers are powers of evil and will fight for this cause. But if in the verse cited from the chapter of *Al-Imran*, Allah mentions an opposite to an already omitted, but inferrable party in the verse from the chapter of *an-Nisa'* or vice versa; this method is called *ihtibak* in the science of Arabic rhetoric. But how does it function?

Consider the saying of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted*: 'You have already had a sign in the two armies that met in battle, one fighting for Allah's cause and the other made up of disbelievers.' (*Al-Imran*: 13) The word 'disbelievers' here indicates that they fight for the cause of *taghut* (the powers of evil); this group is contrasted with the opposite group—that fights for the cause of Allah—who certainly consist of believers.

Thus, the entire discourse is harmonious. Allah says: 'You have already had a sign in the two armies that met in battle, one...' (*Al-Imran*: 13). Here, He just says 'one' and we immediately infer that this army that fights in the cause of Allah are believers, though this is not mentioned in words. Our Lord provokes our minds by avoiding stating everything explicitly so that we put our mind to work, and so that there would be no redundancy. This way, we also realize that if Allah says: 'in Allah's cause', He refers to the believers, and if He says for the 'cause of the powers of evil' (*an-Nisa'*: 76) He refers to the disbelievers. The True Lord then resumes: 'Fight the allies of Satan' (*an-Nisa'*: 76). This verse refers to the advocates and proponents of the devil who promote his principles and endorse his temptations with their hearts in order to spread them among other people. These are the allies of Satan; for, Satan, as we know, said in the following conversation that took place between Satan and his Creator: 'Satan said, "I swear by Your might! I will most certainly tempt them all."' (*Sad*: 82) Satan, then, realized his limits and constrained his claim accordingly: '(All) save such of them as are true servants!' (*Sad*: 83)

This means that I (i.e. Satan) will not be able to tempt or sway whoever Allah wills to be on His path. This indicates that the struggle is not between Satan and Allah. Allah is too Exalted to go into struggles with anyone. The struggle, then, is between Satan and the losers among the creatures. Inasmuch

as He said: 'I swear by Your might! I will most certainly tempt them all.' (*Sad*: 82), this indicates that Satan knew how to take oaths and swear because if our Lord wills that all people adhere to His path and become believers, Satan would not be able to approach anyone. But our Lord is Mighty and All-Sufficient and is in no need of His creation. Thus, whoever wills, may believe and whoever does not, may not. This is how Satan insinuated himself into the picture. Satan made his way due to the fact that Allah is Almighty and in no need of His creation because if Allah wants all people to adhere to his path, Satan will not be able to do anything about it. The evidence is Allah's saying: '(All) save such of them as are true servants' (*Sad*: 83) which indicates that he will not be able to approach any of them. The oath of Satan also indicates that he has studied and is aware of how to approach the servants of Allah. He thus said: 'I shall most certainly lie in ambush for them all along your straight path.' (*al-A'raf*: 16) Satan will not try to sway those who already stray on the path of error because those do not need Satan to sway them. They are comfort to him. They are his allies who help him accomplish his mission. The allies of Satan are thereby the ones who oppose the path of Allah and by doing so they become his advocates.

The True Lord commands us: 'Fight the allies of Satan' (*an-Nisa'*: 76). Those are the ones who ally themselves with Satan. Each of them supports the other. Allah then comforts us in this regard and says: 'Satan's strategies are truly weak.' (*an-Nisa'*: 76) The reason is that when Satan forges a guile, his guile will be against his Lord. Thus, it has to be weak in comparison to that of Allah. Satan does not have dominion and power over the human body, so he cannot overpower humans to do anything. He cannot force you to do anything and he does not have any justification with which he can convince you. You are said to be physically coerced if someone forces you to do something unwillingly and grudgingly. For instance, a person may threaten and menace you, point a gun at your head or command you to prostrate to him. But can anyone coerce or overpower your heart and command you to say, 'love me'? No, it is impossible. Thus, a tyrant can overpower your body, but can never overpower your heart. The things that overpower the heart are justification and evidence; these are the powers that may convince you, but not force you to pursue a specific course of action. Hence, the means of overpowering the body is force and that of overpowering the heart is justification.

The True Lord explains this point to us: know well that Satan is very weak. He does not have the power to force you to do anything. So if he tries to tempt you, you should say to him: 'I will not do so.' Further, he cannot come to your head and say: 'You should do this' and force you do a particular thing against your will. He does not have any justification with which he can convince you to do such things; he is weak. Why do you obey him then? You obey him due to your oblivion and your love for your lusts and desires. Satan is incapable of overpowering your heart or your body; he just entices you. For this reason, Satan would defend himself on the Day of Judgment by saying: 'I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call.' (*Ibrahim: 22*) This means that he did not have any power or force to compel your bodies to do anything, and nor did he have any power of justification to convince your hearts to do anything. You are the ones who are faulty and sinful, and Satan does not have anything to do with it. Therefore, the guile of the devil is weak. The 'guile'—as we know—is an attempt to corrupt something or a state of being through mischief and knavery; for there are some who corrupt without using any tricks and there are some, by contrast, who want to corrupt things so that if you catch them, they would say: 'We did not do anything,' because they commit mistakes secretly and corrupt using mischief and knavery. However, guile can only attract the weak. The strong person is the one who is capable of confronting the one who conspires against him. For instance, if someone is trying to poison another, he would be classified among those who try to corrupt things using tricks because he is afraid of confrontation. By contrast, a strong person is the one who refuses to do so even to the one who kills by way of confrontation, we say to him: you are afraid. You have proven through your audacity to kill another person that you cannot stand his life; but true manhood and courage necessitates that you let him live and see what he can do.

Therefore, the guile of Satan has transpired to be weak because Satan does not command power, whereby he can coerce or force your body, and he does not have the justification with which he can overpower your heart and persuade you. He, cunningly, points and tempts you using tricks, and you come to him. He does not play his ticks except on the weak person. The weaker the person, the graver Satan's guile will be. For this reason, people used to say that a woman is stronger than a man because our Lord says: 'Verily, your

guile is great.' (*Yusuf*: 28) To these people we say: 'A woman's use of guile is proof of her weakness.' Otherwise, why would they resort to forging guiles? An Arab poet emphasizes this by saying:

A woman is weak till she seizes an opportunity

Only then she would kill. This is what the power of the weak looks like

This is because, once a weak person has power over his opponent, and life gives him mastery over him, he says: 'I will not let him go, for if I do, he will harm me more and do this and that'; whereas a strong person if put in the same situation, will say: 'I will let him go, and if he wrongs me again, I will get hold of him and hit him on the head.' So, when the guile is great, the weakness behind it is greater. The True Lord, then, says: '[Prophet], do you not see those who were told, "Restrain yourselves from fighting, perform the prayer and pay the prescribed alms"? When fighting was 'ordained for them, they evaded the command. The reason is that when the weak seizes his enemy and has control over him, he will say, 'I will not leave him because if I do that, he will do so and so to me.' But when the strong seizes his enemy, he will say, 'I will let him go, but if he does something else, I will catch him and hit and punish him.' Thus, the greater the person's guile is, the greater his weakness tends to be. Subsequently Allah *the Exalted* says:

الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا ﴿٧٧﴾

[Prophet], do you not see those who were told, 'Restrain yourselves from fighting, perform the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms'? When fighting was ordained for them, some of them feared men as much as, or even more than, they feared God, saying, 'Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? If only You would give us just a little more time.' Say to them, 'Little is the enjoyment in this world, the Hereafter is far better for those who are mindful of God: you will not be wronged by as much as the fibre in a date stone [77] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 77)

We know that when Allah *the Exalted* uses the interrogative clause 'do you not see,' He means that if you witnessed the matter at the time it happened,

you could meditate on the actual event. By contrast, if the event has not been witnessed, then it means, 'do not you know?' However, the knowledge informed by Allah is more authentic than whatever you may witness with your own eyes. When Allah says, 'Constrain your hands,' this entails the intention to extend and use the hands; that is, no one would order someone who did not extend his hands to constrain them. The discourse here in the verse is about fighting. Thus, constraining hands, in this context, refers to abstaining from fighting. The evidence is that Allah says later in the verse, 'When fighting was ordained for them...' Hence, they were commanded to constrain their hands because they had manifested the intention to engage in fighting, either verbally by saying, 'O Muhammad, give us the permission to fight,' or action by preparing themselves for fight. Inasmuch as Allah says in the Quran, '...But when fighting was ordained for them,...' this indicates the existence of two temporal contexts in this verse: the first is when they were asked to constrain their hands, and the second is when fighting was prescribed for them. We, thereby, understand that there were intentions on their part to extend their hands in the sense of fighting before it was ordained for them. Those who asked for the permission to fight were Ibn 'Awf and some of his friends. If the command to fight had been left to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he would have commanded them to do so once they asked him. It has been related that Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said that 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf and some of his companions came to Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and said, 'O Muhammad! We were respected when we were idolaters, and when we believed, we were humiliated.' He said, 'I have been commanded to pardon, so do not fight.'⁽¹⁾ Then, when Allah caused us to move to Medina, He commanded us to fight, but they refrained. Then Allah *the Almighty* has revealed: 'Have you not seen those who were told to constrain their hands (from fighting)?' This is proof that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was waiting for the Command of Allah. Subsequently, Allah has prescribed fighting upon them; yet, some of them evaded the command. This is in line with Allah's words that, when fighting was prescribed, some of them feared the enemy as they feared Allah or even more. (*an-Nisa'*: 77) So, how

(1) *Abu Dawud, authentic*

can one explain this fear even though they are supposedly believers? Does this mean that they were afraid of their enemies, or that they reneged on their faith, as some of the children of Israel did after they had asked Allah to prescribe fighting upon them? The children of Israel asked a Prophet of theirs to raise a king for them to fight in Allah's cause. Yet, when fighting was ordained for them, they turned their backs, save for a few of them. (*al-Baqara*: 246)

Accordingly, when matters reached the stage of actual application, fear and weakness befell on some of them. Allah *the Exalted* has not ignored the possibility that any believer's faith can increase and decrease. Since the person is neither a Messenger and nor infallible, we should not say that someone did so and so. The reason is that the person did not claim to be infallible. Thus, he may err, fall prey to the inclinations or temptations of his own self and he may be in a weak position. For this reason, when someone tells you that this woman did this, and that man did that, ask him, 'Did anyone claim to be infallible? Since they are not infallible, they may err.'

Allah says that only some of the group took this stance, and this means that they were not equal; some of them were weak, and some of them preserved the strength and robustness of their faith so that no weakness or atrophy befell them. In addition, consider Allah's courtesy when addressing people. Allah has not referred to a specific person; rather, He only says that some of them wanted to evade fighting which necessitated that everyone should check into himself. Allah has intended to avoid naming anyone in order to preserve the privacy of His Servants. Since preserving the privacy of His servants emanates from Him *the Exalted* then know that our Lord is more jealous about His Servant than the servant himself. For this reason, we always say that Allah's concealment of people's secrets from others is an honour for all mankind.

Assume that Allah has revealed to you the secrets of other people; would you like them to know yours? No; therefore, when you see that Allah has concealed your secrets and that of other people, know that it is a bounty and a form of Mercy because man is always in a flux of change. Thus, someone may offend you deep down in his heart, but he may not want you to know about this offense. You may also hate him and want to get rid of him. If Allah revealed to him what you conceal in your heart and revealed to you what he conceals in his

heart, a dispute may flare up wherein each of you may lose his dignity. But Allah has concealed the secrets of His creation due to His mercy to them.

You are the servant of Allah who may disobey Him, but He likes to conceal your sins and also commands others not to look into them. By Allah, is there another Lord like this Lord? This is wondrous. You may be sinful, but He still conceals your sins, and He also commands others not to reveal other people's faults. That is because some people may be ashamed of their faults, so they use their reputations and clothes in order to conceal their shortcomings. Why has Allah decreed this? He has decreed this so that people would not lose control or hope of the way of repentance to Allah.

Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* dispenses His mercy to society, but the failure is on part of the people who always insist on knowing the unseen and seeking those who can foretell the future. We say, to whoever pursues such practises, that Allah has concealed the unseen as a bounty that He has bestowed upon you, so leave it as Allah has willed.

Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* says that when fighting has been ordained for them, a group stood in awe of men as one should stand in awe of Allah. Everyone who belonged to this group was afraid of fighting, getting killed and death because it would lead him to be recompensed for what he has done in the worldly life. For this reason, one companion once said, 'I hate the truth.' So, another companion wondered, 'How come you hate the truth?' He replied, 'I hate the truth of death and who among us likes it.'

Why do people hate fighting and death? The reason is that Allah takes a soul without the destruction of the body. In contrast, enemies at war may cut bodies into pieces or even mutilate them. But if the servant of Allah recalls the reward which he will be granted for this sacrifice, the whole matter will become easy for him.

When fighting was prescribed for those people, they asked why Allah has done so. It is as if they forgot that they were the ones who had asked Allah to prescribe fighting for them. But this is the nature of the human psyche; it always craves what is remote and out of reach, but once the object of desire is attained, it loses interest.

Then, they said, 'Lord, why have You ordained fighting for us? If only You would give us just a little more time.' Was this discourse really intended as an interrogative? Allah explains that they said, 'Lord! Why have you examined us in such a tough way? We may not be able to endure it at the time of fear in battles.' For this reason, they asked Allah to postpone the prescription of fighting and cause them to die naturally, not at the hands of their enemies. The phrase '...for a little while...' shows that each and every one of them was completely aware that he would inevitably die, but none of them wanted his life to end by getting killed. Why do you ask Allah to postpone the time of prescribing fighting? Is it out of your love for the worldly life and its pleasures? Allah's answer immediately follows: '...Say, "little is the enjoyment of this worldly life..."' It is very inappropriate of you, believers, to be so concerned about your lives that you do not go to fight. All of you will ultimately die and everyone will be recompensed according to his or her deeds. However, the one who gets killed while fighting for the cause of Allah, will immediately be rewarded and granted a life in lieu of his death in this worldly life, as he attained martyrdom. For this reason, Allah commands His Prophet Muhammad to declare the littleness of the enjoyment of this worldly life when compared to the great reward that someone attains if he is killed for the Cause of Allah. Then, some of them said, 'If death is inevitable, why do we not go and fight for Allah's cause. If we get killed, let it be for a price that exceeds the value of our deed.' Hence, this is raising the value of the benefit. For this reason, a wise man once said:

If any human being were immortal

We would deem the courageous the most erroneous among us.

This means that if life lasted for someone, the most misled people among us would be the courageous ones—who get killed in battles; however, this is not the case. The Arab poet says:

O you who deter me from fighting let the uproar of battle begin

And watch me take pleasure in dying, for will you make me immortal

And the poet Al-Mutanabbi says:

I see that all of us desire the life

Each keen on his life as if he were in love with it
The love of the coward for himself made him cautious
And the love of the courageous for himself led him to war.

Thus, both of them love their own selves; but there is a difference between the foolish love and the deep love.

When we look at the overall context of the verse, we will realize that Allah *the Exalted* is educating the believing group in the early times of Islam. This education regarding their faith is not subject to the party spirit of the pre-Islamic era or to the pride of the soul. A group of the believers in Mecca who experienced persecution wanted to fight, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed them that he has not been commanded to fight yet. Then, he commanded them to pray, pay alms to the poor, and endure what they were going through until Allah permitted them to fight. This is the first stage of education which the believers went through because Islam came about at a time when Arabs were full of pride, tribal prejudices, haughtiness and arrogance. Whenever one of them was provoked about something, he would rush to his sword and tribe and wage a war. Thereby Allah *the Exalted* wants to uproot the believers' anger for the sake of themselves, tribal prejudices and pride; rather, He *the Exalted* wants to make their anger for the sake of Allah only.

When the permission to fight was revealed, it did not come to impose Islam as a creed on people or to force them to embrace it as a religion. Rather, it came to protect the people from the domination of the stronger one, who wants to subordinate the weak to him. When Allah *the Exalted* wants to free the choice of the human being, He prescribed fighting to preserve the dignity of the human being and to keep them from being subordinate to anyone else in their creed. Afterwards, Islam should be presented rationally so that whoever accepts it is welcomed, and whoever does not, he can retain his religion. This indicates that Islam is a religion that prohibited encroaching upon other people's faiths and guaranteed for them the freedom to choose whatever creed they wanted—after clarifying to them what is guidance and what is error.

When Allah enjoined fighting on the believers, He made it solely for His cause so as to clear the believers' intentions from any other purposes or aims. He wants the believers to fight only for His cause and not for anger, prejudice, pride or any

other personal motive. For this reason, we find that some of those who were craving to fight feared it when it was decreed as they fear Allah or even more.

Accordingly, there is a difference between fighting in theory and actually engaging in it. For this reason, we saw that some of them even feared to engage in fighting in order not to get killed. Killing, as you know, is the destruction of the body; it is different from the natural death in which Allah severs the soul from the body without destroying the latter. In addition, fighting excites one's fear of death, and the fear of fighting emanates from one's desire to live longer. That is due to the fact that getting killed in battle makes the fighter confronts death closely, whereas natural death is only known by Allah. For this reason, they said, Our Lord! Why have you ordained fighting for us? Was their request for fighting intended to satisfy their pride and haughtiness? Allah wants to acquit the believer of any suspicion of fighting for the sake of pride because He *the Exalted* wants the battle to be only for the cause of faith so that the Word of Allah is the highest, even if the one opposing its prevalence shares familial, blood or friendship relations with the believers.

Allah *the Exalted* wants to teach us this principle because the Muslim *Ummah* will face fierce violence in its attempt to affirm the basis of creedal choice among mankind. In this vein Allah *the Exalted* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that 'If they say to you that they want Allah to postpone the prescription of fighting, tell them that the enjoyment of this world is little.' Thus, the keener the believer is to preserve his life—to make it longer—the bigger the share he wants to take from this life. Similarly, Allah commands us to abandon this idea and to establish a criterion whereby we can gauge the worth and value of our life; 'for He promises the believers to be admitted into Paradise in return for their lives and property' (*at-Tawba*: 111).

It is a transaction of selling and buying. Furthermore, Allah *the Exalted* says concerning the bargain of faith that He says 'Shall I show you to a bargain that will save you from a grievous punishment.' (*as-Saff*: 10)

Accordingly, Allah regards the human interest in His dealing with us. A courteous and intelligent person would choose to engage in the profitable and guaranteed deal whose return exceeds every other deal. If we compare this world to the Afterlife, we will immediately realize that no matter how long

the former lasts, this will not affect or increase the age of the individual. That is due to the fact that, even if the age of the world were extended, its actual lifetime, which is relative to everyone, is measured in terms of the individual's lifetime and not in terms of the lifetime of the world's population. Even if the worldly life lasted longer for others, what benefit would accrue to the individual in return?

Therefore, the worldly life for any individual is defined. Allah gives glad tidings to the believer who fights for His cause by assuring him that He will gain an infinite lifetime from this deal. Moreover, the length of our stay in this world, without being killed and dying naturally, is dubitable and not certain. Indeed, we see people who die as infants, and others who die in their youth or early adulthood. By contrast, the Afterlife is infinite and certain.

Indeed, on the one hand, pleasure and gratification in this world are commensurate with the vision and capacity of each individual to achieve them. On the other hand, pleasure in the Afterlife is commensurate with what Allah has prepared for His servants through His infinite power and abundant Mercy. Thus, if we compared the exchange of the worldly life for the Afterlife, we will realize that the worldly pleasure, assuming that it is a pleasure in the first place, is quite short-lived and limited.

Accordingly, Allah raises our awareness to value the bargain of faith. He knows that everyone loves to achieve his benefit. So, no one should think that religion came about to divest him of his freedom or to humiliate him because religion was revealed to refine and develop the interest of the believer.

A good example is when religion forbids the person to steal from others, it also forbids all other people to steal from that person; therefore, everyone gains the protection of religion. As much as religion prevents one from encroaching upon others' rights, it similarly prevents others, who are numbered in millions, from encroaching upon the individual's rights. Similarly, when religion forbids you from casting your eyes upon what is only permitted to others; it restricts others from casting their eyes upon what is only permitted to you. The greatest gain thereby accrues to the individual.

Allah's statement concerning the littleness of this world enjoyment reflects the greatness of the bargain of faith. Subsequently, Allah assures us of His

Justice saying that none will be wronged by even as much as the fibre in a date stone. The Arabic word *al-fatil* often refers to the threads of dirt that get formed as one rubs his plums together. Also, *al-fatil* may refer to the small thread inside the date stone. All of these semantic connotations indicate that you will not be wronged even regarding the most trivial matters. Allah has also set conditions for justice as He explains that whoever commits a sin will be commensurately recompensed for it. However, the one who does a good deed will be rewarded ten times its worth or more.

In this manner, justice will not exhaust any believer because it comes with its grace as the good deed is worth ten times its value or more. The good deed is further weighed for Allah on the scale of justice based on the Grace the one has received. So, no one should say that Allah dispenses Justice without Grace.

Thus, the saying of Allah that says that none will be wronged by as much as the fibre in a date stone associates grace with justice. For this reason, we supplicate to Allah to treat us in accordance with His Grace and not with His Justice, since Justice alone may exhaust us. We also ask Allah to give us gracefully and favourably and not according to the measure of the scale, because the latter may exhaust us. Further, we supplicate to Allah to treat us generously and not according to strict calculative measures. Thereby, we see that Allah's statement informs us that He will treat us justly and gracefully so that the sin would be counted as one, and the good deed would be worth ten times its value or more.

Allah's statement refers to what He has decreed in accordance with both His Grace and Justice. Further Allah *the Exalted* wants to reassure us that the issues of faith are preserved. Accordingly, we should not think that your deeds are the cause of your granted reward. Rather, the true cause is the Grace of Allah as He says that the believers should rejoice at the Bounty of Allah and His Grace. (*Yunus*: 58)

It is Allah's Grace which delights the heart of the believer. Afterwards, Allah responds to an issue that the hypocrites raised when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went out to war in Uhud and a large number of Muslims were killed. The hypocrites said that if the Muslims had remained with them, they would not have been killed. (*Al-Imran*: 156) They thought

that staying in their homes would protect them from death and that going to war, conversely, brought about death. We know that every event has its temporal and spatial context to which we usually refer as the condition of the event. Those who grammatically studied the meaning of *azh-zharf* (the spatial and temporal conditions) know that it is the part of speech which classifies the conditions into either time or space. Every event must have a certain place and it at a certain point in time. However, the time and place of death are ambiguous; it is spatially and temporally vague. When Allah conceals something, He does not do so to make it unknown to us; rather, to clear its nature abundantly. Thus, when Allah conceals something, it becomes abundantly clear, but how so?

When Allah *the Exalted* conceals the time of death and makes it unknown to us, man ought to expect death at any moment. Thus, is there clarity better than this? When He has made us unaware of the time of death, He has not prevented us from determining the time it happens; however, He has raised our awareness that death may happen at any point in our lives; therefore, no one is thus capable of taking precautions to avoid the time or the place of death. Thus, Allah says:

أَيَّنَمَا تَكُونُوا يُدْرِكَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُرُوجٍ مُّشِيدَةٍ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ حَسَنَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ تُصِبْهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ يَقُولُوا هَذِهِ مِنْ عِنْدِكَ قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ فَمَالِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ حَدِيثًا ﴿٧٨﴾

Death will overtake you no matter where you may be, even inside high towers.’ When good fortune comes their way, they say, ‘This is from God,’ but when harm befalls them, they say, ‘This is from you [Prophet].’ Say to them, ‘Both come from God.’ What is the matter with these people that they can barely understand what they are told? [78] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 78)

In this verse, Allah addresses the question of death from the perspective of the place, when He says that death overtakes the person wherever he might be, even inside high towers. The human mind—which imagines that it could take precautions against death by avoiding the place where it is supposed to happen—should realize that it is incapable of doing so. The presence of a person in a particular place does not protect or prevent him from death.

Irrespective of whether he is in the camp of belief or that of disbelief, nothing will keep death from reaching him.

The location, as we know, defines the spatial condition of the event. The subtlety of death penetrates any place or time as long as Allah has decreed it to happen. The enemies of man, as far as his health and life are concerned, are numerous. But if we consider enemies in terms of their violence, we will find that it suits their subtlety. The subtler the enemy is, the more violent it tends to be; the greater and larger in size it is, the less violent it tends to be. The powerful enemy may terrify and horrify a man, but one can always protect himself against it. But when is the enemy really difficult to confront? It is when the enemy is really small in number, subtle and imperceptible so that it manages to insinuate itself into a man.

Here is an example that may illustrate this point; assume that someone is building a house in the wilderness, and another person passes by to congratulate him for laying the foundation of the house. The latter may tell the house owner, 'You did not take the necessary precautions for building a house in this location, where wolves and foxes abound; you should install iron bars on the ground floor windows so that wild animals do not attack you.' Upon listening to this piece of advice, the owner of the house installs iron bars. Another person may come and tell him, 'You have overlooked the fact that in this place snakes also abound. So, you should make the spaces between the iron bars narrower.' The owner of the house then accedes to the advice to prevent snakes from entering the house. Then, a third person may come to visit the owner of the house and tell him, 'I wonder how you safeguard your house against snakes, wolves and foxes and forget to protect yourself from the flies in this region, even though the flies here are poisonous.' The owner of the house may then install a screen to shut out the flies. Afterwards, a fourth person may tell the owner of the house that there are even smaller yet more ferocious and dangerous insects in the area. Upon this warning, the owner of the house may replace the screen he had already installed with another that with a finer mesh. Accordingly, we may draw the conclusion that the subtler and more imperceptible your enemy is, the more aggressive and dangerous it will tend to be.

For this reason, the most dangerous microbes that penetrate the human body—without one's awareness of how they infringed his skin and contaminated

his body— are quite minute and subtle. Thus, one does not become aware of his infection except after the incubation period, when the symptoms start to surface. Those microbes enter the body, even though we can never know when it does so or where it dwells in the body.

Allah drives our attention to the fact that the subtler and more minute the thing is, the more aggressive it tends to be—and the less likely that any defence mechanism would be capable of deterring its offense. So, imagine the case of death, which is subtler than anything? Can anyone take any precautions against it?

What is the opposite of death? It is life; the period within which the soul dwells in the body. But what is the essence of the soul? No one knows the essence of the soul despite the fact that every person bears a soul within. Further, no one knows the dwelling place of the soul or its shape; moreover, no one knows who has seen, heard or touched it. When Allah takes the soul away, life ends. Allah is the One Who confers the soul upon any living being; when He breathes this soul into it, He brings life into it.

Allah draws our attention and alerts us to the fact that He has willed that some truths about our material existence would remain concealed and hidden away from physicians and microscopes. For instance, until today we do not know which viruses cause certain diseases.

If Allah *the Exalted* has given man a soul that is the cause of his life, why can we not believe that there is an actual, concrete cause underlying death that deprives the man of his soul as soon as it happens?! In this vein, we may understand the saying of Allah (chapter of *al-Mulk*) that He is *Glorified is He* Who holds all control and is Powerful over all things. He has created death and life in order to test people. (*al-Mulk*: 2)

Accordingly, death is not a negative process as some people may mistakenly think. It is rather a positive one; man has been created with accurateness and exactness like that of a manufacturer. The Almighty Allah described the process of life and death in the chapter of *al-Mulk*, and even gave priority to death over life; despite the fact that we factually experience life before death, death is mentioned before life. Life gives everyone his identity and capabilities—and using them, he employs the means and causes Allah has created for him to

fulfil his mission in life. One may plough the land or trade in things; whichever befits his life, and entertain one's hearing and seeing. For that reason, man may think that life has been created first. The Almighty Allah calls our attention and explains to us that we should not think of life without thinking of its opposite. He says about himself that He is the only One who created death and life (*al-Mulk*: 2). This facilitates the comprehension of the Qudsi Hadith that explains the state of the inhabitants of Paradise versus that of the inhabitants of Hellfire. The Almighty Allah will bring death represented as a ram that He slays.

Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that 'Death will be brought on the Day of Resurrection and made to stand on the *sirat* (the bridge over hell). It will be said: "O people of Paradise!" And they will look anxious and afraid lest they be brought out of the place they are in. Then, it will be said: "O people of Hell!" and they will look, hoping that they will be brought out of the place they are in. Then, it will be said: "Do you know what this is?" They will say: "Yes, it is death." Then, the command will be given for it to be slaughtered on the *sirat*, and it will be said to both groups: "It is eternal wherever you are, and there will never be any death therein."⁽¹⁾

The depiction of death as a ram indicates that death is an actual entity. The Almighty Allah informs us that He will annihilate death so that we can have immortality without any fear of death. Further the Almighty Allah alarms and warns those who abjured their faith and mistakenly thought that, if the people who were killed for the sake of Allah had stayed behind, they would not have died or been killed; we say that staying behind would not have avoided death. If someone's demise is due, wherever he may be, death will overtake him, even if he were inside fortified towers.

The discourse of the Quran varies according to different contexts. Sometimes, the meaning of its discourse is immediately grasped through the literal analysis of the words. In other contexts, the discourse is understood based on the guidance of the style of the Quran because it is the discourse of the Almighty Allah. Humans generally forge their discourse in line with their linguistic and

(1) *Musnad, Ahmad*

mental aptitudes. But when the Almighty Allah addresses His creatures, He addresses their psyche. For this reason, when a child—who is happy because he memorized the Quran—is asked by an elder person: ‘What is so delightful about memorizing the Quran?’ The child responds: ‘Memorizing the Quran gives me peace and harmony, and this suffices me as an enjoyment.’ He does not know that memorizing or listening to the Quran fills him with such harmony—because the speaker is the Almighty Allah, and through His Capability and the Beauty of His Majesty, He addresses the psyche.

The Almighty Allah says that wherever you may be, death will overtake you; the word ‘overtake you’ indicates that once the soul is breathed into the body, death starts pursuing it (the soul) until it overtakes the latter at the time appointed by Allah. The word ‘overtake’ shows that death pursues the soul until it overtakes it. It is often said that death pursues life until death overtakes it; indeed, none of you can ever escape from death. For this reason, people who got deep knowledge from the Almighty Allah say: ‘Death is an arrow shot at you; your life is measured in terms of its journey towards you.’

Thus, we learn that the saying of the Almighty Allah ‘overtakes’ indicates that death pursues the life of the human being until it concludes and brings it to its demise.

Almighty Allah says that death will come to you even if you dwell in a lofty tower. Tracing the etymological root of the word *buruj*—the Arabic word for towers—we can grasp its general sense. The etymological root of this word consists of three letters: *al-ba'*, *ar-ra'* and *al-jim*. All of these letters semantically indicate salience and height.

Some people may say about a particular woman: ‘This woman has *baraj*.’ This often means that her eyes are wide and occupy a considerable portion of her face. Accordingly, *al-baraj* refers to salience, conspicuousness and wideness.

Towers were often tall buildings, like the fortresses we build nowadays with concrete and steel. The word *mushayyad* means that it is well-constructed. This qualification is important because some buildings may be tall, yet frail and faltering. A building that is *mushayyad*—the Arabic word, here translated as *raised* which is derived from *ash-shayd* referring to either height or clay.

What is intended is that the bricks used to build the tower are bound using clay, and thus it stands strong and tall.

If there is a number that is divisible by another number, this means that the division process yields units. Once a teacher walks into a class room, he says to his students: 'Take out your books;' that is, each student must take out his book. The same holds true in the analogy.

The word '*towers*' was used in a plural form to indicate that even if all of you take refuge in a tower surrounded by another, that one by a third and a fourth, and if there were a perfectly fortified fortress, such tower would not be of any avail to you. As a matter of fact, sometimes fortresses are built as a point surrounded by bigger concentric circles. Thus, the fortress would assume the shape of a centre point surrounded by a number of other fortresses. Death overtakes humans even if they are hiding in a tower surrounded by other fortresses. Both meanings reflect the Capability of the Almighty Allah to cause death to happen whenever He wills.

When The Almighty Allah speaks about life and death in a context of *jihad* (fighting in Allah's Cause), so He wants to lead people out of darkness into light because religion is essentially light that dispels darkness. But those who live in darkness for a while get used to it and to the anarchy and corruption that accompany it. When religion comes about, some of them are bound to avoid it because light will deprive them of the pleasures they enjoy in their misguided life—as light dispels darkness. For this reason the Almighty Allah explains that He created death to serve two functions; the first is to be a reminder for the believer of his encounter with his Lord. Whoever believes has to always recall death because he knows well that his reward will only come forth upon death. When a believer hears the word death, he ought to start looking forward to this end and the reception of His reward.

The other function of death is that the non-believer always fears and dreads death and consistently fails to prepare himself for that reckoning. Thus, the word death inspires both desire and fear. When the one who truly has faith hears the word death, he immediately tells himself: 'The hardships of this world will not last; I really want to go to Paradise.'

For this reason, those who have faith in the Almighty Allah must always bear this issue in mind. Doing so will alleviate the effect of any calamity that befalls them. As long as one has faith, he would immediately ask himself whenever he lost anyone dear to him: ‘was this person a believer or not?’ Were he a believer, he would be happy for him because the Almighty Allah brought him forth to what is good to him. Indeed, if you grieve over losing a relative who is a believer, then you should know that you are grieving over yourself. If the one who died is not a believer, then the believer would be relieved of his evil. Therefore, death is a comfort in all cases. The one who did good deeds ought to look forward to it—this is the ‘desire’ aspect—while the disbeliever should be afraid—this is the fear aspect.

For this reason, it is foolish to grieve over the deceased. One should rather consider the saying of the Almighty Allah that wherever you may be, death will overtake you even though you are in towers raised tall.

The Almighty Allah then follows, ‘Yet, when a good thing happens to them, some people say, “This is from the Almighty Allah,” whereas when evil befalls them, they say, “This is from you, O Muhammad!” Say: “All things come from the Almighty Allah.” What, then, is amiss with these people that they are in no wise near to grasp the truth of what they are told?’ But who is most likely to propose such a discourse?

The one who says that the *hasanah* (good deed) comes from the Almighty Allah truly believes in Him; he says so based on a true belief and conviction in his mind. However, the verse at stake does not address such a strain of people; it is rather intended to address those who tend to separate between Muhammad and his Lord. That is, they attribute the good things that happen to them to the Almighty Allah and the bad things to Muhammad. Accordingly, those who say such things are either hypocrites who only allegedly declared their conversion to Islam and allegiance to Prophet Muhammad, while still bearing infidelity in their hearts, or some people of the Book who believe in the Almighty Allah but do not recognize Muhammad as the Messenger of Allah. The latter group attributes all good things to the Almighty Allah and falsely accuses His Messenger of being responsible for all evils that befall them. In doing so, they separate between Muhammad and his Lord.

Therefore the Almighty Allah would not allow them to do as such. He revealed to them the Quran to be recited until the end of time, and there He says 'whoever pays heed to Prophet Muhammad pays heed to the Almighty Allah thereby; and as for those who turn away – We have not sent you to be their keeper' (*an-Nisa'*: 80) The Almighty Allah also says: 'O Muhammad, tell them, 'If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you.' (*Al-Imran*: 31) No one can cause a dispute or cleavage between Muhammad and his Lord because Muhammad is a Messenger from Allah *the Almighty* to relay His Message and the course He set to mankind. Allah *the Almighty* says that they could not find any fault [with the faith] save that Allah has enriched them and caused His Apostle to enrich them. (*at-Tawba*: 74)

The Almighty Allah is not content with any servant who asks Him only for forgiveness. Rather, His good servant ought to go to the Messenger of Allah and ask him to ask the Almighty Allah to forgive him on his behalf. No one can have a proper relation with the Almighty Allah away from Muhammad—His Messenger; so do not separate between the Command of the Almighty Allah and that of His Messenger. Therefore, the one who wants to fabricate and claim a difference between the Almighty Allah and His Prophet Muhammad by attributing good things to Him and bad things to His Messenger is erroneous and will ultimately be a loser.

But in what context was this verse revealed? People used to go to war; if they triumphed and collected the spoils of war, they would say: 'The Almighty Allah has privileged us with these winnings and gains.' Were they defeated, they would say that Muhammad is the one who caused us to be defeated as if Muhammad causes things to happen in a way other than that which the Almighty Allah intends. So, do not be misled and deceived by anyone who tries to distinguish between the will of the Messenger of Allah and that of his Lord. The Almighty Allah is the One Who sent Muhammad and revealed to him the Quran.

When the Message of Islam was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, he was hoping that people of the Book would believe in him as they have already believed in Allah. They were closer to his heart than those who do not have any faith or belief in one God, namely those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah. At that time, there were two main global powers: the Persians

and the Romans. The Persians used to worship fire— Allah forbid!—while the Romans used to believe in Allah and the Books He had revealed before sending Prophet Muhammad, but they abjured the Message of Muhammad.

Those who believed in Allah *the Almighty* were closer to the heart of Muhammad than those who disbelieved in Him. This evidence refers to the inclination of Muhammad towards the latter group; a matter which stemmed from his faith and belief in the Almighty Allah. Such inclination also applied to the Jews. When Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina, their harvest accidentally yielded less than usual. The Jews said: 'Our ranches and harvest have been decreasing since the arrival of this man.' But was this really a sheer coincidence or was there a material explanation for it?

When Prophet Muhammad arrived in Medina, the Jews refused to recognize him even though they used to take pride in him and foretell his advent to the infidels. However, his advent divested them of their temporary power because they used to dominate wealth by dealing in usury and provoking enmity and animosity among people. Further, they dominated the movement of trade so that they would achieve mastery over others. They also knew the Almighty Allah's Book, yet they tried to turn such knowledge into a trade. Hence, they had mastery in terms of three aspects: knowledge, money and the system of life they followed.

In the early times of Islam, the Aws and the Khazraj tribes went through one path under the power of Islam; the Jews thus failed to sell the weapons they used to make. This ultimately led them to lose the power and dominion they used to enjoy due to the disputes and differences they originally created and fomented. Further, they lost their financial dominion because Islam proscribed usury. In addition, they lost the mastery and dominion they enjoyed due to their knowledge of the path of Allah *the Almighty* because Islam exposed the way in which they paraphrased the Book of Allah.

Therefore, their means of dominion came to an end. For this reason, they grieved at the advent of the Prophet Muhammad to the extent that if any Jew met another one, he would not talk to him about anything except the issue of Muhammad. In so far as they were distracted by the matter to that extent, they neglected agriculture. They were distracted from the pursuit of the proper

means of growing a good harvest and so they did not get one. Nonetheless, they tried to impute the problem to Prophet Muhammad since it was difficult for them to understand what was happening. However, it could also be the case that the Almighty Allah wanted to punish them because they cunningly conspired against His Messenger instead of taking care of their land and crops and pursuing the proper means to nurture their harvest. It could also be that this was a heavenly curse; the question is: 'Why did they not turn to the religion of Muhammad to rescue themselves from such hardship?' They used to take pride in Islam and foretell about its advent, but when Islam was revealed, they did not believe in it, and when it came unto them that which they knew (to be the truth), they disbelieve therein. Accordingly, more than a punishment was meted out to them. Those who used to deal with Jews in usury refrained from such practice. Further, the harvest of their land diminished.

Thus, Islam was a cause of the diminishment of their wealth. Allah *the Almighty* has related what they said: 'Yet, when a good thing happens to them, some people say, "This is from Allah," whereas when evil befalls them, they say, "This is from you, O Muhammad!" Say: "All is from Allah." (*an-Nisa'*: 78) This means that good and evil things are both from Allah. But what is the '*good thing*' and what is the '*evil thing*'? The '*good thing*' in this context refers to victory, gain, affluence, prosperity and fertility. The '*evil thing*' refers to defeat, murder, misery, harm and aridity. This is their conception. But we—the believers—understand the meaning of the '*good thing*' in a more precise way. The good thing from the perspective of the Islamic law is what Allah *the Almighty* commands, and the evil thing is what He proscribes. The evidence in support of this is that a believer may lose someone dear to him, or harm may befall the one who is dear to him, and at the same time, he takes a stance based on faith in receiving and dealing with such a calamity. Thus, this person may say: 'My grief will not bring back this dear person to me; I should seize the opportunity of such a calamity to gain admittance into Heaven.' He may add to this: 'it is enough condolence that the Almighty Allah may reward me for enduring the loss of someone who was dear to me; I would not receive in my entire life as big a reward as that which I would take for enduring the calamity of losing this dear person.'

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warns us against thinking that the 'good deed' is what is favourable to ourselves, and that the 'evil deed' is what is distasteful. No; from the perspective of the Islamic law, the one whom evil befalls is the one who has been deprived of the reward of Allah. For this reason, the Quran says that everything is from Allah, which means that good and evil deeds are all from Allah.

But does Allah cause evil deeds to happen? We must seek forgiveness of Allah should we think so. What is evil and what is good are only so from the relative perspective of man; all is ultimately from Allah. But if we ascribe every act to Allah, we will realize that everything that He has decreed is good. It is the absence of correct criteria that causes tiredness and toil. Indeed, if we tried to measure these things around us as accurately as a computer does, all our results would be correct.

Here is an example to illustrate this point. Assume that a student neglected his studies and attending his classes. Subsequently, he would fail at the end of the year. He may consider this failure to be an evil that befell him, but it is a good thing from the divine perspective. The success of such a negligent student would be an infringement of the universal law that whoever works hard should be rewarded for his efforts. It would also lead to the negligence of studying by all the students which would, in turn, cause the decline of knowledge and sciences. When Allah *the Exalted* has set the law that whoever does not work or exert any effort should fail, He has revived this universal law as a standard for thousands of humans. The failing person would become a clear, sufficient and practical example of this universal law. Similarly, the one who did not cultivate his land or was too lazy to plough or irrigate should not expect that it yields a good harvest which is something bad for him. This universal truth, in its essence, is good because it teaches everyone not to neglect the pursuit of proper means for attaining success. In conclusion, the one who suffers the result of his negligence often tends to interpret such a calamity as an evil thing that befell him because it involves harm and detriment. But if he considered the result commensurately with the effort he exerted, he would realize that this is Allah's permanent law; it will never change.

Allah *the Exalted* sets His laws in His universe so that He will reward whoever pursues the proper means for success and divest of the reward whoever does

not. When we weigh things according to this standard, we can easily discern that the one who works assiduously is bound to be successful, and that, conversely, the one who is neglectful and lazy is bound to fail. Both ramifications are results of the universal law set by Allah.

Whenever Allah *the Exalted* puts forward the sayings of any party without commenting on them, this implies that He approves such sayings. In contrast, if the opinion is false, Allah puts forward the proper evidence to refute it and demonstrate its falsity. This shows us that Allah *the Exalted* does not want us to neglect the false claims of our adversaries so that we do not know them. Rather, Allah elucidates these claims, and then criticizes them to protect our faith and creed against any disbelievers' claims—so that their claims do not harm our faith and creed. Therefore, Allah expounds the rationale and arguments of the disbelievers and explains to us that they are bound to argue, and that you believers, should respond to them by arguing in a certain manner.

A good example of this point is when some alleged that Allah has had a son; He has responded that their claim were nothing but falsehood. (*al-Kahf*: 5) Allah has exposed the arguments of the believers' adversaries because some believers may be taken aback by such arguments. However, when Allah presents these arguments, He draws the attention of the listener to the way in which He can refute it by showing its weak points.

Those—who said that what is good is from Allah, whereas what is evil is from Prophet Muhammad—wanted to cause dissension and a chasm between Allah and His Messenger. Thus, in order to explain that matter, Allah has commanded Prophet Muhammad to say to them that everything ultimately emanates from Allah. Further, the precision of Allah *the Exalted* is manifested in the fact that He has chosen prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to deliver His Message to them, even though He could have put forward the matter without saying, 'Say...' as a command to Prophet Muhammad.

However, Allah wants Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be the intermediary. Hence, He has commanded him to say that all is from Allah. All, in this context, means both the good and evil things. Allah *the Exalted* wants to explain to us that the ontological realities of the world are consistent with the human natural inclination to have faith.

For a long time, scholars have disagreed about the ultimate origin and cause of the deeds of the servants of Allah. In this vein, they posed the following questions: is the deed of a servant of Allah undertaken by himself, or does Allah cause all actions to happen through the agency of His servants? If every servant of Allah is the ultimate cause of his deeds, it is fair that Allah will either punish or reward him for what he has done. However, if Allah were the ultimate cause and the Originator of all deeds, then why would He punish His servants? Subsequently, scholars plunged into a huge maze in pursuing the answer to this question.

Here, we say that we have to understand that Allah has created the universe and set laws to govern it. Further, these laws, to our utter surprise, regulate and encompass the acts and deeds of both the believers and the disbelievers. This indicates that no one in Allah's universe is worthier of worship than Him. Allah has admitted even those who do not believe in Him in the realm of His Lordship. Moreover, He has ordered all means and causes in His universe to respond to whoever labours and exerts effort, whether he is a believer or disbeliever because Allah is the One Who created him and brought him to the universe. In so far as this is the case, Allah thereby provides him with what is needed to sustain his life. Afterwards, Allah reveals His path to His servants saying that He likes a certain act and dislikes another; so whoever believes in Him, will be assigned a different status—he will be a true servant of Allah.

Therefore, recognition of the Divinity of Allah is the cause of His assigned obligations for all those who believe in Him. However, Allah is the Lord of all, and His Lordship encompasses everyone. In this vein, He sustains and provides all with their livelihood. That is, cosmic laws serve all. Some of Allah's creatures—whom He has made subservient to humankind and governed by His laws and norms wanted to revolt against man, to stop serving man because of his ingratitude to Allah.

Cosmic laws are like the soldiers of Allah. They revolt against the man when he fails to thank Allah for what He endowed him. But Allah explains to the subservient creatures that those disbelievers are still His creatures and He is the One Who brought them into existence. Thus, Allah has set universal laws that regulate the life of both believers and disbelievers. Afterwards, Allah has

revealed His assigned obligations through the agency of His messengers. In this vein, He explained to mankind that He likes one act and dislikes the other; so whoever loves Him should adhere to His assignments. Accordingly, the purpose of Allah's Lordship is different from those of Divinity.

The purpose of Lordship is creation and supporting the needy, whereas the purpose of Divinity is to establish obedience to Allah. Such obedience consists in following commands and avoiding proscriptions. Every ruling that involves a command or a proscription, which is Allah's obligation, is related to the requirements of Allah's Divinity and not His Lordship.

By contrast, everything related to the universal laws is connected with the purpose of Lordship. Universal laws never change. For instance, someone who wants to succeed in a subject at school may need to score fifty per cent or more; another may need to score only forty per cent to pass a different subject. The question is: if a student managed to meet the condition of success, would it imply that the student has succeeded due to his efforts or, rather, that such rules gave him success on him?

The latter is true. It was the law that conferred on the student his success. It is true that the law did not tell the student that his exam answers would guarantee his success. Thus, if the student applies himself and studies according to this standard, his effort will give him a level of success that is commensurate with the level of excellence such effort supposedly accomplishes. The law does not make anyone successful, nor does it cause anyone to fail; rather, the student who exerts effort succeeds, and the one who does not do so fails. Accordingly, everything in the universe functions according to a specific law.

Let us consider the following example: if we consider the movement of the hand created by Allah, we will not be able to completely know the way it functions. When one lifts something from the ground, none of us usually knows which muscles move to carry such object. In reality, the One Who has acted is Allah. By analogy, the hand, whether one used it to do a good deed or used to perpetrate an evil thing, is ultimately used by Allah, Who is the Ultimate Doer; indeed, every act is ultimately the act of Allah. The man only directs the energy to either shaking hands with someone or slapping another person on the face; the hand can perform both functions. When one directs his

hand to slap someone on his face, he deserves a punishment, and when he directs it to shake hands with someone, he merits a reward.

The man is thus responsible for directing the effort required for undertaking a particular act, not for the deed itself. Therefore, punishment and reward are the compensations for the direction of the energy spent, and not for the act itself. Let us take another example: consider a knife; one may use it knife to slaughter a chicken; alternatively, one can use the same knife to stab a person. The knife itself is incapable of disobeying the one who uses it to slaughter a chicken as much as it cannot disobey if he decides to use it to stab another person.

Allah has created the knife to serve the function of slaughtering. However, one may use this tool to slaughter in different ways—whether such slaughtering is lawful or proscribed by Allah. Therefore, Allah is the ultimate Doer of all deeds. As long as the deed is within the realm of the commands of the One Who has assigned the commands, and He is the Originator of the universal laws, then He is the ultimate Doer of all deeds and actions.

When we meditate on the matters carefully, we realize that all deeds ultimately emanate from Allah. The man is only capable of channelling his energy to actually bring about the act. A young man dwelling upon studying his lessons did not create his mind or his eyes with which he reads. However, his mind is fit for thinking about the good things and the bad ones. Further, he can use his eyes to read a comic or use them to read a useful book.

Accordingly, irrespective of one's deeds, he can never hide anything he does from his Lord. In fact, all what one does is to channel the energy that Allah has given him to act.

Your reward or punishment is based on the way in which you channel your energy and power to do good or evil things. Thus, when our Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'All is from Allah,' we immediately say that this true. Practically, whoever neglects his land and fails to fertilize and irrigate it, and then suffers through a drought, should know that such a calamity is a result of his failure to correctly direct the energy that Allah has created for him.

By contrast, when there is no rain, one is absolutely left idle. Universal laws have been created by Allah; whoever follows these laws gains, but whoever

suffers an evil thing should know that he failed to pursue the proper means to succeed in whichever endeavour he undertook. This holds true for both individuals and groups. Whoever gambles and afterwards suffers destruction and loss of wealth or property should know that he was the cause of such misfortune because he had already received orders from the True Lord *Glorified is He* not to practice such activities. Any nation that complained about the lack of agricultural land or proper livelihood should realize that they are the cause of such a problem because those in charge amongst them should have worked on developing the nation's resources in proportion to the increase in population.

What often exhausts and drains us is the fact that we have to endure the oblivion of other previous generations; thus, a single generation may find itself faced with all the problems that its predecessors should have addressed and resolved in the first place. If a previous generation took its responsibility in resolving its own problems, the mission of the present generation would be less exhausting. As long as we have a fertile land that is suitable for cultivation, we should prepare and use spring water to cultivate it. If there is a problem, it is therefore the problem of the laziness of the previous generations. As long as there is a buffer of underground water, we have to use our reason to extract the secrets Allah has concealed in His universe. It is not necessary that rain should fall in order for agriculture to happen. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky and makes it flow as springs [and rivers] in the earth' (*az-Zumar: 21*).

Allah *Glorified is He* has created outlets for water inside the soil so that people in tropical countries could reach down to underground water as well as the water would not evaporate. Thus, Allah has hidden some of the water inside the earth for the benefit of man. In tropical countries, we notice how salt precipitates on the soil. This is clear evidence that Allah has set the law for distilling fresh water so that it can be used for both drinking and cultivation.

We are all aware of the law of evaporation. For instance, we may pour a glass of water and spread it over the floor of a 25 square meter area room. Then, we will notice that the water evaporates quickly. However, if we leave the same amount of water in the glass, only very little of it will be lost through evaporation. Accordingly, the greater the area or surface over which the water is

spread, the greater the evaporation will be. The True Lord *Glorified is He* intended that three quarters of the earth's surface should be water because water is the origin of life. Further, Allah made some of this water salty so that its taste would not change or decay. In addition, saltwater is always spread over vast areas in order for it to evaporate, condense and then fall again in the form of rain. As rain falls, water runs into valleys, and the remaining of this water gets stored in outlets inside the earth as fresh water so that man can use the intelligence Allah has endowed him to extract it from the earth. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has created for us all the means we need to earn our livelihood.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, 'Do you indeed disbelieve in He who has created the earth in two days and attribute to Him equals? That is the Lord of the worlds.' (9) And He placed on the earth firmly set mountains over its surface, and He blessed it and determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance in four days without distinction – for [the information] of those who ask. (10)' (*Fussilat*: 9-10)

Accordingly, do not ever say that the human population will outweigh the livelihood and sustenance available on earth. Rather, admit that your creative and deductive capacities have waned. As long as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance,' we should know that no saying is truer than His. Consider the following example—and Allah has the supreme and most exalted parables. Assume that an employee bought all his monthly needs and stored it in the attic of the house in the beginning of the month. One day, he walks into his house and finds out that his wife did not prepare lunch; what would happen? He would be angry.

Allah has stored all the livelihood and sustenance we need inside the earth. Yet, we do not exert enough effort to benefit from it. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that if man did not avail himself of the laws Allah has set for him and failed to follow Allah's assigned commands and proscriptions, he would toil and would live in murk and misery.

Allah *Glorified is He* thus says: 'and Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure; its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favours of Allah. So, Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) This town enjoyed security and tranquillity, but it refused to show gratitude for Allah's

blessings. When you examine closely the connection between cause and effect, between the universe and its laws, the human and what is created for him, you will notice a peculiar thing. This town was secure and tranquil and abounded with sustenance that came to it from everywhere. Thus, the town was the place of inhabitancy. Further, the place of inhabitancy is not the only place where there is sustenance; rather, sustenance used to flood it from everywhere else. It is as if every dweller of a particular place has other places serving it. However, this town refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings.

The apparent meaning of ingratitude is concealment. Therefore, the town that showed ingratitude to Allah's blessings is the town that concealed these blessings. The blessings of Allah were present, but the humans in this town concealed these blessings through their laziness and failure to extract such blessings from the earth.

Alternatively, it could be that the people in that town managed to extract Allah's bounty to them, yet they hid it away from others. The evil in the universe is always due to one of these two matters: The people of several nations were too lazy to channel their efforts to extract Allah's blessings from the earth. Further, other nations possessed wealth that they threw in the sea lest it would go to other nations. The corruption we see in the relation between different parts of the world, indicates that the world is the town that Allah *Glorified is He* used as a parable, 'And Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure; its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favours of Allah. So, Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing.'

Consider the precision of the style of the Quran in Allah's saying: 'Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger.' We know that food is the thing that is often experienced through taste. Further, we know that the tongue is the organ that tastes. In contrast, *al-libas*—the Arabic word here translated as 'envelopment'—encompasses the entire body. The organ that tastes is not only the tongue but the entire body. The mouth ultimately eats for the benefit of the rest of the body. When the nutrients needed to sustain life do not reach the rest of the body, all the body experiences hunger as well.

The universe is created by Allah according to an accurate system of laws so that universal phenomena would follow the path set for it by Allah. When

these laws function regularly, they yield the expected results to man—even after a while—to the extent that some of the commentators on the Quran and some theologians argue that hereditary illnesses and diseases are transmitted from the preceding generations to the succeeding ones due to the negligence of the ancestors and their tendency to encroach upon and breach the path set by Allah. Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* sets a universal law for the human being, but the latter violates it, he must experience bad results to ensue from his action. The same holds true for groups and nations.

Nevertheless, reason tends to be preoccupied with calamities and evil things that befall people unknowingly and unexpectedly. Philosophy should have investigated this domain; however, religion teaches us the causes of these phenomena. Religion teaches us that if a human being fails to pursue the means and proper causes for securing success in whichever endeavour he undertakes, and then suffers a disaster, he should know that such a disaster is the consequences of his own actions.

Consider earthquakes, volcanoes, sweeping avalanches or ferocious storms. Man cannot interfere with or prevent any of these phenomena. All of them relay one message to man: if everything in the universe could be monotonously and consistently explained in terms of causal relations, we would not need to assume a connection with an unknown concealed force to which we must consistently submit.

Some philosophical schools in Germany, for instance, argued that the existence of evil in the universe is evidence that there is no god. Were there a wise god, all of these evils would not have happened, and no one would have been born with a single eye, stumbling leg or mutilated body. Another school in the same period of time argued: No, the monotony of the cosmic order is evidence suggesting that there is no god. If there were a god, He would break that order and cause certain events to happen in violation of the cosmic laws. Thus, we may realize that these people seek infidelity for its own sake. The evidence is that one school took the order of the universe as grounds for its infidelity, whereas the other school took the exceptional anomalies in the universe as evidence to substantiate its argument for disbelieving in God.

To both schools we say: you are immature. Whichever wants to seek order as evidence of the existence of a Wise God, and whichever wants to take the

universal anomalies as an indication of the existence of an All-Capable God should realize that both aspects are present in the universe, and both are evidence of the existence of an All-Wise and All-Capable God if we are fair in judgement.

Consider the order of the higher universe. If a minor thing is amiss in this order, the entire edifice of the universe would collapse. Also, consider the sun, rain, planets and stars; they all follow a strict order. So, whoever wants to take order and regularity as evidence of the existence of the wisdom of a creator, would find what he seeks. By contrast, whoever wants to take anomalies as evidence of the existence of a dominating God—Who transcends the mechanical nature of the universe—would also find those clues; but anomalies are always individual cases. Accordingly, if there is a corrupt individual event or member in a system, this does not imply that the system is defective. The percentage of those born with a single eye to those born with perfect eyes is almost negligible.

However, when anomalies occur in the system of the universe and in the movement of celestial bodies, the destruction of the world may ensue. Thus, whoever wants to see that an ultimate order governs the universe and indicates the existence of a higher creative wisdom should consider and examine the higher celestial bodies. By contrast, whoever wants to take anomalies and aberrant incidents as an indication of the existence of a power that controls the mechanical structure of the world should know that such things are also present. However, anomalies are individual cases; thus, if there are one or two anomalous individuals within a system, the entire system would not fall apart.

We also know that the monotony of the blessings may distract man from thinking about the ultimate Giver and Lord. For instance, if one of us enjoys healthy teeth for a long time, he will never recall how painful bad teeth tend to be. However, if a tooth starts to decay, one remembers the bounty of having good teeth. The same thing holds true for the kidneys and eyes; if one feels pain in any of these organs, he immediately rushes to a physician. All of these matters are alarms intended to disrupt the monotony of the blessings one enjoys so that one may recall the value of these blessings. When we see a man whom Allah deprived of sight, each one of us immediately says, ‘thank Allah for His bounty’ and becomes protective of his eyes lest he should lose them.

The same attitude recurs when one sees a stumbling or mutilated man. All of these are direct and clear cosmic messages so that people would not be distracted by the blessings away from the One Who conferred such blessings.

If we consider the things that may befall an individual or a nation as a whole, we will always find that these are well deserved punishments for opposing Allah's instructions. If there is anything beyond man's capacity, we say that this is the wisdom of the Creator so that He may call our attention to the fact that He is the Ultimate Lord. For this reason, we notice that people who suffer from congenital mutilations are only a few. In addition, Allah compensates those who suffer from such anomalies with other permanent bounties. A poet said:

My eye was born blind yet blindness is often associated with intelligence

Indeed I peculiarly acquired a lot of knowledge

The absence of the light of the eye opened a space for a river of knowledge

To follow within me... a river that no one else could comprehend.

I once used the famous composer Ludwig Van Beethoven as an example. Even though he was deaf, he managed to compose symphonies that struck the entire world. For this reason, there is a common saying that states: 'everyone who suffers from a disability has great powers.' Inasmuch as Allah uses that person as a means to remind people of His bounties and blessings, Allah *Glorified is He* compensates the disabled by endowing him with another talent which attracts people's attention so that they may see Allah's Grace upon him. Therefore, we should ponder on the calamities that abruptly befall man and without him having to do with the cause. Those are part of the Divine Wisdom so that one may realize that the universe is not left without leadership and guidance.

Allah has created the universe and its universal laws to prove to us that He exists and that He controls the cosmos. If something happens, we ought to seek the wisdom underlying its occurrence. Wisdom is a violation of the universal laws intended to call our attention to the existence of a higher power that surpasses the mechanical nature of the world—a power that is capable of suspending this mechanical order.

Hence, the miracles of the Messengers of Allah assumed this nature. For instance, the nature of the fire is to burn; nonetheless, it did not burn Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Was the intention of the True Lord *Glorified is He* only to rescue Ibrahim (Abraham) from the fire? If His intention had only been to rescue Ibrahim (Abraham), Allah *Glorified is He* would not have allowed his adversaries to get hold of him. After the adversaries of Ibrahim (Abraham) apprehended him and lit up a fire to burn him alive, the True Lord *Glorified is He* could still have brought about a cloud, that the adversaries of Ibrahim (Abraham) would not be able to control, and caused rain to fall and extinguish the fire. No; Allah intended that the adversaries of Ibrahim (Abraham) would capture him, light up a ferocious fire and nothing would extinguish that fire; then, they would ultimately throw Ibrahim (Abraham) in the fire. Subsequently, the True lord explains: I exercise my dominion and mastery over the universal laws because I am the Creator of such laws, and I can suspend them whenever I will: 'We (Allah) said: 'O fire! Be you coolness and safety for Ibrahim (Abraham)!'' (*al-Anbiya'*: 69) By contrast, had the other scenario taken place, and the fire had been extinguished by rain, people would have asked: what if rain had not fallen and had not extinguished the fire? The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to refute all the possible claims Ibrahim's (Abraham's) adversaries might come up with. When events not determined by man happen, we say: attribute these events to the wisdom of the Creator because He wants to direct the attention of His creation to the fact that He is the One controlling and dominating the universe. The mechanical nature of the universe baffles the minds due to its precision; nonetheless, it does not escape the control of our Lord. For this reason, wind sometimes blows so vigorously that one cannot see anything at all. This means that specks of dust have accumulated until they created some kind of a barring wall. Such phenomenon takes place no matter how much modern scientific equipment may try to control or prevent it from happening.

It is peculiar that Allah *Glorified is He* left us a sign that says: I have ennobled you, human being, with reason. However, I have not endowed you with an infinite power of understanding. There may be an instinct-driven creature that is still more capable of understanding things than human beings.

When an earthquake happens in a particular region, the first animals to sense it and flee are often the donkeys. This was intended by Allah *Glorified is He* so

that man would not take pride in his knowledge and reason. 'No! [But] indeed, man transgresses (6) because he sees himself self-sufficient. (7)' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7)

Accordingly, if you see a cosmic phenomenon that is not up to man or to any nation or group of people to control, know that Allah *Glorified is He* intends that it happens for a wise reason so that He can direct our attention to the existence of the Highest Creator, and so that no one would think that the mechanical nature of the universe is monotonously autonomous, but rather, it is a system that Allah has implemented in accordance with His Power, Will and Wisdom.

Some people proudly say: the electronic mind does not err. They do not know that the fact that it is infallible is in itself problematic because inasmuch as you feed it with data, it produces information. It does not have a choice about anything. By contrast, the human mind is capable of deduction and discovery. Further, it can discard harmful data. This is indicative of the greatness of their Creator.

Others use a different example, namely, the fact that artificial flowers do not wither. To those who think this way, we say: it is the defect and flaw of artificial flowers that they do not wither; it indicates that they are lifeless and completely inanimate.

The Quran puts forward a glimpse of these issues—issues that were you to subject them to reason, you would not accept. However, when the One Who caused it to happen interprets it, we would find that it makes perfect sense. A good example to illustrate the point is when Moses went to the righteous servant. What happened? The righteous servant said: 'Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience.' (*al-Kahf*: 67) The righteous servant then tried to give an excuse to Moses; he thus said: 'And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?' (*al-Kahf*: 68) Moses, who was among the most resolute Messengers of Allah, replied: 'You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order.' (*al-Kahf*: 69)

Afterwards, the righteous servant [Al-Khidhr] made a hole in the ship which they boarded together. To the superficial, immediate understanding, making a hole in a ship is an evil act. Although Moses promised the righteous servant not to disobey his order and to be patient, he could not stand what happened. He thus said to him: 'So they set out, until when they had embarked on the ship, Al-Khidhr tore it open. [Moses] said, 'Have you torn it open to

drown its people? You have certainly done a grave thing.’’ (*al-Kahf*: 71) Moses suspected the act of the righteous servant on an apparent level. But when he understood the wisdom underlying the act, he found that it was the best course of action to take. Had not the righteous servant made a hole in the ship, the unjust king would have usurped a good and sound ship by force because: ‘As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So I intended to cause defect in it as there was after them a king who seized every [good] ship by force.’ (*al-Kahf*: 79) Had the righteous servant not made a hole in the ship, its true owners would not have been able to keep it. The hole guaranteed that its owners would keep it because they could always fix that defect later. Accordingly, one should always bear in mind that anything that happens at odds with the superficiality of human understanding is caused by Allah for an underlying wisdom as long as no creature has caused it.

Is there anything more atrocious than murder? The righteous servant murdered a young boy. So what was the wisdom underlying such an act? If any one of us has a boy, he always thinks of him as the ravishment of his eye and his ultimate support in life. However, this son may be the cause of the corruption of his father’s religion. He may also incite him to lie, take bribes or even to steal. This son may lead his father to Hellfire. It is thereby better that Allah removes this son from the life of the father so that he would not lead him to wrongdoing.

Someone may wonder what sin or wrong deed the young boy committed to deserve death. We answer: you do not understand matters properly; the death of the boy was better for him because he returned to the True Lord without having to go through the experience of having to choose whether to obey or disobey Allah; he was sent directly to the mercy of Allah, and this is better for him. Accordingly, killing the boy was a mercy for his parents. If something happens to one’s self due to a violation of Allah’s law, one ought to know that he is the cause of the detriment. The same thing holds true when a nation violates a cosmic or a religious law. By contrast, if matters are beyond the sphere of people’s power and control then one should know that Allah caused them to happen for a wise reason. The story of the righteous servant with Moses abounds with wisdom. Both of them went to a village and asked its people for food. ‘So they set out, until when they came to the people of a village, they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality.’ (*al-Kahf*: 77) Neither

of them asked for money so that they would not arouse suspicion. They rather asked for food, which is the basic necessity of human life. However, the people from the village refused to offer them food as they were vile—despite the fact that the righteous servant erected and supported a wall that was on the brink of collapsing on the village. Then, Moses asked the righteous servant: why did not you ask the people of the village to pay you for your work? The righteous servant eventually explained to Moses the reason underlying his actions: ‘And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So, your Lord intended that they reach maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience.’ (*al-Kahf*: 82)

The mean village people who refused to give food to their guests when they asked for it were definitely incapable of undertaking the responsibility of keeping the treasure of the two orphan boys. Hence, Allah commanded the righteous servant to hide the treasure away from the village people. This way, if bad things happen to a man due to something he did, he should realize he is the one who did wrong and harmed himself. In contrast, if one did not have a hand in what happened to him, he should have faith in the wisdom of the One Who caused it. In such a manner, man can always be at ease whenever anything befalls him.

The one who has faith receives whatever evil thing that may happen to him strongly and patiently. If such things are due to things he did, he should adjust his behaviour. In contrast, if such things come from his Lord, he should have faith in the wisdom of his Lord: ‘Say: All is from Allah.’ This is an admonition for you, human being so that you could know that any deed is ultimately caused by Allah. Man does not have a hand in the energy with which Allah has endowed him. However, man channels and directs the energy and faculties Allah created for him towards obedience or disobedience.

Since all is from Allah, He wants us to feel astonished by the attitude of those people. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘So what is [the matter] with those people that they can hardly understand any statement?’ (*an-Nisa'*: 78). It is as if the logic of reason and thought must lead to proper understanding. We should be rather astounded when people do not understand things properly. We should not be surprised unless the thing offered to them is a matter that

could be comprehended by the mind. When one says that a particular person does not ‘understand any statement,’ this means that the latter’s mind is incapable of understanding. Yet, when you put it with ‘hardly,’ this means that such person cannot even begin to understand. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ
وَأَرْسَلْنَاكَ لِلنَّاسِ رَسُولًا وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٧٩﴾

Anything good that happens to you [Prophet] is from God; anything bad is [ultimately] from yourself. We have sent you as a messenger to people; God is sufficient witness [79] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 79)

If someone is subjected to a universal law, then it is from Allah. However, if some evil befalls you, then know that as much as you have done wrong, it is from you. It is as if the matter is divided into parts: a part for which you are responsible and a part for which you bear no responsibility. However, you should always consider anything that happens to you as a good thing because it ultimately contributes to spreading faith in the universe.

A believer should be in a state of alternation between self-reproach for the calamities for which he bears responsibility and faith in the wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He* concerning the calamities for which he bears no responsibility. ‘What comes to you of good is from Allah, but what comes to you of evil, [O man], is from yourself. And We have sent you, [O Muhammad], to the people as a messenger, and sufficient is Allah as Witness.’ But who is the Messenger? The Messenger is the one who conveys the message of the One who sent him to whom he was sent. As long as the Messenger relays and delivers the Message of Allah, then whatever he causes to happen is ultimately caused by Allah.

When the True Lord says: ‘sufficient is Allah as Witness,’ this means that it will not harm you, Muhammad, if they say that whatever evil that befalls them is from you because it suffices that Allah is on your side. Further, they are powerless to hold anyone accountable. Your Lord is the One Who is capable of holding people accountable. He testifies that you are honest in delivering His message and that you did not cause any evil to anyone as they alleged. Next, the True Lord says:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّى فَمَا
أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا

**Whoever obeys the Messenger obeys God.
If some pay no heed, We have not
sent you to be their keeper [80]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 80)**

Obedience to Prophet Muhammad is a form of obedience to Allah. Whoever obeys Prophet Muhammad is also obeying Allah because the Messenger only delivers Allah's message.

For this reason, in personal affairs, Prophet Muhammad used to act like an ordinary human being, and he put it forth as such. When these matters were proven incorrect, Prophet Muhammad gave us an example of his honesty.

Anas Allah be pleased with him related that the Prophet passed by some people who were pollinating their palm trees. He then said: 'If you were not to do it, it might be good for you. (So they abandoned this practice) and there was a decline in the yield. He (the Prophet) happened to pass by them (and said): 'What has gone wrong with your trees?' They said: 'you said so and so.' Thereupon he said: 'You have better knowledge (of a technical skill) in the affairs of the world.'⁽¹⁾

This indicates that the Heavens do not have anything to do with the empirical issues that are, for instance, subject to experimentation in the lab. As for the issues that are subject to universal cosmic laws, they cannot be left to the servants of Allah. It is quite peculiar that when Prophet Muhammad deals with something about which Allah has not enacted any prior decree, but later changes it, he is the one who communicates to us such change so that we would testify that he is most honest and sincere in delivering Allah's message even if it is against his own interest. This noble verse comes after the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'And We have sent you, [O Muhammad], to the people as a messenger and sufficient is Allah as Witness.'

(1) Related by Ahmad, Ibn Majah and Muslim (who narrated this version of the Hadith)

A Messenger of Allah—as we know—is the one who delivered the law that Allah has intended to govern the life of His vicegerent on earth. Further, if we consider the letters which compose the etymological root of the word *risala* ('message' in Arabic): *ar-ra'*, *as-sin* and *al-lam*, we will notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in a different verse: 'And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet.' (*al-Hajj*: 52)

The messenger may be a messenger in the sense we understand or may be a prophet; however, both are sent by Allah. The difference is that a messenger brings forth a law—which he is commanded to deliver and communicate to the people so that they apply it. By contrast, the prophet is sent by Allah *Glorified is He* to give an ideal example of following the path and code of conduct set by the religion that preceded him; thus, he is sent to serve as a behavioural example. But, technically, a messenger is the one who brings forth a new path that could differ in some of its branches from the one that preceded it. Both of them are messengers; the messenger brings forth a new path and course of life to implement, whereas the prophet only sets his attitude as an example for the implementation and adherence to the path of Allah that the messenger before him has already relayed.

If the True Lord *Glorified is He* has sent the messengers and made Prophet Muhammad the seal of all of them, this means that his Message will be complete—with no subsequent Message. If that is so, how could it be possible that a human mind would try to second-guess it?

Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen Muhammad to be the seal of all messengers and revealed to him the saying: 'This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30) Therefore, there will be no subsequent message. So, how come a contemporary or a non-contemporary person dares to say, 'No, we want to include new additions to certain parts of this religion'? Or alternatively, that one may claim that a particular ruling does not befit the age. If Allah has not willed for the existence of any subsequent message because He has perfected it, what gives humans the right to second-guess it?!

Messenger Muhammad, when mentioned, follows either format: Messenger of Allah or Messenger to the people, as he is the middle man between Allah and creation.

Revealed messages are necessary for humans because, if man examines and traces existence with only his natural disposition and his sound reason, without the aid of a messenger, he may still discover that the universe must have a Creator whose power is commensurate with the wisdom and perfection of such universe. Further, he may discover that such Creator must be a Lord because He provides us with whatever we need. However, could reason reveal to us what this great power and capability wants from us? We can only conclude that a great power underlies this universe, and this power has enough capability, wisdom, knowledge, will and attributes of perfection to create this amazing universe in such perfect form and with such precise engineering. In addition, the universe has a purpose. However, can the mind assign a name to this power? The fact that it is a great power implies that it has capability and wisdom but does not reveal the name to us. Accordingly, a messenger has to be sent to provide the people with the answers to the questions that engross them namely, what the power that created this universe with such amazingly perfect form.

Here, reason should pause and wonder. When a messenger is sent from Allah to say: 'I will lead you to the name and essence of this creative power,' the creatures ought to listen because this messenger would solve the riddle that puzzles them. Both the believers and the disbelievers believe it because both find themselves in a universe wherein species that are more powerful than they are serve them involuntarily.

In addition, man finds that there are innumerable species that do not fall within the realm of his power or dominion. Further, the human mind falls short of understanding the functioning mechanism of a lot of tasks these species perform in fulfilling the purpose of being subservient to him. Therefore, man ought to have believed on his own.

We have already given an example to illustrate this point. We said: assume that a man survived a plane crash, and then lost his way in the desert without food or water. Afterwards, he sat down and fell asleep. Upon waking up, he found a table abounding with different kinds of food and tasty drinks. By Allah, would his mind not be preoccupied with the question as to who brought this food and these drinks, even before he touched them? For this reason, and before we avail ourselves of any of these blessings, we ought to pose the

question: 'who creates all these blessings?' Despite that, Allah *Glorified is He* gave us a some time to think so that we would immediately believe, once a messenger comes forth to teach us that the power for which we search is called a particular name, asks us to do certain things and informs us that, since we have been created by such power, we are bound to eventually return to it.

The epitome of this whole argument is that Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared what may be called the bountiful table of the universe for His creatures before He even created them. Further, He has created all the species that man needs to sustain his life. As we have said before, the chain of species and the services they provide to mankind make us wonder: how is it possible that creatures which are more powerful and stronger than us serve us?

We also may wonder: how is it possible that the sun—that is far beyond the realm of my power and dominion, the moon—that I cannot reach, the wind—that I cannot control, and the earth—with which I cannot communicate, serve me? There must be something more powerful than me and all these creatures, which in turn subdued them to my service. Further, have you ever noticed that any of those creatures performed its service to you in a deficient manner? This may never happen because all of these creatures are, by nature, compelled to perform the function of being subservient to you. Thus, if a messenger comes to solve for us the riddle concerning nature and the origin of life and to guide us to its Creator, we must open our ears and listen to him. Accordingly, I should believe the Messenger of Allah if he tells me that the One Who created the universe is Allah, and that Allah is my Creator; He sent him [the messenger] with a particular path and code for living so that I can accomplish my mission in life by doing certain acts and avoiding others; and everyone will be judged by Allah for his acts in his worldly sojourn—such path is the epitome of all religions. For this reason, it is necessary that Allah *Glorified is He* sends a messenger and then supports him with a miracle that proves his honesty and the truth of the message he delivers Since Allah has sent a messenger to deliver the path that comprises His dos and don'ts; this means that one must obey this messenger. Our Lord says in a different verse: 'And We did not send any messenger except to be obeyed by Allah's permission.' (*an-Nisa'*: 64) This means that obedience to the Messengers of Allah is a must, not because such obedience is due to the

Messengers themselves, but because this obedience is part of being obedient to Allah. What sets apart Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from other messengers is the fact that the miracle that vindicates the truth of his message is the Book itself that was revealed to Him by Allah, and puts forward the path He has set for mankind. Other messengers were different. Every messenger of Allah used to be supported by a miracle in addition to the Book that set the way of life of the religion he preached. For instance, the stick of Moses, and his white hand were his miracles; however, his path was set in the Torah. Accordingly, the miracle supportive of every religion was different from the Book that set the path of life such religion delineated.

The miracle of 'Isa (Jesus) was his capacity to cure the mute and mutilated. However, the Book that set the course of his religion—the Bible—was different. Nevertheless, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad was identical to the Book that set the path for his people because Allah intended that the miracle of the seal of all religions would not be separate from the course of life it defined.

Whoever witnessed the miracles of the previous messengers of Allah would believe in them. The one who had not witnessed such miracles only heard about them; if he trusted the person communicating the news of such miracle, he would believe him; if he did not, he would not believe him. Indeed, if Allah had not told us about those miracles in the Quran, we may have very well doubted them.

Yet, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will last as long as the path of life he has set for his followers lasts. Every Muslim is capable of asserting until the end of days that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and that this is his miracle. Followers of others messengers are incapable of such assertion. None of them can assertively say: this person is the Messenger of Allah, and this is his miracle because such miracle has already happened and ended. In contrast, the Quran will stay and survive as long as the message and the universe last.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to deliver the message of Allah. The True Lord explains to us that I have sent the Messenger so that he would be obeyed. Thus, it logically makes perfect sense that the Quran would say: 'He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah,' because the

Messenger was sent to relay the message of Allah; we are thus more connected to the Messenger of Allah. We have learnt before that if the command to obey Allah is coupled with that of obeying His messenger, we must obey both. If Allah *Glorified is He* discusses a general issue like *zakat* (obligatory alms) or performing pilgrimage, and the Messenger of Allah then comes forth to explain the details and specifics pertaining to these matters; we have to obey Allah by following the general command and obey His messenger by adhering to the specifics and details he explained. If Allah *Glorified is He* puts forward neither a general issue nor a specific one, then know that the legislation will be decreed by Prophet Muhammad in accordance with the authorization Allah *Glorified is He* gave to His messenger in His saying: ‘And whatever the Messenger has given you—take; and what he has forbidden you—refrain from.’ (*al-Hashr*: 7)

The only Prophet whom Allah *Glorified is He* gave an authorization to decree and legislate is Muhammad. All other prophets only delivered the message of Allah, and none of them brought about anything pertaining to the religion he preached on his own except for Prophet Muhammad. Allah *Glorified is He* authorized him to legislate in His saying: ‘And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.’ Thus, Prophet Muhammad also has a mission that is directly related to the domain of the Quran. We find analogous examples in our day to day lives. For instance, someone may say to an employee that the state law decrees that if an employee is absent for more than 15 days from his work, he must be fired. This employee may then refer to the state constitution and then retort: ‘I have read the constitution of the state, but I did not find this law. Accordingly, what you are telling me about firing the employee who is absent from work for more than fifteen days is an unconstitutional claim.’ To this person we say the following: the constitution states that in such a case a committee must be empanelled to regulate and organize the affairs of the employees in this regard. Through authorization, an authority or a committee could formulate and decree a law to be applied to all employees; if this happened, such a law would be constitutional. All the articles of the law concerning employees are included in the authorization the constitution grants to the committees and authorities that decree secondary and subordinate laws and regulations. Similarly, if someone probes you to adduce an evidence from the Quran that *al-maghrib*

(evening) Prayer is three rak'as, *Al-fajr* (morning) Prayer is two rak'as, both *Azh-zhuhr* (noon) and 'Isha' (night) Prayers are four rak'as, you should say here 'is the evidence from the Quran: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from.' In order to protect the safety of his path against such distortions, Prophet Muhammad says: 'Let me not find one of you reclining on his couch when he hears something regarding me which I have commanded or forbidden and saying: We do not know. What we found in Allah's Book we have followed.'

In a different narration, Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'di Yaqrib relates that Prophet 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 says: 'Between us and you is Allah's Book. So whatever we find in it that is lawful, we consider lawful, and whatever we find in it that is unlawful, we consider it unlawful.' Indeed whatever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made unlawful, it is the same as what Allah made unlawful.'⁽¹⁾

I am relating this Hadith of Prophet Muhammad so that you would realize the stupidity of those who say so, and to tell them that your saying is evidence of the truth and honesty of Prophet Muhammad. In the Name of Allah, if someone claimed, as you do, that the only source of legislation is the Quran, what would we say to the narrators who relate the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad? Even if they had not said so, we would still respond that Prophet Muhammad said: the man lies on his couch, talks, and no one said anything opposing it. Therefore, the existence of these people is evidence of the truth and validity of the discourse of Prophet Muhammad. The very nature of assigning a mission to a Prophet automatically involves obedience. Obedience means acceding and responding to a demand. Rhetoricians and grammarians identify various kinds of demands. For instance, one can wish for something impossible, like the saying of the poet

I wish the stars would approach me so that I could reorganize them into
Necklaces of praise; my words would never satisfy you in describing them

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhi in *Al-Ilm*; it was also related by Ahmad and Ibn Majah

Stars will never approach or come close. This is also similar to the saying of the poet:

I wish youth would one day come back so
I could tell it about what old age did to me.

This is a kind of demand wherein the thing demanded, though desirable, is not likely or may never happen. An interrogative structure is a kind of request because we use it to request for information. This is like when you ask someone you are visiting, 'Who of the family is home?' In contrast, to command is to tell someone to do something; or you may even ask someone to avoid something—then it is a prohibition. In short, obedience is to respond to the demand placed on you by someone else. The one placing the demand on you either requests or forbids you to do certain things. Obedience in an absolute, general sense only applies to the obedience of the servant to his Lord. You may also say, yet in a less absolute sense, that the son obeyed his father, the student obeyed his teacher, or the worker obeyed his mentor. All of these are examples of relating obedience to the one obeyed. However, if you use the word obedience in an absolute sense, it refers to the obedience of the servant to Allah. This is the safest and soundest form of obedience, why? The reason is that whenever anyone commands or forbids you from doing anything, it invites a doubt of whether that command would benefit him or not. However, if the one who asked you to do or refrain from a specific act is the All-Sufficient Who stands in no need of the fruit of your work, then know that the value of such a demand is indubitable. What arouses one's doubts about obeying a particular command or proscription is the fear that the commander has made the order for a benefit that will accrue to him or, in case of a proscription, that the proscription will either benefit or fend harm off the one commanding. But if the commander enjoys the attributes of absolute power before you have even come into existence, you must know that your entire existence, your work or your abstinence from work will not accrue anything to Him. Obedience to such a commander is thus the safest and most trusted kind of obedience.

Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* related that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Whoever obeys me, obeys Allah; whoever disobeys me, disobeys Allah.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Related by Ibn Abu Hatim; it was also related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

The hypocrites are the ones who cannot endure light because they are accustomed to living in darkness. They are also disturbed by the presence of justice because they are endeared to the life of injustice. For this reason, they try to find any pretext to inhibit this religion. Hence, they said: 'Did not you hear your friend; he is on the vicinity of polytheism. He tells us not to worship anyone but Allah, but at the same time, he is making himself a lord to whom love and obedience are due.'

Therefore, the True Lord revealed to His Prophet Muhammad: 'He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.' Obedience here is not attributed to the person of Prophet Muhammad because it is either due to His mission in communicating Allah's message in partial texts or communicating Allah's message through the general authorization he was granted. Since it is a delivery of Allah's message through a general authorization to legislate, this implies that Allah *Glorified is He* has entrusted him with decreeing religious laws.

What is the opposite of obedience? It is disobedience and refusal. We have seen that people are divided into two groups in terms of their attitude towards Prophet Muhammad. There is a group that obeys him in all that he instructs. As for the matters about which no commands or proscriptions have been revealed, they are considered among the permissible. In other words, you have the choice of doing or not doing. Those who properly respond to Prophet Muhammad, in the sense of obeying him in all the dos and don'ts, are the ones who embrace the path that Allah has revealed to him. Those who do not obey Prophet Muhammad are the ones who turn their back upon this path and try to inhibit its application.

Consider how the True Lord *Glorified is He* protects Prophet Muhammad. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'but those who turn away - We have not sent you over them as a guardian.' Concerning the one who turns away and refuses to obey the Prophet, know Muhammad that the True Lord has not sent you to force them to believe in Him. There is a difference between 'sent you,' 'sent you to them' and 'sent over them.' The first means that your mission is only to communicate Allah's message to them. In contrast, 'sent over them' means to force them to do so and so. This means that you should always bear in mind, Muhammad, that we have sent you to the people to communicate to them Allah's message,

and not be their keeper; thus, whoever wants may obey, and whoever does not may not. Therefore, do not overstrain yourself and think that we have sent you to force them to believe, and assign to yourself a task that Allah has not assigned you. 'Not upon you, [O Muhammad], is [responsibility for] their guidance, but Allah guides whom He wills.' (*al-Baqara*: 272)

The True Lord also says: 'So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. (21) You are not over them a controller. (22)' (*al-Ghashiya*: 21-22) In another verse, He also says: 'and you are not over them a tyrant.' (*Qaf*: 45) Know, Muhammad, that you cannot force them to obey Allah. Coercion contradicts with the essence of the individual accountability. It also contradicts with the idea of embracing faith voluntarily. 'We have not sent you over them as a guardian.' The word 'guardian' reflects how far concerned Prophet Muhammad was.

The True Lord asserts this matter in the interest of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* because Allah *Glorified is He* has explained to us to what extent Prophet Muhammad was preoccupied with the well-being of his followers, and how he wanted all of them to be observing, obedient believers. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3) They refused to believe; therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* explains to Prophet Muhammad: Be comforted; all what you are required to do is to deliver My message to the people. This alleviated the burden of Prophet Muhammad's mission.

We also notice that all the reproach Allah addressed to His messenger is not because he violated His commands, but because he has taken upon himself a responsibility that the message of Allah has not required him to do. This is similar to those who raise the story of Ibn Umm Maktum. They claim that Allah reproached the Prophet because he committed a mistake. To those who make such an allegation, we say: Prophet Muhammad wanted the most honourable and courageous men of the Quraysh to believe in him. Ibn Umm Maktum embraced Islam and came to him to inquire about a number of questions. It was easier for the Prophet to deal with Ibn Umm Maktum rather than the elite who opposed and antagonized him. But the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* preferred the more difficult alternative to the easier one. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says: Why do you torment yourself, Muhammad? It is not up to

you whether or not they choose to purify themselves. This means: Why do you overburden yourself? Allah *Glorified is He* reproached Prophet Muhammad for his own advantage, not because he violated His commands.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* told His Prophet: ‘We have not sent you over them as a guardian’ because He wanted to alleviate the burden of Prophet Muhammad. The guardian is the one who takes care of the one to whom he delivers the commands of Allah and adheres to His path. If the latter deviates, He will straighten him. Allah *Glorified is He* thus explains that He has sent Prophet Muhammad to deliver His message to them. Afterwards, people are then free to embrace it or not.

Therefore, the guardian assumes a dominating and prevailing role, as Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse; the dominating or the mighty is the one who forces people to believe. The discourse here is concerned with the proper obedience to Allah. It means that your faculties should act in accordance with the commands of Allah *Glorified is He*. Obedience is not merely to say: ‘O Prophet Muhammad, we are obedient,’ but then try to breach such obedience. Obedience is not a mere verbal claim; it is carried out by all the limbs. The obedience of only the tongue, without the rest of the limbs, is not deemed a sign of faith. For this reason, the True Lord subsequently says:

وَيَقُولُونَ طَاعَةٌ فَإِذَا بَرَرُوا مِنْ عِنْدِكَ بَيَّتَ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ غَيْرَ الَّذِي تَقُولُ وَاللَّهُ
يَكْتُبُ مَا يُبَيِّتُونَ فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٨١﴾

They say, ‘We obey you,’ but as soon as they leave your presence, some of them scheme by night to do other than what you said. God records what they scheme, so leave them alone, and put your trust in God: He is sufficient protector [81]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 81)

In this verse, the True Lord explains to His Prophet, Muhammad: you will deal with a faction of the nation to whom you are sent to preach Islam; however, the people that respond to you are the people that actually believe in Allah and His Prophet, Muhammad. When you command or demand something of the latter, they will say: ‘We obey you.’ This means that they are always in

a state of obedience to your commands. 'But when they leave you, a group of them spend the night determining to do other than what you say.' *Baraza*—the Arabic word here translated as 'leave'—means going to *al-baraz*; *al-baraz* means a vast piece of land. For this reason, a warrior may say to a rival challenging him: '*ubruz*' meaning come out of your fortification. In the past, the Arabs did not use to have restrooms in their own houses. Whenever they needed to go to the restroom, they used to go out in the wilderness. This is why the word *buraz* is the root of the word indicating excreting in the wilderness.

The verse means that when they leave you, they ponder over the command to obey and realize how onerous and exhausting it is. They thus conceal their intention to violate your commands. We know that the word *bayt* means the dwelling and shelter wherein one lives and to which one resorts for comfort and rest. The best time for rest and respite is at night. Thus, they called the house where we live *mabit*, because we often spend the night in a place composed of a number of rooms and covered by a ceiling. Does this imply that no one can conceal anything during the day? No; it is rather that it is customary that people conceal and hide things at night. They do so to be away from an eye that could witness them; hence, they plan well. The verse may either mean that they were concealing their contrived plans at night, or that they were contriving in secret.

Etymologically, therefore, the Arabic word *bayyt* (conceal) is often associated with being at home, and the concealment is often associated with night time. Further, the root of the word *bayyt* (conceal) revolves around the meanings of concealment and covering. Thus, if someone is said to have *bayyat* (concealed) something, this means that he has concealed something at night or that he has contrived it in secret. Those people declared their obedience to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but as soon as they left him, some of them schemed by night to do other than what he has said. This means that after leaving him, they contrived something at odds with what he has said. They declare in public that they are obedient, whereas their behaviour is contrary to such declaration. Their attitude reflects disobedience to Prophet Muhammad's commands or obedience to other than what he orders. Thus, if he ordered them to something, they would not do it, and if he ordered them

not to do a certain thing, they would do the opposite of his command; they only obeyed their desires and devils. This part of the verse means that a group of them purported that they would always obey Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in all their affairs; yet, they concealed something contrary to what they revealed; that is why they were declared disobedient. Allah then says that He records what they have schemed; that is, He records that according to His Knowledge. The Arabic word *yaktubu* (record/write) was used in order to tell them that all their deeds are recorded so that they will be able to read what has been written when they examine their own records. If anything had not been recorded, they would have alleged that it had not happened. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to take his precautions against this group because they were bound to dissuade others from accepting the call of Islam. For this reason, Allah explains to His Prophet: ‘Those to whom you were sent will not give you victory; rather, it is the One Who sent you who will grant it to you, viz. Allah. Therefore, do not let these deeds dissuade you or impinge on your determination to preach Islam. Should any group do so, leave them; that is, do not talk to them about any of these issues and leave Retribution to Allah because He will grant you triumph and victory despite their violation of your orders. Just make sure that you follow the commands of Allah, Who sent you.

We know that the interest of all Messages is always with the one who dispatches the Message. However, the new message which one receives may exhaust him because it may force him to go against his whims and desires. Therefore, know, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, that the One Who sent you is the guarantee to make you succeed in your preaching of Islam. So, leave them and put your trust in Allah for He is a sufficient Protector for you. Why has Allah prescribed such command upon you, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? The reason is that the believers have a very limited capability and lack in both the means and the ability to plan. However, the One Who sent you is capable of turning the number of your enemies as well as their weapons into soldiers for you, and He is also capable of granting you victory in a way that you would never expect. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* has intended that only a few people embraced Islam upon its advent. Had a lot of people embraced it at the very beginning,

some could have said that if a lot of people support injustice, it will prevail. However, if only a few people manage to make a religion successful, this would be a good omen and an indication that you, Messenger Muhammad, did not triumph due to the support of your followers; rather, it was due to the Support of Allah. Subsequently, Allah says:

﴿٨٢﴾ أَفَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوَجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا

Will they not think about this Quran? If it had been from anyone other than God, they would have found much inconsistency in it [82] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 82)

Whenever you encounter the expression 'Will they not...' in the Quran, know that it is intended to blame and reproach the one who does not heed the thing that will follow this expression. This verse implies that they ought to have tried to understand the Quran. As far as the Quran is concerned, there are levels of comprehension including thinking, contemplation, remembrance, knowledge and reasoning. All of these words were used in the Quran: 'Will they not try to know...' (*al-Baqara*: 77), 'Will they not try to reason...' (*Ya Sin*: 68), 'Will they not try to remember...' (*al-An'am*: 80), 'Will they not try to contemplate...' (*al-An'am*: 50)? Therefore, there is a distinction among thinking, contemplation, remembrance, reasoning or knowledge.

When someone addressing you asks you to try to understand something, this means that he is confident that were you to exert yourself intellectually, you would reach the desired truth. But if someone wants to deceive you, he will not induce your cognitive abilities. For example, when you walk into the store of a textiles merchant to buy a piece of fabric, the merchant will offer his goods to you. In order to convince you that the fabric that he is trying to sell you is natural and not synthetic, he wets it and tries to tear it to demonstrate how resistant it really is. By doing so, the merchant excites you and alerts your cognitive abilities. Inasmuch as he does so, this indicates that he is confident that critically examining his claim is in his own interest. If examining the cloth had not been in his interest, he would have tried to deceive you, but he told you to look closely and test his claim.

Allah commands us to think about the Quran which means to examine every thought-provoking matter that your reason comes across to discover the evidence of its truth; this is the first stage. Then, if you discover the evidence of its truth, you should also heed what result would ensue if you did not follow what you have verified. Accordingly, the Arabic word *tadabbur* (thinking) means to consider the consequences and ramification of things. Therefore, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tells you that Allah is One, you should use your reason to investigate the truth of this message. If you reach such conclusion, you should immediately believe that there is only One God. Do not ever say that this is a sophisticated or luxurious matter because the fire will be your punishment if you do not believe in the Only God. Thus, *tadabbur* (thinking) in this context means to investigate the ramifications of things and to try to envision the consequences that may ensue from them—this is a stage that follows contemplation (*tafakkur*). Contemplation requires that you recall what you have previously known concerning an object in case you have forgotten anything about it. Contemplation comes first and then understanding follows. For instance, you may say to your son ‘In order to have a bright future and become an engineer or a medical doctor, he has to study and work assiduously.’ Accordingly, the child contemplates being in the high status that the distinguished people in every vocation in the society enjoy; and thus he works hard.

Thus, the first stage is to contemplate over the matter you are considering and the second is thinking about it. If you slip into oblivion, we immediately tell you to recall what you have pondered over, and the results you have reached; also, think about the consequences that may follow from the matter you are considering. These are all mental processes. Reason starts with contemplating and it then tries to consider the consequences of the matter which it has contemplated. Afterwards, the memory enables you to recall what you have missed and what was once the focus of your consciousness and then was marginalised. So, if you reason about something on your own, it is then said that you perceive it rationally. If you understand what someone else has rationally conceived, this means that you know what that other person has rationally perceived.

Therefore, it is not necessary that you have reached every piece of knowledge using your own reason; rather, you may have taken the fruit of the reasoning that others had developed. That is why when Allah denies that someone may encompass the entire knowledge; this implies that the latter is basically incapable of all rational conception. The reason is that knowledge indicates one's capacity to perceive what others reached using their capabilities without necessarily understanding the laws, rules and fundamentals that others employed to acquire such knowledge. He only knows how to benefit from and utilise it. In our daily lives, we notice that the illiterate may use technology and electricity; thus, they avail themselves of the knowledge of others; however, they cannot rationally conceive of the capacity of the scientist. Hence, the realm of knowledge is vaster than that of reasoning because it does not depend merely on the fruits of your reason. In the realm of knowledge, you may know and apprehend what others have rationally conceived. For this reason, when Allah addresses this issue, He reproaches some people because when they are commanded to follow what Allah has revealed, they reject it, saying that they would follow the faith of their forefathers, even if the latter had not used their intellectual capacity and had been devoid of guidance (*al-Baqara*: 170). In the same vein, Allah, in another verse, condemns some people for following the faith of their forefathers, even though they knew nothing, and were devoid of all guidance. (*al-Ma'ida*: 104)

In the first verse, Allah *Glorified is He* states that they did not use their reason as they said that they would follow what their forefathers believed, without stating that it was sufficient for them. In the second verse, however, they said that it was enough for them to follow what their forefathers believed in. Thus, they insisted on rejecting and adamantly refused to submit to anything apart from their forefathers' beliefs. Accordingly, Allah has reproached them for following their forefathers even though they knew nothing and were devoid of all guidance. Here, Allah has negated that their forefathers possessed any knowledge, which is more general than negating their capability of reasoning because negating the latter would mean a negation of their capability to deduce, but it does not preclude their capacity of availing themselves of what others have deduced.

When Allah *Glorified is He* encourages the listeners, especially those who violate His Path, to reflect upon the Quran, this means that He wants them to work out their minds in order to apprehend what they listen to. The reason is that Allah knows that if they use their minds to understand what they hear, they will indisputably arrive at the conclusion that He has put forward. However, their public declaration of obedience to Allah and covert scheming—to do other than what the Prophet had ordered—is evidence that they did not think about the Quran. The saying of the Allah, ‘will they not think...’ follows after the verse, as if the latter serves as its evidence. If they thought about the Quran, they would know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was honest when communicating Allah’s Message, and that his discourse was true. By Allah, who told Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they concealed in their hearts or secretly hid at night something other than what they have avowed in his presence? Therefore, had they tried to ponder upon things, they would have realised that Allah is the One Who divulged their secrets, cunning contrivances and what they tried to hide from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, he was honest in delivering the Message of Allah, and as long as he remained so, that would support the other verse that stated that whoever obeyed Messenger Muhammad obeyed Allah.

Therefore, all verses support each other. When the Quran was revealed in Arabic, Allah has willed that not every Arab who listened to it would embrace it because had all the Arabs embraced Islam, people would have said that their belief in the Quran made them overlook the challenges that the Quran posed to them. However, some Arabs who encountered with the Quran insisted on their disbelief. The disbelievers should be argued with and, therefore, the Quran challenged them to bring forth something the like of the Quran. In another instance, He *Glorified is He* asked them to bring forth only ten of its chapters, and in a third instance, to bring forth the like of the shortest of its chapter—all of these were challenges posed to them. Would such challenges not provoke their stubbornness? None of them uttered a word; what does this mean? It means that they were convinced of their incapacity to meet the challenges, but they, nevertheless, maintained their disbelief and continued to offend Islam and say what they used to say. In spite of all that, they could not find a response to the Quran. They could have possibly said that Messenger

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* claimed that the Quran is miraculous and exceptionally eloquent, yet he is mistaken in this and that point. Had they been believers, they would have concealed their claims, but they were disbelievers who always tried to spread rumours about mistakes in the Quran. There are also people who do not master the Arabic language and are not well-versed in its eloquence, and yet they try to claim that there are contradictions in the Quran. How can they lay down such claim even though they do not master the Arabic language or its eloquence, and they are not native Arabic speakers? How can they say that the Quran contains contradictions? The disbelieving Arabs were more worthy of such claims because they were well-versed in the Arabic language and they also witnessed the revelation of the Quran. Although they rejected Muhammad's Message, they have never alleged that the Quran contained contradictions. This proves that the allegations of the orientalist were mainly due to their deficient knowledge of the Arabic language.

To those orientalist, we say that the Quran addressed numerous issues to prove its eloquence and rhetorical miracle for those to whom it was originally revealed—since some of them were going to undertake the mission of preaching Islam. The Quran then bore other miracles to non-Arab nations. Therefore, the miracle of the Quran does not only consist in its eloquence; otherwise, someone may say that the Quran is only miraculous for the Arabs and that it has nothing to do with non-Arabs or Romans, for instance? To such person, we respond by asking: does the Quranic miracle consist solely of its rhetorical style? No; its miracle extended to matters that all people, irrespective of their languages, would assent to. For instance, it demonstrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, in accordance with the testimony of his rivals, never left the Arabian Peninsula except with the trade caravans to Syria. Further, no one could prove that he learned anything from a teacher. All his contemporaries were aware of these facts. Allah has even used the mistake they committed against them by stating that their claim that a person has taught him is totally false because the language of such person would be foreign while this revelation is in clear Arabic. (*an-Nahl*: 103)

The person that the disbelievers referred to was either a slave boy who was owned by Huwytib ibn 'Abd Al-'Uzza who converted to Islam and became a good Muslim, to another Roman slave boy or to Salman Al-Farisi

Allah be pleased with him. Hence, Allah explains that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not attended by any tutors and did not go on journeys. Afterwards, the Quran posed another challenge not using logic, language, eloquence or explanation, but rather, through a comprehensive matter for all minds; that is, the Book of the universe, events and incidents that all humans share.

Universal events, as we know, are covered by temporal veils. Events that took place in the past are veiled by the past time—whoever was living in those days knew about them, and whoever was not living in those days would not know about them. Thus, events of the past are veiled by the past time. Similarly, the events of the future are veiled by the future time as they have not happened yet. Even the present time that stretches ahead of us, Allah veils it through the spatial dimension. However, the Quran manages to penetrate all these veils through its diverse techniques. For instance, it poses a challenge by saying that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not present on the western side of the mountain when Allah has given His Command to Musa (Moses) (*al-Qasas*: 44). Allah also says that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not live among the people of *Madyan* or recite His Revelation to them. (*al-Qasas*: 45) In addition, He *Glorified is He* says that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had never recited any scripture before revealing the Quran, and nor had he written any scripture down, lest those who follow falsehood might have had cause to doubt (*al-'Ankabut*: 48).

The expression ‘...you were not present...’ is used in the Quran to relate events that took place in the past. By Allah, had they suspected that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had some kind of knowledge or that he was attended by a tutor, would they have kept silent? Definitely, they would not; the reason is that the disbelievers wanted to exploit any gap that they could find to assail Islam. Afterwards, the Quran penetrates the veil of the future time when Muslims were incapable of protecting themselves. Allah says, ‘Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) When this verse was revealed, ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* inquired about the forces which would be routed. The verses of the Quran then continued to be revealed, recited and memorized. Eventually, the battle

of Badr took place and the forces of the disbelievers were routed. Another verse was revealed about Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira who was cruel and a tyrant. Allah says that He will brand him on the snout (*al-Qalam*: 16). When this verse was revealed, some Muslims wondered whether they were capable of reaching and laying their hands on this tyrant. After that, in the battle of Badr, they found that he was struck on his nose by a sword, and that the sword left an indelible mark on it. So, who penetrated the veil of the future? It is Allah and not Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If you deliberated matters and tried to understand them properly, you would realise that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only delivered the Message of Allah as put forward by the Quran. You would also realise that the Quran is the discourse of Allah to Whom eternity, past, present and future are irrelevant, for He is Timeless. In this context, the Quran revealed that they say inwardly, 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we are saying?' (*al-Mujadala*: 8) They said this inwardly, and no one heard them. But the Quran was revealed to divulge what they have only said inwardly. What should they have said then? If they had thought about the Quran, they would have known that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who informed His Messenger Muhammad of what they said inwardly. Thus, the verse that is asking them to think about the Quran is followed by the verse that reveals their secret scheming to do other than what the prophet told them to do. Had they deliberated and tried to understand the Quran, they would have known that Allah, Who sent Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with guidance and the religion of the truth, is the One Who apprised him of what they concealed. Those who do not have a proper comprehension of the language may rejoice at a seeming contradiction that they thought existed in the Quran. They may say that a single verb attributed to a single agent cannot simultaneously be negated and affirmed; if you negate it, you cannot affirm it, and if you affirm it, you cannot negate it. However, the Quran contains similar cases.

They thought that the following saying of Allah involves such contradiction: '...when you [Prophet] threw [sand at them] it was not your throw [that defeated them] but Allah's...' (*al-Anfal*: 17). The verse negates that Prophet Muhammad threw and simultaneously affirms the same act. The Quran uses

the same verb which is 'throw', and the subject of the verb is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; so, how come the Quran affirms and negates a verb attributed to a single subject in one verse? To those who think in this manner, we say that you only thought so because you do not master the Arabic language. However, those who master the Arabic language, and are fluent in it, naturally and spontaneously did not think the same way when they heard such discourse, indicating that they properly understood its meaning.

But why should we revert back to the pre-Islamic era to understand the meaning intended in this verse? Let us adduce an example from our daily lives. For instance, if you tell your son, 'Study! The exams are impending; I will stay to watch you and ensure whether or not you will study well.' Your son may then pick up a book, turn its pages and nod his head constantly. After a while, he may call you and say, 'Come and see what I have studied so far.' You may then grab the book and ask your son a couple of questions about the material he claims to have covered, but he may fail to answer. Upon noticing such failure, you may tell him, 'You have studied and, at the same time, you have not studied.' This means that you have formally studied; however, the result of your studying is nil. Your statement, 'You have studied,' is an affirmation of the action of studying on his part. In contrast, your statement: 'You have not studied,' is a simultaneous negation of the same act. If a verb attributed to a single subject is simultaneously affirmed and negated in an eloquent discourse, know that the context in which it is negated is different from the context in which it is affirmed.

The saying of Allah in such verse means that when Messenger Muhammad engaged in war, he grabbed a handful of pebbles and then threw it at the enemy's army. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* undertook the formal aspect of the process, but was he capable of causing the pebbles to reach every individual in the enemy's army? This matter is definitely beyond his capability. Thus, the saying of Allah means that he performed the act of throwing on the formal level, but on the objective level, the ultimate effect of such act of throwing is due to Allah *Glorified is He*.

Further, in another verse, Allah says that 'most people do not know' (*ar-Rum*: 6) which indicates negation. However, Allah immediately says afterwards that

they know but the outer surface of this present life (*ar-Rum*: 7). The opponents of Islam might wonder: how is it possible that Allah says that most people do not know and then says that they know immediately afterwards? We reply by affirming that people do not have beneficial knowledge. His saying that they know only the 'outer surface of this present life' means that they do not know the essence of things or their ramifications. Therefore, if a verb is affirmed at one time and negated another time, it must be that the aspects, about which the negation and affirmation are made, differ.

Another good example is the saying of Allah that on the Day of Judgment neither mankind nor the jinn will be asked about their sins (*ar-Rahman*: 39). The Quran says in another instance that they will be halted for questioning (*as-Saffat*: 24) which means that they will be asked. To those sceptics, we say that they should first acquire a good knowledge of the Arabic language. Do teachers not ask their students? Thus, a knowledgeable person may ask the learner to evaluate what the latter knows and to make him acknowledge something—and not because the knowledgeable wants to know what the learner already knows. When Allah says that they will be questioned, do not ever think that He is asking because He does not know. He is rather asking so that you would acknowledge; indeed, the proof based on acknowledgment is more powerful than that based on examination and inquiry. Accordingly, if you notice that something is being negated and affirmed simultaneously, know that the aspects—to which the negation and affirmation are attributed—are different. Here is another example: we may adduce in demonstration of the miraculous nature of the Quran; Allah says, '...do not kill your children in fear of poverty'—We will provide for you and for them...' (*al-An'am*: 151). In another verse Allah says, '...We shall provide for them and for you...' (*al-Isra'*: 31).

The one who is not well-versed in the Arabic language may wonder, 'Which is more eloquent? If the first one is more eloquent, the second would not be, and if the second is, the first is not.' To this person, we respond that you have considered the end of each verse only. You should consider the end of every verse along with its beginning. It is true that the end of each verse is different because Allah says in the first verse that He provides for you as well as for them, while in the second verse He says that He provides for them as

well as for you. But is the beginning of each verse the same? No; the beginning of each verse is different because Allah commands us in the first one not to kill our children in fear of poverty. It is as if poverty already exists. For this reason, the one addressed was concerned with his livelihood before he was concerned with the sustenance of his child. Thus, He is afraid lest he should beget a child, he might not be able to feed that child because he is poor. Therefore, Allah first assures him about his livelihood and then assures him about the sustenance of his child, saying that He shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them. By contrast, Allah has not mentioned the same thing in the second verse. He rather says, 'Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty...', as if the father is afraid of losing his wealth and becoming poor upon begetting a child. Since He has said, '...for fear of poverty,' this means that poverty does not exist. Rather, the father is afraid lest poverty may befall him upon begetting a child. Thus, Allah has explained to him that he should not be afraid, for Allah will bring about the sustenance of the child (*al-Isra'*: 31). Thus, if you consider both the beginning and the end of each verse, you will notice that the relation between them is integral and harmonious. Some of them try to find a way to question and cast suspicions on the eloquence of the Quran.

Further, one may wonder why Allah commands us in a verse to bear anything that happens steadfastly (*Luqman*: 17) and in another verse He says that if one is patient in adversity and forgives—this is one of the greatest things (*ash-Shura*: 43). To those who argue, we say that you did not understand the truth of these verses. In the first verse, Allah commands us to bear in patience whatever may befall us, which implies bearing the calamities wherein you face no rival. As long as you do not have a rival, what should you do? If you have a rival, you may be tempted to avenge yourself. For this reason, heed the first verse because it obviously befits a situation wherein you do not face a rival or adversary. In the second verse, Allah says that this is indeed one of the greatest things. This formulation better fits a situation wherein you face a rival or an adversary because you will endure both the calamity and the rival who caused it, for whenever you see him you will get provoked and enraged. For this reason, the verse strongly stresses the importance of patience and forgiveness.

This is the rationale of the orientalist who want to cast doubts about the Quran. They tell us, 'Look at the Quran from a sanctifying perspective. However, if you consider the Quran more scrupulously, you will identify numerous contradictions in it.' We ask these orientalist to mention to us these contradictions; we have already refuted them in the context of our reflections on the Quran. Some of them may, for instance, say that when the Quran addressed the issue of the creation of the heavens and the earth, all the verses dealing with this matter asserted that Allah has created them in six days. However, they claim that one finds a discrepancy upon examining the verses that address the details of creation. In those verses, Allah states that He has created the earth in two days. He then placed solid mountains on it, blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four days. Then, He turned to the sky, which was smoke—He said to it and the earth, 'Come into being, willingly or not,' and they said, 'We come willingly'—and in two days He formed the seven heavens, and assigned an order to each. (*Fussilat*: 9-12). Upon examining these verses, the orientalist remarked that creation took a total of eight days and, therefore, claimed that the Quran entails a contradiction. To these orientalist, we say that you did not understand the meaning of these verses. When Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has created the earth in two days, has He talked about what would sustain life on earth? When He has talked about the earth, He only said that He has created the earth in two days and that He then placed solid mountains on it. This refers to the completion of the creation of the earth because He is talking about the earth. Then, Allah says that He has placed solid mountains on it, blessed it and measured out its varied provisions. All of these pertain to the earth. Thus, the second stage is that of the completion of earth's creation. Initially, Allah created the earth as a planet; afterwards, He placed on it solid mountains and dispensed the means of subsistence to everyone on earth and blessed all of this. But, how many days did it take Him to accomplish this task? It took Him four days; it is as if the first two days were included in the four because this is the completion of the earth's creation.

To Allah pertains the supreme and most exalted parables. You may, for instance, say that you have travelled from here to Isma'ilia [an Egyptian city] in one hour and to Port Said [another Egyptian city] in two hours. Your

statement that you travelled to Port Said in two hours means that the first hour was counted. Thus, those orientalist did not understand the Quran. For this reason, Allah says, 'Will they not think about the Quran?' If you encounter something in the Quran that on a superficial reading arouses your suspicion, you will have to work it out in your mind and ponder over it until you realise that, if there is any contradiction, it is due to your own understanding and not to the Quran itself. The reason is that the Quran is the discourse of the One Who would always truly recount whichever story He tells; the One from Whom nothing is concealed; the One Who is not veiled by the past, present or the place. Allah admonishes them to think about Quran, for if it had been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found much inconsistency in it. The Quran is a big Book that encompasses one hundred and fourteen chapters. By Allah, find a novelist or writer who is capable of writing something like it? If you consider the eloquence of any writer, you will find that such a writer will be strong in certain aspects and weak in others. Afterwards, you may notice that he did not properly express the meaning of something; he may, for instance, say something and contradict it a few lines later as what Abu Al-'Ala Al-Ma'arri did when he said:

Days shatter us as if we were

Like glass that cannot be fixed.

When he composed this verse, he did not believe in Resurrection.

However, upon restoring his sanity, he said:

Both the astrologist and the physician claimed

Those bodies are not going to be resurrected

So I say to both: if your claims turn out to be true, I will not be a loser; and if my claim turns out to be true, you are the ones to incur the loss.

Thus, contradictions emerge from the one whose opinions are liable to change; the one who may have an opinion and then modify it based on his experience or the reality. But Allah does not change, and His Knowledge also does not change; He is the True Lord. Thus, contradiction emanates either from someone who lies because he did not restrict his opinion to what is real, or from someone who is constantly changing. He may maintain a particular

opinion and then change his stance towards it. But, Allah never changes. He says about this truism, 'Will they not think about this Quran? If it had been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found much inconsistency'

In fact, we find that all issues discussed in the Quran are essentially presented as texts that He has revealed to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, these issues are concerned with the nature of the cosmos that is constantly changing. Some of the changes are caused by those who believe in the Quran and some by those who do not believe. But have you ever come across any matter discussed in the Quran that was nullified or contradicted by a cosmic discovery even if the latter was made by a non-believer? No, there is nothing of this sort. For instance, in the west, they invented after the First World War a cylinder that was capable of fragmenting individual substances and atoms. This was the first stage in the process of fragmenting the atom. But the Quran uses the atom as an example of the smallest entity; the saying of Allah *the Almighty* indicates that he who will make a good deed, even if it is like an atom, will be rewarded. (*az-Zalzala*: 7)

When the atom was fragmented, some Muslim scholars were taken aback. They were afraid that something smaller than the atom was going to be discovered. Thus, some claimed that the Quran was revealed in an age wherein the smallest particle for the old Arabs was the atom. However, the Almighty Allah eternally knows that science aspires to progress to the point at which it can break down the atom. Thus the Almighty Allah says that He is the only one who knows the unseen so nothing would be out of His knowledge, even if it is a thing smaller or bigger than a weight of an atom, wherever it will be, since everything had been written in a clear Book. (*Saba'*: 3)

Those who said so pondered over the Quran and understood the discourse of the Almighty Allah for whom all times are equal: the future is like the past, and His knowledge is not function of or bound to the differences among the future, the past or the present. Further the Almighty Allah explained to us that there may be something smaller than the atom. Accordingly, if they break down what has resulted from breaking down the atom, the result of this process will also be mentioned in the Quran. For instance, let us reflect upon social issues. You will find that the adversaries of Islam are trying to find a way to exploit

them to assail Islam. You will also find that those who do not understand Islam follow in their footsteps and babble that the views propounded in the Quran no longer befit the age. The Almighty Allah says that those people do not even ponder over the Quran; if it had been from anyone other than Him, they would have found much contradiction. (*an-Nisa'*: 82)

Here is another example. Some people say that there are differences in the readings of the Quran as in the case of the saying of the Almighty Allah, 'Lord of the Day of Judgment!' (*al-Fatiha*: 4) Someone may say: Some people may read it as *malik* instead of *maalik*—the Arabic word in the verse translated as Lord. However, this person did not notice that there is something that we call the order of priority. The meaning of *maalik* is identical to that of *malik*. But can someone claim that the Quran was not issued by the Almighty Allah? So, He replies that if the Quran had been from anyone other than Him, it would have contained much contradiction. That is, 'had the Quran been issued from anyone other than Allah, could any other than the Almighty Allah bring about the Quran?' No, no one can. The Quran can only come from the Almighty Allah; were it issued from any but the Almighty Allah, they would surely have found much contradiction in it.

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* that 'why do they not ponder over the Quran?' is regarded to be an ennoblement and honouring of the human being. It is as if the Almighty Allah created man and endowed him with a faculty that, if used properly, enables him to arrive at the essence and realities that lead to the best understanding of the commandments of the Almighty Allah. This is a testimony in favour of the human being; it is as if man is equipped with a thinking tool. If man uses such tool, he will be able to arrive at the essence of things. The Almighty Allah only wants us to use this tool—such as in case of pondering over the Quran, reaching the conclusion that it cannot be possible for it to have been issued from any source other than the Almighty Allah. The Quran is the discourse of the Almighty Allah, and thus it is indicative of His Character and Attributes. Further, the Character of the Perfect Being is perfect, whereas contradiction is contrary to perfection. The meaning of contradiction, in this context, is to find a verse that contradicts another; this is impossible to take place in the Quran because this indicates that the one who

said the first verse forgot about what he meant by it when he uttered the other. That is, He put forward a verse that negates the previous. Accordingly, if the one who is speaking were perfect, he would surely keep in mind what he had initially said to avoid contradictions in any of his following statements. Therefore, there is no contradiction or conflict in the Quran simply because it has been made by the Almighty Allah. Subsequently the Almighty Allah says:

وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوِ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ
وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ
عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُ الشَّيْطَانَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿٨٣﴾

Whenever news of any matter comes to them, whether concerning peace or war, they spread it about; if they referred it to the Messenger and those in authority among them, those seeking its meaning would have found it out from them. If it were not for God's bounty and mercy towards you, you would almost all have followed Satan [83] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 83)

Allah *Glorified is He* teaches the faithful a method and a style that would guarantee and secure for them the secrecy of their intentions and actions—especially when they are approaching a severe conflict and have fierce enemies. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* trains them to deal with their problems wisely to be able to confront spies. This verse refers to the case when a piece of news about any matter pertaining to the believers or their rivals reaches the believers. For instance, they may hear that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* will depart secretly towards certain destinations, and that such tribe is waiting to join him. When this piece of news reaches the weak hypocrites, they may spread it to others. As a result, the rivals of the Prophet may engulf the tribe—that promised to fight on Allah's Messenger's side—to keep it from going out and meeting Prophet Muhammad. They may also say that Prophet Muhammad is about to leave Medina to do something; that is how they spread the news. Thus the Almighty Allah explains to them: do not do this, especially in case of issues related to your interest as a group—that embraced a certain course of life, and you want it to prevail against its enemies.

So, do not divulge or spread any matter that you hear about before discussing it with your leader or with those whom your leader deems worthy—in this case the Almighty Allah means any [secret] matter pertaining to security—indicating that this admonition is in their interest. By contrast, fear refers to their enemy—indicating a matter that jeopardises their interest. However, the Quran states that they spread words about matters irrespective of its nature.

The verb *'dha'hu* has a different meaning than the verb *'dha'bihi* when it is followed by the prepositional phrase *bihi*—the verb and preposition here translated as to spread it broadly or publicly. The former means to say something in a general sense, whereas the latter indicates that the subject [of the sentence] talks about the object [of the sentence] to everyone he encounters. It is as if the piece of news is announcing itself—on its own. It is as if you tell other people about something, and they do not spread it further. However, *'dha' bihi* indicates that the spreading of the news accompanies the news, from a limited sphere to an unlimited one, or from ears that respect its privacy to ears that are consistently trying to pursue and expose it. The Almighty Allah then says that if they had consulted the Prophet (Muhammad) concerning such matter, the Apostle—or those he appointed—were the ones entitled to decide whether or not the matter should have been divulged. Then the Almighty Allah says about the entitled ones who can draw correct conclusions from it—would have known about it (*istinbat*)—the Arabic verb here translated as deduction derived from *an-nabt* which means the appearance of something after being hidden and concealed; *istinbat* means to work assiduously to extract water. The word *an-nabt* means the first amount of water to come out, while the well is being dug. Thus, instead of using the word to refer to tangible things—as in the case of water—it is here used to refer to intangible things; that is, the news. We also started to use the word in sciences. For instance, you may give a student a geometry problem and provide the given. Next, the student will deliberate on the given information and draw a conclusion from it in order to solve the geometry problem. This process is called the process of inferring or deducing something from nothing or *istinbat*.

In this context the Almighty Allah explains to them: ‘If you hear news about any secret matter pertaining to security or fear, do not spread it broadly before discussing it with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* or those whom the Messenger of Allah has given authority because they are

the ones who can intelligently make the right judgment on the matter and decide on whether or not you should spread the matter publicly.

The Almighty Allah then says that if He had not bestowed His favour and mercy upon you, you would have followed Satan—except for a few. This statement indicates that they may have broadly spread some events that took place; yet, they were saved from the consequences of their deeds due to the bounty and grace of Allah *Glorified is He*. Among the secret matters they divulged were the news about the intention of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to conquer Mecca. They did so even though the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* used to conceal the identity of the city he intended to conquer whenever he launched an expedition by claiming that he was setting out to conquer another city; he thus hid his actual destination so that he could surprise his enemies and defeat them—without giving them a chance to prepare to confront him, sabotaging their ability to resist.

Consider the mercy involved in the battle of *al-Fath*. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded the Muslims to prepare to conquer Mecca. When the people of Mecca realised that Messenger Muhammad had mobilised an army that they could not confront, they decided to give in and surrender; this was an act of mercy towards them. Hatib ibn Abu Balta'ah heard about this incident and sent a message to the Quraysh. The message was picked up by a woman who mounted on her camel and headed out. Then, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard about the news and summoned 'Ali and his Companions, telling them: there is a woman crossing the meadow of Khakh who carries a letter from Hatib ibn Abu Balta'ah informing the Quraysh of our impending attack. They went, caught the woman and asked her about the message, but she denied it. Our master 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* then threatened her and managed to get the letter out of her hair. They discovered the letter from Hatib ibn Abu Balta'ah to Quraysh. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then summoned Hatib and asked him: 'Is this your letter?' Hatib replied: 'Yes, O Messenger of Allah.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'What induced you to do so?' Hatib answered: 'By Allah, O Messenger of the Almighty Allah, I knew that the Almighty Allah would grant you victory, and that my letter would not change anything about the course of the battle. Further, I am

not from the Quraysh; I am only associated with them and I do not bear any bias or prejudice towards them. I have a child and a family living among them. Thus, I wanted to do something that would make them think favourably of me lest they cause harm to my family. I did not do so due to my infidelity or because I have abjured my religion and relapsed into infidelity after embracing Islam.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said to him: 'I know you have spoken the truth.'

Accordingly the Almighty Allah *Glorified is He* wants to base issues concerning faith—especially that which was connected to the relationship between the believers and their enemies—on truth. Thus, matters would not be straightened if everyone divulged and publicly spread whatever he heard. Rather, people should always refer the matter to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or to those with whom the Messenger of Allah has given authority because they are the ones capable of taking the right decision considering their conditions. Then, they may even give you permission to divulge the matter broadly and reveal the news or they may even tell you to say other things about the same matter—in case there is a way and there is need for misleading the enemies. This indicates that even though Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed victory to the believers and told them not to fear their enemies because He is their advocate and the One Who grants victory, Allah wants the believers to pursue the proper means to achieve victory—even if they depend on Him as the ultimate source of their victory.

Allah *the Almighty* then says that if it were not for His favour and mercy, they would have followed Satan except for a few. This statement indicates that they were the ones responsible for what happened, but the Almighty Allah's Grace supported and protected them. Thus, despite their deeds, He *Glorified is He* did not rule that they should suffer the repercussions or negative consequences that could harm them. We also know that, once an exceptional form follows a verb, we ought to immediately inquire as to whether the exception refers to the subject of the verb or the verb itself. In this verse, we immediately notice the saying of the Almighty Allah: 'you would have followed Satan, except for a few.' Thus, we wonder: Was it the case that a few followed Satan whereas the majority did not? Does 'a few' in this context refer to the event, the cause or the subject of the event? If we consider that 'a few' referred to the event, the verse would mean that they mainly followed Satan, except for a few things, wherein they followed the natural

inclination that Allah has given them. By contrast, if 'a few' referred to the subject of the event, the verse means that all of them—but a few of them have a sound instinct—would follow Satan.

It has been authenticated that, before the Messenger of Allah's mission with the Message of Islam, some people gathered and deliberated about the condition of *jahiliyah* (ignorance) they were living before Islam: including worshipping idols and totems. Then, they decided that it did not make sense to them. Accordingly, some of them quit such practices completely, while others set out to seek true knowledge of religion in other countries. For example, Zayd Ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl, Abi As-Salt and Qus ibn Sa'idah were all led by their instinct that the idolatry of the Arabs in the Pre-Islamic period was not correct, and that the Arabs should not continue to practice it. Those few people who were enlightened were called *Al-Hunafa'*; some of them, however, continued to worship idols until the Almighty Allah enlightened them with the Message of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Thus, when the Almighty Allah says that if not for His Favour upon you and His Mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few—this means that the Almighty Allah will not, due to His Grace and Mercy, leave any room for the devil to insinuate itself in certain matters. Rather, the Almighty Allah will expose the alliance of Satan with the hypocrites. In doing so, He *Glorified is He* instructs you how to keep away from the Satan's way to be on the way of the truth. Such process is only due to the Almighty Allah's Grace and Mercy. Subsequently the Almighty Allah addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying:

فَقَنْلٌ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَا تُكَلَّفُ إِلَّا نَفْسَكَ وَحَرِّضَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى اللَّهِ
 أَنْ يَكْفَ بِأَسِّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَاللَّهُ أَشَدُّ بِأَسًّا وَأَشَدُّ تَنكِيلًا ﴿٨٤﴾

So [Prophet] fight in God's way. You are accountable only for yourself. Urge the believers on. God may well curb the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment [84] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 84)

When you encounter a sentence commencing with the *fa'* particle, you are to know that it is an effect of the cause that precedes it. For example, consider

the saying of the Almighty Allah: 'and in the end He causes him to die and brings him to the grave.' The meaning of this verse is that the grave follows death. Thus, if you encounter the particle *fa'*, you should bear in mind that what precedes it is the cause of what follows it. For this reason, they call it the *fa' Sababiih (causal Fa')*.

So, what precedent could possibly be the cause for Allah's saying to his Messenger (Muhammad), directing him to fight for His cause holding no responsibility except for himself? In this respect, we say that, as long as the command was *fight*, we have to look for the previous verses that addressed the question of fighting. the Almighty Allah has said before, 'Therefore let those fight in the way of Allah, who sell this world's life for the hereafter; and whoever fights in the way of Allah, then be the slain or be the victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward.' (*an-Nisa'*: 75) In another verse, He encouraged the believers by asking them, 'why do you not fight for the sake of Allah?' (*an-Nisa'*: 76)

Thus, He addresses the command to fight to Messenger Muhammad who, in turn, delivered it to the believers. He *peace and blessings be upon him* only needs to hear Allah's Command once and so as to carry it out immediately. He thus urges the believers to fight for Allah's cause. (*an-Nisa'*: 74) So, whoever is a true believer must believe in Messenger Muhammad since he *peace and blessings be upon him* was the first one to receive this order of encouraging the believers to fight for Allah's cause [in both verses]. (*an-Nisa'*: 74- 75)

As he *peace and blessings upon him* was the first to abide by Allah's Commands and Enactments, he, therefore, should be the first to adhere to them even if no one else listened to him. This is evidence of his complete faith in the One Who ordered him to fight the disbelievers. Before commanding the believers to fight, he has to fight alone. For this reason, when our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* assumed the Caliphate after the death of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he insisted on fighting the disbelievers among the Arabs and said: 'If they do not give me what they used to give to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, even if it is little, I will fight them with the sword.' Some of the companions tried to dissuade Abu Bakr from pursuing his intention to fight, but he responded: 'By the Almighty

Allah, if my right hand disobeyed my order to fight them, I would fight them using my left hand.'

Thus, the order came from Allah to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to fight for His sake—calling our attention to the difference between delivering the Almighty Allah's Commands on one hand, and adhering to and executing these commands on the other. Since the Messenger of Allah has received Allah's Commands, he is committed and bound to implementing them first. Subsequently he *peace and blessings be upon him* should deliver such commands and decrees to the believer—whoever listens to him and believes in him should follow in his footsteps.

Allah *the Almighty* informs His Prophet Muhammad that he bears no responsibility except for himself; it is an assignment to the Prophet that he should execute and implement Allah's commands and not just deliver them to the people. As far as the latter mission is concerned, Messenger Muhammad is only responsible for delivering Allah's Message to the believers; whether or not they follow and adhere to what he communicates to them is not up to him, and he will not be held accountable for it. However, Messenger Muhammad should commit to fighting for the cause of the Almighty Allah, irrespective of their actions.

Does this mean Prophet Muhammad should leave those who have believed to themselves? No, Allah asked His Messenger to urge them to fight and not leave them to follow their own interests and desires: '...*harred* (urge) the believers on. Allah may well curb the power of the disbelievers...' (*an-Nisa'*: 84) The Arabic verb *harred* is derived from *al-hurd* which refers to a substance that cleanses hands or clothes by removing impurities. It is a command to Prophet Muhammad to understand what it was that could probably keep his companions from fighting and seek to remove from their souls any factors that prevented them from fighting in the cause of Allah. Ponder the words of Allah: '... (Urge) the believers on. Allah may well curb the *ba's* (power) of the disbelievers...' (*an-Nisa'*: 84). Allah wants to tell His Messenger in this verse that he would not achieve victory due to the greatness of the number of believers with him; rather, the believers are only the means Allah uses to support His Messenger, and triumph comes from Him only: '...victory is only from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise' (*Al-Imran*: 126).

The word *ba's* in the verse we are dealing with encompasses the meanings of power, robustness in fighting wars, cunning plotting and the capacity to defeat enemies. It is a word with multiple connotations. Allah informs His Messenger that he would not be held accountable for those who have known His command and refused to obey it, and nor would victory be achieved through material power or support of the believers who fought with him; rather, Allah executes His Will through to those who fight for His cause and victory comes from Him alone: 'Fight them: Allah will punish them at your hands...' (*at-Tawba*: 14)

Why does Allah not directly grant victory to the believers without getting them to fight against the disbelievers and idolaters? Were victory to be granted due to some unknown cause without the believers having to fight, this would offer people no sign or proof of the truth, but rather would give them a pretext to persist in disbelief. Furthermore, Allah has willed that victory should be achieved by the hands of the believing minority to teach them that they have to pursue the proper means for attaining ends, meanwhile never forgetting that means and causes are powerless in themselves—and victory is only from Allah. In the Battle of Hunayn, pride crept into the hearts of some Muslims due to their large numbers; they thought they were too many to be defeated; they became full of themselves and their material power. To teach them a lesson, Allah made them experience defeat at the beginning before He granted them victory at the end. About this battle, Allah says: '... on the Day of Hunayn, when you took pride in your great numbers, and they proved of no avail whatever to you...' (*at-Tawba*: 25). This was intended to call attention of the believers that, while they exhaust all possible means to attain victory, they must always bear in mind that success comes from Allah alone. Allah creates means and causes to show through them His assistance to His believing servants. Were victory to be granted without any effort on the part of the believers, this would not afford sufficient evidence for their enemies to see that they are supported by Allah. Let me give you an example that illustrates the difference from the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Allah did not want to just save him from fire; had this been the case, he would not have let his enemies catch him in the first place. If Allah had prevented them from getting him, they would have said: 'Had we caught Ibrahim (Abraham), we would have done such-and-such to him.' Such would have

been a chance for them to believe they were right, and they would have found a justification to persist in disbelief. However, Allah let them catch Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and throw him in their kindled fire. Then, He miraculously suspended the burning power of the fire: ‘But We said, “Fire, be cool and safe for Ibrahim (Abraham).”’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 69) This was real frustration and enagement to them. If Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) had been saved by any unknown cause, other than such a tangible one, his adversaries would have found pretexts to justify their defeat.

Allah sent His Messenger, Muhammad, to all humankind and would not make him rely for support and victory on those who believe with him. Allah alone is Sufficient for His Messenger as Supporter and Protector. Were it just for granting Prophet Muhammad triumph over his enemies, Allah would have done that directly. However, He has willed that the believers enjoy the honour of fighting for Allah’s Cause and earn the matchless reward He has prepared for those who strive and those who are martyred. Allah has willed to let victory be achieved through the hands of the believers to grant them superiority over other nations and to elevate their status. If it were only a matter of supporting Prophet Muhammad and assuring his victory, Allah would have done that directly without war or fighting.

Ponder the words of Allah: ‘... Allah may well curb the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 84) The verse refers to the endless Power of Allah Who is capable of deterring the disbelievers and aborting their conspiracies. This Divine Power manifested itself later in the events. Consider what happened after the Battle of Uhud. The battle ended in a rather indeterminate manner; no one can tell which camp won and which camp lost. Muslims triumphed at first, but when the archers violated the command of Prophet Muhammad, and imbalance befell the Muslim forces. However, the warriors of Quraysh did not stay in the place of the battle and did not go into the city. For this reason, the Battle of Uhud did not end with a decisive victory for either party. They threatened to have their revenge in the following year and gave the promised battle the name: *Badr As-Sughra* (Badr Minor).

A year passed and the appointed time for the battle came. Prophet Muhammad called people to join him for the battle, but only seventy men

obeyed him and set out for the specified location. They demonstrated courage and proved they were not afraid of confronting the disbelievers of Quraysh who certainly outnumbered them. Allah threw dread and fear in the heart of Abu Sufyan who ordered his forces to return to Mecca even before they reached the appointed place. Thus did Allah abort their plot; they appointed the time and place for the battle, spent a year preparing for it and even sent spies to spread rumours and fear among Muslims. Still, Allah has made fear overcome them and they did not dare confront the believers. Muslims stayed for days in that place, sold the goods they had, returned to Medina with immense profits and decided victory over their coward enemies.

Allah has fulfilled His promise to Prophet Muhammad: ‘...Allah *‘asa* (may well) curb the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment’ (*an-Nisa*’: 84). The Arabic word *‘asa* (translated in the verse as ‘may well’) bears the connotation of hope: “*‘Asa* (I hope) you will receive good news soon.’ Good news may or may not come, but the speaker expresses hope that it will.

This example is a little different: ‘*‘Asa* (I hope) I will bring you some good news.’ Here hope is stronger. In the first example, actualising hope is not in the least in the hand of the speaker, unlike the second example where the speaker seems to have the means to fulfil the stated hope. Nevertheless, the latter still does not guarantee that he will live and have the capability to bring about the good news he hopes he can bring. He may have a real intention, but he cannot guarantee to have the power to fulfil such intention.

If someone says: ‘*‘Asa* (I hope) Allah will bring you happiness’, the sentence expresses an even stronger hope, since hope, in this case, is pinned on the Almighty Lord. Still, can the speaker be completely sure Allah will answer his hope? Allah may or may not fulfil that hope, based on His Will and Wisdom; we have our own calculations, but Allah alone knows what is best for each of us. Unlike the aforesaid examples, it is Allah Who says about Himself: ‘...Allah *‘asa* (may well) curb the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment’ (*an-Nisa*’: 84). This is the most actual and concrete of all hopes. Nothing can prevent Allah from actualising it.

We have thus learnt the different semantic levels on which the word *‘asa* may be used. It may indicate a kind of hope expressed by someone and pinned

on another. This is lowest form of hope. One may also use it to express his hope that he himself will do something. This is a stronger and more assertive kind of hope. In both cases, however, circumstances may stand in the face of actualising the thing hoped for. The strongest form of hope expressed by the word '*asa*' is the one pinned on Allah. The reason is that the fulfilment of such hope is attributed to the Supreme Power, and it is for Him to make it come true or not based on His Knowledge and Wisdom.

Unlike all three cases, '*asa*' may be used to express a kind of hope that will certainly be fulfilled. An example is expressed in the verse that we are dealing with: '...Allah '*asa*' (may well) curb the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment' (*an-Nisa'*: 84). When the word '*asa*' is used by Allah, it refers to hope that must be achieved, and it is meant as an encouragement and good news to those concerned with fulfilment of the hope. It implies an urge to ask Allah for His Grace because He is the Most-Generous Who will make the desired thing come true. Those who possess power among the creatures of Allah are likely to lose that power. Weakness and fear may strike the most powerful on earth. However, the One Who confers power and capacity to act on His creatures is the One forever capable of truly acting; He is the One, the Most-Powerful and Most Capable of deterring wrongdoers, '... For He is stronger in might and *ashaddu tankila* (more terrible in punishment)' (*an-Nisa'*: 84). The word *tankil* (terrible punishment) is derived from the root *nikl* which denotes restraint. When a ruler administers punishment to someone who has perpetrated a crime, this act deters anyone who thinks of committing a similar crime. Thus, the punishment imposes a non-material restraint on others and prevents them from pursuing the same course of action. This is what it means to make a criminal an example; it is to administer adequate punishment to him so that everyone else is deterred from committing a similar crime for fear of suffering the same punishment. Thus, the word *tankil* denotes a non-material restraint that prevents one from committing a crime, or deters him from returning to a crime he had perpetrated before. This restraint consists of the fact that the punishment administered to the perpetrator of the crime would present itself in everyone's mind as a standing warning against slipping into wrongdoing.

When Allah created humankind, He distributed different talents among them. There is no single person who possesses all talents because Allah has

willed that each person's thought and powers should vary. When He allots to every one of His servants only a specific share of talent, He means that different talents complement and integrate with each other. If every person had the same talents and gifts others have, everyone would dispense with the others. However, Allah wants us to form a community based on coherence and integration, with each individual or group possessing a power that distinguishes them on one level and integrates with the powers of others on the other level—all cooperating for the public well-being. With each endowed with a different talent, each will have a role to play for others, and a need to ask of them meanwhile. An adept engineer would build houses and establish roads and bridges. If he gets sick, he cannot cure himself, though, and would have to see a doctor. Both of them would need to consult a lawyer when they want to enter into a contract. Craftsmen are not less important; with their hands, ideas are put into action. Thus, there is not a single individual capable of doing everything on his own. If such a person existed, no one would need another, and society would eventually fall apart. For this reason, Allah says: '... We have raised some of them above others in rank so that some may take others into service...' (*az-Zukhruf*:32).

When people consider how Allah privileges some over others, they think only in terms of wealth. This is a narrow understanding. Allah may bestow His favours on His servants in the form of physical strength, useful knowledge, a forbearing temperament, etc. Thus, each and every one of us is privileged one way or another. Therefore, when Allah says: '...We have raised some of them above others in rank...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32), some may wonder who are raised, and above whom are they raised? Everyone is raised through his talent, and others are raised above him through their talents. You are privileged, while others are privileged over you.

As we have said, we cannot sum up all the bounties of Allah in the single aspect of wealth. Let us consider all other perspectives in which one may be privileged; we will realize that every person is elevated above others in terms of certain privileges, and that others are raised above him in terms of other privileges. Each and every one is in a way in service of the others. This is the variation Allah has willed among His servants. Our duty is to cooperate to make the best use of our powers collectively. No one in the community of the

believers should be left alone and helpless. Rather, each one of us should give others a helping hand with the powers Allah has given to some and deprived others from. Such is the meaning of solidarity and the essence of power. Individuals of the Muslim community are like the bricks of a wall in assisting one another: none of them is abandoned, and each of them is equally indispensable. When you allow the effect of your talent to be extended to another, each can be a part of a strong whole. To this, the following verse alludes:

مَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفْعَةً حَسَنَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ مِّنْهَا وَمَنْ يَشْفَعْ شَفْعَةً
سَيِّئَةً يَكُنْ لَهُ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقِيبًا ﴿٨٥﴾

**Whoever speaks for a good cause will share in its benefits
and whoever speaks for a bad cause will share in its burden:
God controls everything [85] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 85)**

Joining oneself to another in a good cause is to intercede for someone by offering good arguments in their favour to further an interest belonging to them. In this sense, extending the fruits of one's talent to others is a no less honourable form of assistance, and the one who offers it is entitled to a share of its outcomes.

The aforesaid verse talks mainly about intercession. It is to act as an intermediary to help someone secure an interest he desires or, alternatively, to salvage this person from a detriment without asking him for anything in return in both cases. Likewise, everyone who has a specific talent has to extend his aid to those who lack this particular talent. Communities thus become stronger, instead of being composed of a number of weak individuals. Allah says in a Qudsi Hadith, addressing Prophet Dawud (David): 'A particular good deed will cause its doer to be granted the privilege of allotting places for the dwellers of Paradise.' It is as if that person were made a deputy of Allah in paradise! He is not only granted a place there, but Allah assigns through him the places for the other dwellers of paradise. '... Prophet Dawud (David) wondered: "Who will this person be?" Allah answered: 'A believer who helps another with a need and is keen to fulfil it for him, whether or not he succeeds.'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'If a believer assists another with a need until he fulfils it, this is better [more rewarding]

for him than locking himself up for ten years to observe solitary worship, and [know that] locking oneself up for one day to observe solitary worship for Allah draws him away from the fire by a distance equal to three trenches; the breadth of each is bigger than the distance between the east and west.’⁽¹⁾

The reason is that in offering others the help they need, one thus shows gratitude for the bounties Allah bestows on him by employing them in a manner that pleases Him. Among the immediate effects of such generous attitude is that no one will envy or bear grudge to the possessor of any specific power or ability, since the latter employs that power to help those who do not possess it. Instead of envying him, therefore, others will wish him an excess of that benefit so long as he uses it to fulfil their needs. Allah says: ‘Whoever joins himself (to another) in a good cause shall have a *nasib* (share) of it...’ (*an-Nisa*: 85). The Quran is not sent down for the good and righteous only, but as it promises reward for goodness, it also admonishes those who do wrong: ‘...and whoever joins himself (to another) in an evil cause shall have *kefl* [here meaning responsibility] of it...’ (*an-Nisa*: 85).

Let us now consider the difference between the two Arabic words: *nasib* and *kefl*. Both linguistically mean ‘a share’, but the former has a positive connotation, the latter a negative one. The word *nasib* often refers to a share of a good thing, like wealth, for example. Contrarily, the word *kefl* often refers to a share of a bad thing. The aforesaid verse shows the Grace and Bounty of Allah; whoever does a good deed will be rewarded several folds for it—and this is a great share—and whoever does a bad deed will be recompensed only in proportion of it.

This verse follows after the one in which Allah commands Prophet Muhammad to urge the believer to fight for His cause which promises the believers who respond to the call and fight for the cause of Allah an ample share of His Bounty, a matchless reward.

Allah says: ‘... and whoever joins himself (to another) in an evil cause shall have *kefl* [here meaning: responsibility] of it...’ (*an-Nisa*: 85). This means whoever contributes to an evil cause will suffer part of the repercussions of such

(1) Cited by Al-Bayhaqi

evildoing; the undesirable outcomes of his involvement must befall him as well. By contrast, contributing to a good cause brings on reward to the contributor. This should urge people to spread the fruits of their talents to others by helping them with matters above their capabilities. As long as every member of society benefits from the talents granted to some, the result will be a united, strong society with individuals supportive of each other rather than conflicting and bearing grudge for each other. Everyone will be cooperative and live free of envy and hatred towards others since he knows whatever bounty any of his fellow believers enjoys will have its effect on him as well.

Accordingly, whoever wants to share in the bounties Allah has granted to others should learn to love the fact that they have these bounties. If you, believer, love to see others enjoy the bounties Allah has conferred on them, you will reap the fruits of these bounties. On the other hand, if you find yourself deprived of such fruits, then examine your heart and see whether or not you harbour any feelings of envy, jealousy or hatred. If that is the case, how can the effect of those bounties reach you? It is as if they felt angry on the account of their possessor and would not let the one who bears him a grudge ever taste any of their fruits!

Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘...and Allah is *Muqit* over (controls) all things’ (*an-Nisa'*: 85). After promising contributors to good causes a share of their fruit, and to those who get involved in bad causes also their due share of responsibility, Allah makes this assertion for all His servants to take heed: nothing, no matter how small and negligible, may escape the reckoning of Allah; neither a good nor a bad deed will escape Him, for He holds absolute control over all things. Quran exegetes have extensively investigated the meaning of the Arabic word *Muqit*. Some have maintained that it means Allah is the Witness over everything; others have seen that it means ‘the One who reckons everything.’ Another interpretation says *Muqit* means Allah is the One Who dispenses livelihood to all His creatures; a fourth interpretation says the word conveys that Allah is the Guardian—and some say it means ‘the Watcher.’ I see all these interpretations, however, correlated and complementary, as not conflicting. Each word has a number of semantic references associated with it, so it can have several connotations based on the context, yet the basic sense of the word is that derived directly from its etymological root. The word *Muqit* is derived from the verb *qat* which means providing someone with

livelihood. Why does Allah provide us with provisions? The reason is that He wants to preserve our lives. The fact that Allah provides for every one of His creatures to keep life going necessarily entails that He watches over His creatures and never lets any one of them escape His attention. Furthermore, since Allah gives each one his livelihood based on his needs, then He must keep account of everything. He is also the Witness Who is Ever-Watchful over His servants; He knows what everyone does and recompenses each for his deeds.

Thus, all these meanings and connotations are perfectly correlated. For this reason, we should not say that scholars have disagreed on the meaning of this word. We should rather say that each of them noted a semantic dimension of the word based on the context. Allah is the *Muqit* Who provides sustenance for His creatures and Who constantly watches over them. He is also the Witness Who has Knowledge of and Control over everything. He is also the One Who keeps account of everything since He is the Lord of all creatures Who knows all they do and provides them with the requirements of life, so He keeps account of everything. It is not only for people that Allah provides for, but He gives sustenance to animals and inspires them to choose a specific diet rather than others.

So we know that even though Quran exegetes have reflected on the meaning of *Muqit* from different angles, they were all right in their interpretations of the word. Every one of the several aforementioned meanings represents a single semantic aspect of the word. Allah watches over and provides sustenance for all His creatures: humankind, animals, plants and even inanimate things.

Botanists explain this fact. We grow plants by putting seeds in the soil; seeds are split into halves and absorb nutrients from the soil; then, the plant starts to develop roots that both fix it in the soil and absorb nutrients. As the roots grow, the two halves of the seed sprout into leaves. Who watches over this process and makes the plant prosper? It is Allah, the *Muqit*, Who provides for all and watches over all. Scientists explain that plants are capable of absorbing nutrients through capillary motion. This means that plants absorb nutrition from the soil through very thin roots that absorb water in which nutrients are dissolved.

Capillary tubes put in a vessel full of coloured water would be seen all turning into the colour of the water rising in them all; the water does not rise without the colour, for example. The thin roots of the plant, however, absorb

from the soil only useful material and leave out harmful ones. Who inspires the plant to make such choice? A choice requires a mind capable of thinking, deliberating and choosing one alternative over another. The plant does not have a mind. Nature does not have reason, but everything is governed and managed by the All-Wise Allah Who has absolute Knowledge and Wisdom and Who is indeed All-Sustaining. Exalted is Allah! In this regard, Allah says: ‘...all watered with the same water, yet We make some of them taste better than others: there truly are signs in this for people who reason’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 4). The seeds of peppers, molasses, pomegranates, etc. are all planted in the same earth and watered with the same water, but they develop into wonderfully different plants and fruits with different shapes, colours, tastes, smells, etc. This is the Might of Allah *Glorified is He*.

In the original Arabic text of the verse, this part, ‘...Allah controls all things’ (*an-Nisa'*: 85) the Arabic verb used is in the simple past tense. Use of the past tense in Arabic is different from its usage in English. In the former, present or even future events may be expressed by past verb forms and it is only meant for emphasis. Allah has been, is, and will forever hold control over all things. When the past is used in reference to humans, it means the state expressed was and is no more: Zayd *kan* (was) rich. This means that Zayd, who is subject to change like all other mortals, used to have a fortune and that his fortune is now gone. However, when we say Allah *kan*, even though it literally means ‘was’, it does not confine the description ascribed to Him to the past; all creatures are subject to change, but He is the Creator Who has eternally existed with no beginning and no end. Allah is the One Who causes all things to change and He never changes. In the following verse, Allah says:

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا ﴿٨٦﴾

**But [even in battle] when you [believers] are offered a greeting,
respond with a better one, or at least return it: God keeps
account of everything [86] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 86)**

Allah wants our lives to prosper. What is the meaning of ‘...when you are greeted...’ At first sight, anyone would say it means when we receive the greeting of ‘peace be with you’, we have to return the greeting. Prior to the

advent of Islam, Arabs used to say ‘Allah greet you’, or ‘Greetings from Allah.’ After the advent of Islam, Allah has made ours a greeting of peace: ‘On the Day when they meet Him, they will be welcomed with the greeting, ‘Peace’...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 44), or as Allah says in another verse: ‘...greet one another with a blessed, goodly greeting, as enjoined by Allah...’ (*an-Nur*: 61). That is the greeting of peace.

However, let us examine the Arabic word for ‘greet’: *hayya*. It is derived from the root *h-y-y* from which the word *hayah* (life) is also derived. What is life? Most of us would say it is the motion of a living thing that testifies to the existence of a soul in him. We sum up life in the concept of motion that we perceive by our senses since this is the most immediate experience we have of the world around us. Nevertheless, a deeper understanding would allow us to see the notion of life even in inanimate objects. We are used to associate life with perceptible motion, but everything has its own befitting kind of life.

We have learnt at school about magnetic force and attraction. We used to bring a magnetic rod and move it in a certain direction above a handful of iron filings. As we do that, the iron filings are arranged in line with the direction of the motion of the magnetic rod. The magnetic rod is an inanimate object according to our understanding of the concept of life. Nonetheless, its charged particles can demonstrate a specific motion that we cannot capture the nature of. Thus, the magnetic rod has its own motion which we cannot perceive because we do not have the abilities required to do so.

Consider another example. On a certain moderate height, someone on a plane can perceive motion on land below. If the plane flies higher, everything below seems motionless as if there were no life. The motion becomes too subtle to be perceived. Therefore, I believe everything has a life that befits its nature and a motion that we perhaps cannot perceive. It is worthy of notice that Allah addresses this issue when He says: ‘... Everything will perish except His Face...’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). What is the meaning of ‘perishing’? It is the depravation of life. As long as everything is bound to lose its life, this implies that everything has a life until Allah orders life to be taken away from it. Some may wonder: does perishing truly mean deprivation of life? Verses of the Quran explain each other. One verse of the Quran may afford an

explanation of another verse so that we may understand the Quran as a whole. Allah says: '... that he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth, and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth...' (*al-Anfal*: 42). Therefore, perishing is the opposite of life.

A plastic vessel is bright and soft when still new and unused; however, after using it for a while, its brightness fades away and it becomes rather worn-out; so what happens to it? It has changed. What is the cause of the change? People say it is the normal wear and tear or the effect of sunlight. I believe the change indicates some kind of motion in this material. The same holds true for valuable gems and stones like amber and marble. The age of some is estimated to be thousands of years, and the colour and features of a gem changes through time.

Hold a leaf and put it under a microscope, and you will see an immense number of small compartments that we cannot count. Seeing the wondrous creation of Allah, a believer should say: '...glory is to Allah, the best of creators' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14).

Everything that exists has a kind of life that befits its nature. If we investigate such forms of life and trace their details using tools that help detect their natures, we may be able to perceive them.

Then, there is the life of the noblest species; namely, the human being for whom Allah has made subservient all other forms of life on earth. This life ends in a time unknown to the human being but known to Allah. After this worldly life comes an eternal life. Allah has sent down His ordinance for people to abide by, so whoever obeys Him will be granted bliss in the eternal life. Thus, which is worthier of the two: the worldly life or the eternal one? It is the eternal Afterlife that never ends. For this reason, Allah says: '... the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64). That is the true life. What is the worth of this worldly life where you are constantly threatened by afflictions, pains, disturbances and ailments? It is a life that knows no pure happiness and must one day come to an end. Allah offers us a life that will not be disrupted or come to an end. This worldly life is not the true life Allah has created us for; it is only a passage to the eternal life. Ponder these words of Allah: 'Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to

that which gives you life....' (*al-Anfal*: 24) Here, Allah addresses the believers. We have already been given life, but just according to biological laws. However, if we do not respond to what Allah and Prophet Muhammad call us for, this life will inevitably end and we will be deprived from the life that never ends, the true life where there are no threats, afflictions, burdens, diseases or any kind of suffering whatsoever.

Ar-rouh (the spirit) is the name Allah gives to the secret of life—the force that gives motion and sense to the human body, even if such a life comes to an end: 'And when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit...' (*Sad*: 72). This is the first stage of our existence; the temporary life given to both those who believe in Allah and those who do not.

Allah gives the same name also to the Message He has sent down to Prophet Muhammad: 'So We have revealed *rouhan* (a spirit) to you [Prophet] by Our command...' (*ash-Shura*: 52). Allah here refers to the Message by the same name he has given to the secret of life—the spirit—since this Message is what can lead one to the true life if he sincerely acts upon it. Thus, *rouh* is the secret that gives a temporary life and it is also the Message to which obedience gives one an eternal life free of pain and toil. Thus, the words of Allah: 'Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24) are an invitation to pursue the true life of the Hereafter, a command to abide by the ordinance of Allah in this worldly life to win eternal bliss in the Afterlife.

We have previously referred to the fact that the two words *tahiyya* (greeting) and *hayah* (life) are derived from the same root *h-y-y*. What do they have in common? When someone meets you and gives you the greeting of peace: 'Peace be with you', it is an invocation that Allah will give you security and tranquillity—what is the value of life without peace? Hence originates the similarity.

So the verb *yuhayyi* (the Arabic for 'greet'), or giving the greeting of peace, denotes a wish for the one addressed by the greeting that he will enjoy security and tranquillity. It is an endearing form of greeting that puts peace in the heart of whomever you meet and makes him feel happy to receive you. Thus, when Allah says: 'And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it...' (*an-Nisa*: 86), it means if you are

addressed with a greeting of peace—which brings you a feeling of security and tranquillity—you have to respond with a similar greeting. It is as if you pour life into the heart of your addressee through this greeting. Life without peace is nothing. That reminds me of an Arab poet who once said:

Do not call him who has gone to rest ‘dead’!

Death is the gloom that overtakes the alive!

Therefore, he who greets you with the greeting of peace is actually adding life to your heart through his greeting, so Allah commands you to return it or even give a better greeting. If someone addresses you with: ‘Peace be with you’, reply with: ‘Allah’s peace and mercy be with you.’ This is an even better greeting.

It has been narrated on the authority of Salman Al-Farisi that a man told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Peace be upon you, O Messenger of Allah’, so the Prophet answered him back: ‘Allah’s peace and mercy be with you.’ Another man went to him and said: ‘Allah’s peace and mercy be with you, O Messenger of Allah, so the Prophet answered: ‘Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be with you.’ A third went to him and said: ‘Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be with you, O Messenger of Allah’, so the Prophet answered: ‘The same to you.’ The man said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, dearer you are to me than my father and mother; such-and-such persons greeted you and you answered them with better greetings than you have answered mine.’ Prophet Muhammad then replied: ‘You did not leave room for me to add anything. Allah says: “And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it...”, and I have returned your greeting to you.’⁽¹⁾

Scholars have explicated the rulings regarding who should start with greeting first. They said a passer-by should give it to those sitting down as he passes. A rider should offer greeting to a walker. The young should greet the elder. He who has eyesight should greet him who is blind, and the few should greet the many.

As we know, juristic rulings in Islam are addressed to all the believers, males and females, unless a distinction is clearly made between both. This is a case where women have a special ruling. A woman is permitted to greet other

(1) Cited by Ibn Jarir

women, her husband, or her unmarriageable relatives. Only an old woman who is no longer a temptation to men may be the one who offers a greeting first. As for a young woman, she may not start a man with greeting nor reply when a man greets her unless she is accompanied by women like her. People traditionally say: a woman can guard another woman better than a thousand men! When a young woman is among her peers, they take care of her and protect her. A young woman by herself is forbidden from being the one who starts offering a greeting to a man or replying to him if he offers her any, and it is *makruh* (discouraged) for a man to reply to her if she greets him or offers her a greeting himself. Why is that? When a young woman greets a particular man, this may arouse interest or desire of that man towards her; for the same reason, therefore, if a man greets her, she does not have to answer him back. Nevertheless, if she is accompanied by another woman or a group of women, there is no harm in her answering him back.

Scholars have also dealt with the following questions: How should a Muslim answer if the one greeting him is a non-Muslim? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained that the disbelievers may twist words. They would replace *salaam* (the Arabic for 'peace') by *saam* (the Arabic for 'perishing'). Therefore, if a disbeliever greets you, reply with: 'The same to you.' This way, whatever they say by way of greeting will be returned to them, and they will not have the chance to indulge themselves in ridiculing a believer. Based on these grounds, some scholars hold that: '...greet with a better (greeting) than it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 86) applies to fellow believers when they greet one another, and '...or return it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 86) applies to the disbelievers when they greet the believers; we should return to them whatever they say.

It is true that the greeting of peace expresses the speaker's wish that his addressee will have security and tranquillity. However, some would say it by way of hypocrisy. They would say 'Peace' with their tongues, but their hearts harbour nothing but hatred and malice and their intention is to do harm. By commanding us to return a greeting as it is or with an even better one, Allah means to teach His servants the concept of spreading goodness in general, which is not confined to verbal greeting. Returning greetings in the manner Allah prescribes is meant to promote respect and friendliness in the Muslim

community. On a larger scale, this is an invitation to offer good in return to or in excess of any good done to you.

To increase goodness in society, Allah urges people to give more than they take and, by acting on this principle, whatever good one does will be returned to him in excess, which causes society to be righteous and coherent. At one time, a Saudi citizen would invite King ‘Abdul-‘Aziz Al Su’ud for a cup of Arabian coffee. How do you think the king would return the invitation? The return would be at the level of a king’s capacity which may be imagined. This and returning verbal greetings, all originate from the general concept of returning goodness.

Through abidance by that divine command, a believer would be sure that whatever respect or friendliness he offers his fellow believers would be returned at least equally. After giving that command, Allah reassures the obedient that when they show respect and benevolence to one another, they are sure to receive their reward in abundance since He watches over them and takes account of all they do. Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘... surely Allah takes account of all things’ (*an-Nisa'*: 86). So, the reward is not just for returning what your fellow believer has offered you, but if your intention is sincerely directed to pleasing Allah, He has a far greater reward for you, a matchless reward.

Spreading the greeting of peace, as Prophet Muhammad has taught us, by saying to everyone you meet, ‘peace be with you’, ‘Allah’s peace and mercy be with you’ or ‘Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be with you’ is an act of benevolence that promotes harmony and friendliness in the Muslim community. Healthy and noble relationships can be developed with everyone wishing and praying for his fellow believers to live in security and calm; everyone offering whatever good in his hand to others, and even going beyond this by praying to Allah to send His blessings to them.

In uttering the greeting of peace, ‘Allah’s peace, mercy and blessings be with you’, there is a reminder to everyone who gives or receives it that faith is what binds them to Allah on the one hand and to each other on the other hand. It is at once a greeting and a message: we are all servants of Allah. By promoting goodness and benevolence among ourselves, by spreading peace and mercy, Allah will also bestow His Mercy and Favours on us. So, Allah says: ‘and

when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it; surely Allah takes account of all things' (*an-Nisa'*: 86). It is natural for us to understand that answering a greeting means that we should reply with a greeting exactly like the one we have received. Rather, answering a greeting means to put forward a similar greeting. The third person pronoun in the original Arabic text of the verse—translated into the aforementioned English version as 'it'—'... or return it...'—does not refer to the 'greeting', but its reference includes anything of the same sort of the noun 'greeting' it is associated with.

Third person pronouns in Arabic do not necessarily refer to the very noun they are associated with in a sentence, but their reference is identified through that noun. For example, when we say: 'I have given to charity a *dirham* and *nisfa-hu* (its half)', the third person pronoun *hu* sure does not refer to the self-same '*dirham*' mentioned in the sentence, but to a value that equals it. By applying this to the verse we are dealing with, we then understand that Allah does not command us to offer exactly the same greeting in return to that we have been offered, but a greeting equivalent to it.

The fact that Allah has created us and given us free will to choose our faith and actions does not mean He will not hold us accountable for our choices. Allah does not compel us to accept faith, but He will certainly reward those who accept it and punish those who reject it. Allah does not command us anything that is beyond our capacity to observe, and nor does He forbid us anything that is beyond our capacity to abstain from. He has created us and He knows what is best for us in this life and the Afterlife.

When Allah decrees a command, He has already eternally known that we are able to execute such a command. He does not enjoin on us anything that is beyond our capacity. What then makes us violate the laws of Allah and disobey His commands? Disobedience comes as a result of letting one's own desire to prevail over the commands of Allah—so he does what he likes, even if Allah forbids it, and refrains from what he sees as a heavy duty even if Allah enjoins it. A prudent person, however, would not take advantage of the free will Allah has granted us to give free rein to his desires. Rather, reason calls on everyone to remember that, even though he is given the freedom to choose, he will inevitably be returned to the One Who has given him this

freedom and Who will give him his fair recompense. Therefore, disobedience to Allah is the outcome of irrationality. A rational person who believes in Allah and in the Day of Judgment, when he meets Him and receives his due reward, would not waste his life pursuing whims and desires. Indulging in a thing Allah has made unlawful gives one a transient pleasure, but the price must be paid then at length. A believer would not sacrifice eternal happiness for a temporary joy. Rather, he would be mindful of Allah now in order to have rest and bliss forever in his eternal abode. In the following verse, Allah says:

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لِيَجْمَعَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ لَا
رَيْبَ فِيهِ وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حَدِيثًا

He is God: there is no god but Him. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. Whose word can be truer than God's? [87] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 87)

This means that there is no deity other than Allah -the Creator of all things- will interfere to put an end to the existence of the world. He is the One Lord of the worlds and His is the only ordinance that offers the right guidance to humankind, and it is to Him alone that all creatures will return. There are no multiple Allahs who may give contrary decrees to humankind other than what Allah has prescribed. Only His ordinance is the best that furthers the interests of His servants, and only His prohibitions should be avoided; otherwise, we are only thus doing harm to ourselves. Allah refers to this Truth in His words: 'Say [Prophet], "Disbelievers: I do not worship what you worship, you do not worship what I worship; I will never worship what you worship; you will never worship what I worship: (if you keep to your present Allahs) you have your religion and I have mine."' (*al-Kafirun*: 1-6)

In the aforementioned chapter of the Noble Quran, Allah explains that we are not facing a case where there are two competing religions: a religion for the believers and another for the disbelievers. No, there is only one religion that befits humankind; it is the straight path of monotheism that all the Messengers of Allah called for, and that Islam has come to conclude and perfect; therefore, Islam is the final and timeless Message addressed to all humankind until the

end of time. Since this is the true religion, Allah has assisted His Prophet and granted him victory against his enemies for the Message of Allah to prevail over all other alleged and distorted religions. Allah refers to this meaning in the chapter following the one mentioned above: 'When Allah's help comes and He opens up⁽¹⁾ your way [Prophet], when you see people embracing Allah's faith in crowds, celebrate the praise of your Lord and ask His forgiveness: He is always ready to accept repentance.' (*an-Nasr*: 1-3)

The aforesaid two chapters are followed by the chapter of *al-Masad*: '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 —⁽²⁾ and so will his wife, the firewood-carrier,⁽³⁾ with a palm-fibre rope around her neck.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5)

Could Abu Lahab not have professed belief that there is no Allah but Allah and that Muhammad was His Messenger after this chapter of the Quran was revealed? Yes, he could have done so, and had he made such a profession, he would have cast doubts about this revelation or even proved it to be false altogether. However, and even though he had the choice, Allah did not guide him to make such a profession even by way of hypocrisy; why? He had defied Allah and declared enmity to His Prophet, so Allah decreed that he will never attain faith or be admitted to paradise. Whatever Allah decrees must happen, since there is no other Allahs that defy His Will, a truth which Allah presents clearly in the chapter of the Quran following the aforementioned three: 'Say: 'He is the One Allah' ' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1).

There is no other Allah that may contradict or suspend any of the decrees of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'He is Allah: there is no Allah but Him. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection...' (*an-Nisa*': 87). The word 'gather' may be meant to denote the fact that Allah will bring all of us into His Presence, all of us with no exceptions, and no one will escape Him. It

(1) 'This sura [chapter of the Quran] is mainly understood by interpreters to refer to the surrender of Mecca to the Prophet [Muhammad]'. Abdel Haleem, *The Quran, A New Translation* (translation adopted and adapted).

(2) 'Abu Lahab means 'Flame Man' and this verse contains a pun on this name', Abdel Haleem, *The Quran, A New Translation*

(3) 'She used to tie bunches of thorns with ropes of twisted palm fibre and throw them into the Prophet's path'. Abdel Haleem, *The Quran, A New Translation*.

may generally also refer to the Day of the Gathering, when Allah will resurrect His servants from their graves to be recompensed for their deeds.

Why does Allah make this statement? It is a reminder to those of understanding: Before you disobey Allah, think of the punishment awaiting you. To act without thinking of the outcomes of one's action is foolishness.

Those who persist in sinning never actually recall or think of the punishment they will receive for their deviation. Crimes are committed, while the perpetrator is heedless of the punishment. A criminal commits his crime assuming that he will escape its punishment. A thief steals assuming that he will get away with his theft; however, if he bears in mind that he may be caught and penalized for his crime, he will never commit it.

That Allah has granted us freedom of choice is not meant to let us deviate from His Path and violate His commands with impunity. Rather, this freedom is meant to differentiate the devout from the depraved. In order not to misuse this freedom, ask yourself how much benefit you will receive from a sin, and how much grace and bounty Allah will bestow on you if you obey Him, then choose the alternative that will lead you to the highest good and most fulfilling status. A rational person would not let desire drag him into evildoing and suffering.

We will all be gathered on the Day of Resurrection about which Allah says: 'A Day when everyone will stand before the Lord of the Worlds' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 6). Death is like long sleep; this is the closest parable by which we can identify the nature of death. Allah has called it the Day of Resurrection, for it is when all creatures will be made to rise from their graves, as Allah Almighty tells us in the Noble Quran: 'He is Allah: there is no Allah but Him. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection...' (*an-Nisa'*: 87).

The way to deliverance is to have firm belief in the Day of Resurrection. When one believes that Allah has created the world, given His servants free will to do good or evil, sent them guidance through His Messengers and will surely gather them all on the Day of Resurrection, he will never persist in disobeying His commands.

Consider the following example. When we use examples to explain things about Allah, it is not meant to hold a comparison—Exalted is Allah above all comparison—but to make the point clearer and more accessible to the limited

human mind. Now, suppose a father gave his son a pound and told him: 'Go buy something with this money, but bear in mind that I will reward you if you buy something useful, whereas if you buy something bad, like playing cards, I will punish you.' The father has given his son the freedom to buy what he chooses. The question is: if the son chose to buy a pack of playing cards, would such a purchase happen against the will of the father? Or would we say that the father imposed a choice on his son? No, the father is the one who has given him the freedom to buy what he chooses, yet the son has not taken his father's warning into consideration and disobeyed him.

If a father has been given the right to punish or reward his son based on the latter's use of the freedom he allowed him, would Allah not be entitled to do the same with His servants in as much as He grants them the right to freely choose their actions? If Allah wanted everyone to be rightly guided and obedient, He would have made people like angels and no one would have dared to commit a sin or an act of disobedience. When a sinner commits an offence, he only does it because Allah *Glorified is He* has granted him the freedom of choice. For this reason if someone says that acts are created by Allah *Glorified is He* he is correct and honest. But why is the perpetrator of the sin afflicted if he only used the power of freedom he was given to suit his convenience? To this we respond as follows: the sinner used his freedom in a manner that was contrary to the way Allah *Glorified is He* had intended for it to be used. The knife, for example, is used for slaughtering, if one was to slaughter a chicken, he would not be susceptible to any kind of punishment. However, if it was used as a tool for manslaughter, then it would fall into the domain of committing a grave sin, so much that the Truth likens it to the killing of the whole of humanity. For this reason we cannot say to someone who bought a knife for domestic reasons, that he brought a criminal tool. He only brought a tool that could be used for both permissible and forbidden acts. So even the one who has the freedom of choice, his actions emanate from him being granted such a bounty from Allah *Glorified is He*. But has The True One *Glorified is He* obliged such a sinner to commit a sin? No, Allah *Glorified is He* clarified what He likes, i.e. that which is permissible and impermissible. However, the one who has been forbidden from these acts ultimately has the choice to do that which will bring him benefit or that which will bring him harm.

'He is Allah: there is no god but Him. He will gather you all together on the Day of Resurrection...' (*an-Nisa'*: 87); this is a statement made by Almighty Allah. The human credibility of statements is likely to be questioned; however the divine statement is upright. Yet, likely is still the correctness of the discourse in general. For this reason the Truth appends the verse as follows: '....and whose word could be truer than the word of Allah?' (*an-Nisa'*: 87) But is truth gradable? There are no degrees or levels in truth; the truth is the correspondence between discourse and objective reality. Being a rational creature, before man speaks he ponders over that which he plans to talk about, and then verbalises it as a result. Thus discourse has three dimensions: the mental dimension, the wording and phrasing of the discourse and finally the relation between the discourse and the actuality to which it refers. When someone says: *Zayd* is a hard worker, the thought of *Zayd* being a hard worker must have occurred to his mind; this is the mental and intellectual dimension of the discourse. The person then utters the statement; this is the wording and phrasing of it. Yet the question remains: is there really a person whose name is *Zayd* who is a hard worker? If actuality corresponds to both the wording of the discourse and the mental or ideal dimension of it, then the discourse is deemed true. In contrast if there is no one by the name *Zayd* who is not a hard worker, then there is not objective actuality that corresponds to the ideal thought and wording of the discourse. So the discourse is said to be untrue and is deemed false. Truth implies an identical correspondence between the thinking-phrasing of the discourse and the objective actuality with which it is claimed to correspond to.

Why does the liar, lie then? He lies so that a certain benefit is attained or harm eschewed, seemingly, by not saying the truth. Here is an example: A child may break something in the house such as a table. When this happens, the father may ask his son: 'Have you broken the table?' At this point, the son may reply: 'No; I have not.' In saying so, the child thinks that he is attaining a benefit or avoiding a harm and loss, namely, the punishment because he knows that saying the truth may cause him to be punished. Hence his interest in avoiding a detriment that might befall him if he says the truth, is the main cause for lying. He resorts to wording that contradicts reality.

Needless to say, a man chooses to lie because he wants to achieve a particular benefit or alternatively safeguard himself against an impending harm. The thing that benefits man has to be stronger than him; the same holds for that which may harm him. But no entity is capable of either benefiting or harming Allah. If Allah *Glorified is He* is to speak, then it is an absolute truth. Allah is Most Exalted and Transcendent to all reasons that may cause one to lie.

Since Allah is the sole key speaker who tactfully briefs us on the reality of life, who gives detailed accounts of what goes beyond the actuality of our lives and clarifies to us the unknown that does not fall within the ambit of what we experience and see, this means that he speaks to us frequently. When Allah says: '...and whose word could be truer than the word of Allah?' (*an-Nisa*: 87) We accept His account as a non-negotiable fact. The comparative form—in truer—is not used to actually distinguish between a true and much truer discourse. It is rather functionally intended to show us that Allah's discourse to us is plentiful; the intensification in this context is used to refer to the frequency and amount of discourse instead of referring to a distinction between a true and a much truer discourse.

The disparity may be related to the degree of truth as well; how? Let us assume that someone witnessed an accident wherein someone killed another. He may then be a witness, and testify that he saw the victim bleeding due to the fight he had with the killer. However, another witness may relate all the details that preceded the beginning of the altercation between the murderer and victim until the former actually killed the latter. Consequently we realise that the second witness was more comprehensive in his account of the truth than the first witness. It is true that the first witness provided a true testimony nevertheless the testimony of the second witness was more detailed.

Therefore the verse: '...and whose word could be truer than the word of Allah?' (*an-Nisa*: 87) means that Allah is truest in the sense that His statements are the most comprehensive. It is an absolute truth with no gradations. The comparative form was thereby used to indicate that the amount of the truth that emanates from Allah is infinite and that Allah knows things in themselves in the most comprehensive way possible. The creations, by contrast, may at one point say the truth and at another lie; for instance you may say something thinking that it is true when in fact it is not.

Here is an illustrative example. Someone may for instance say: so and so person visited such and such person last night. The person who made such a statement so thought because he saw the light on in the guest room of that person. Upon inquiring about the identity of the visitor he was told that it was so and so. He thus relates the news of the visit based on what he thought. In this case he cannot be called a liar, even if his inference transpires to be false.

We have to distinguish between a statement and the one who communicates it: the informant; how? If someone says Zayd is a hard worker, we should inquire: is there really someone called Zayd and is he really a hard worker? This is called investigating the objective reality of the statement. Furthermore we should inquire into whether or not the informant actually thinks so. Thus we need to ascertain and verify two things: the certainty of the existence of the subject matter of the statement and its inference. Accordingly the statement would be true and the informant, nonetheless, in both cases is honest as well.

Supposedly you have stated that Zayd is a hard worker based on somebody's account even though Zayd is not really like this. In such a situation you may be considered truthful based on your inference, but the statement you made is not true in reality. So one could infer that there is a kind of disparity between the truth of a statement and that of the informant.' If the inference underlying a statement actually corresponds to reality then the statement would be true and so would the informant. If a statement corresponds to the objective reality to which it refers and is at odds with the inference, then only the statement would be rendered true. This is exemplified in the stance of the hypocrites about whom Allah says: 'When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet Muhammad], they say, 'We bear witness that you are the Messenger of God...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) Their statement is true as they testified the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad, yet Allah Almighty adds: '...and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars'.

The statement is true but the hypocrites, i.e. the informants are liars because they were not convinced of its truth when they admitted it; they were therefore liars. Accordingly, the scrupulous examination of the statement reflects the difference between the truth of the content of the statement and the falsity of the inner contention of the informants. In this manner the truth of any speaker means that his/her discourse corresponds with his/her inner belief and conviction.

What they lied about is their statement: '...we bear witness...' and not their statement: '...We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). True testimony necessitates the correspondence between the statement made by the tongue and the contention residing in the heart.

For this reason when some people read the Quran without a proper understanding of the Arabic language, they may superficially understand the following verse in a mistaken way: 'When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet Muhammad], they say, 'We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.' Allah knows that you truly are His Messenger and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1)

But how could Allah Almighty bear witness that the hypocrites are liars even though Allah Almighty knows the truth of what the hypocrites have testified for? To this we reply: the statement was not false; Allah *Glorified is He* did not say anything to falsify it. But He pointed out that although the statement was true, the hypocrites lied in their testimony because they manifested something other than what they concealed in their hearts and truly believed. Allah *Glorified is He* falsifies their testimony and not the statement about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being the Messenger of Allah.

'He is Allah: there is no god but Him. He will gather you all together on the on the Day of Resurrection [the coming of] which is beyond all doubt: and whose word could be truer than Allah's?' (*an-Nisa*': 87) A believer has an unquestionable faith in the Day of Resurrection; indeed logic necessitates the advent of the Day of Resurrection. If there were any doubts or suspicions about whether or not there is a Day of Resurrection, those who have deviated in their worldly life and offended the honour of other people and usurped their money and spread corruption on earth would be the lucky winners. By contrast the good and the few straight people would be the ones who lived their lives in naivety. Accordingly, logic necessitates that inasmuch as there are people who have wronged others and committed acts of aggression and others who have been wronged, that there must be some kind of reckoning for their accountability. There would not be any reckoning unless death is to be followed by resurrection and summoning in the presence of Almighty Allah on the Day of Judgement. The evidence of this is furnished by those who deny the bounty of Almighty Allah,

i.e. atheists themselves. As top lawmakers of non-religious societies are the ones who enact the laws that guarantee the protection of social mobility, they enact these laws so that whoever violates them would be accountable and consequently punished. Since receiving punishment is the only deterrent for people from overtly committing a crime, what would be the situation then? The adept and clever would be the one who succeeds in escaping and avoiding the punishment of the leaders of the society and manages to hide away from them so that they would not be able to penalise him.

Such atheistic societies forge laws to protect themselves. But what would these societies do with those who err and hide? According to their laws, they should have been punished and penalised for their deeds. These societies should thus have said that there is another place for reckoning and punishment even if one escapes the worldly place for it. As an atheist, you have decreed a punishment for anyone who violates your laws. However, you can only apply these laws to those whom you can spot and catch. But what about those whom you could not actually spot violating the law and could not apprehend by your own hands? We, people of faith, thereby say to atheists that our logic complements your inadequate thinking. We also say to all creatures: if you have managed to escape the worldly justice, you will not be able to escape the heavenly one that misses nothing. Accordingly, we deduce the evidence in support of the truth and necessity of the Methodology of Allah Almighty from the disbelievers who as a matter of fact, should be grateful to the people of faith for we have made up for the inadequacy in human legislation. This is a protection of the society against crime, violation and escaping the penalty of the man-made laws.

And '...whose word could be truer than the word of Allah?' (*an-Nisa'*: 87) This means that no one puts forward a truer discourse than Allah. As a comparative form '...truer...' is used not because there are different degrees of truth; truth as a quality is non-gradable because truth is one and the same thing; truth is the correspondence between what is said and the objective reality about which it is said. Rather, '...truer...' is used to indicate the amount of truth that Allah *Glorified is He* imparts to us about both what we witness in our world and what we are unaware of from the Unknown World. Humans can only make claims in their discourse about the world they perceive with their

senses. However, when Allah speaks to us, His discourse also refers to the unknown world. The word of Allah is much truer than any other entity because Allah *the Almighty* is the one who advanced the greatest amount of true discourses. Subsequently, Allah *Almighty is He* says:

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِتْنَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَرَكَّهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ
تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا ﴿٨٨﴾

**[Believers], why are you divided in two about the hypocrites,
when God Himself has rejected them because of what they
have done? Do you want to guide those God has left to stray?
If God leaves anyone to stray, you [Prophet] will never find
the way for him [88] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 88)**

Allah *Glorified is He* always relates cause to effect, and the premise to the result. He *the Almighty* discussed the reasons justifying the legitimacy of calling the believers for fighting only for a specific goal that is, imparting the Methodology of Allah *the Almighty* to the people. Beyond this—meaning after receiving the Methodology of Allah —people have the freedom of choice. Thus fighting was not decreed to impose the Methodology of Allah Almighty. Rather, fighting was legislated to impose the freedom to choose the Methodology of Almighty Allah. The evidence is the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'There shall be no coercion in matters of faith...' (*al-Baqara*: 256).

Accordingly, Islam does not impose itself as a religion. Rather, Islam came to enact and enforce the freedom of belief and right to choose one's religion. Islam combats the forces that impede one's freedom to choose his/her religion; Islam also stands against all these forces until they cease to coercively dominate their subjects; when the believers take over they would allow them to freely embrace whichever belief they wish. The evidence is that people continue to retain their dogmas and beliefs in the countries conquered by Muslims by force. If fighting was decreed to impose Islam as a religion, we would not have found a single non-Muslim religion in any of the countries that Islam conquered by the sword.

After Allah Almighty had talked about fighting in several places in the chapter of *an-Nisa'* and said to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

'So [Prophet] fight in the way of Allah. You are accountable only for yourself. And encourage the believers on. It may well be that Allah curbs the power of the disbelievers, for He is stronger in might and more terrible in punishment.' (*an-Nisa'*: 84)

Allah *Glorified is He* puts forward an interrogative issue; it involves both a sense of disapproval as well as condemnation and chastisement. This is quite widespread in all similar styles in the Noble Quran. If you encounter the form: 'How, then, could you be...' indicates that the rational reckoning implies that you should do what follows this form and that it would be strange if you acted otherwise. This style is not used unless it is intended to deplore and condemn something that you ought not to do or something that you ought to have done and you did not.

For instance, a father may say to his son: how, then, could you not be studying even though your exams are approaching? It is as if the logic of reason necessitates that if the son had neglected studying throughout the academic year, he should not have neglected studying before the exam. This is a rationally intuitive matter. It is as if Islamic legislation and the Quran are telling the believers not to initiate an action unless they thoroughly detect its correctness; No believer should take any course of action irrationally. The same applies to quitting an action without a plausible reason. A similar expression to '...how, then, could you be...' was also used by the children of Prophet Jacob—the Arabic word here translated as minds—means group. A group is a number of individuals who have come together despite their differences in interests and passions. Yet when it comes to the expression of faith in religion, they have to unanimously fall under the right methodological course of faith and interest. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'None of you will be a true believer unless his passion goes in conformity with the message I brought about.'⁽¹⁾

The cause of difference among people is that their interests and passions are not the same; they are not gathered around the tenants of religion and nor

(1) *Related by Al-Baghawi (Sharh As-Sunnan), Ibn Abu 'Asim in (As-Sunna), Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi in (Kanz Al-'Ummal) and Al-Khatib Al-Bafhdadi in (Tarikh Baghdad)*

the order of Allah of holding fast to His rope all together. But what about the hypocrites and why were the believers divided in their stance towards them?

The word (*Fi'a*) —as we learnt—means a group but not in an absolute or generic sense. For instance, you would not call a group of people who sporadically amble down a street without a common purpose or destination a (*fi'a*). The word (*fi'a*) more aptly refers to a group of people who unite in their pursuit of a single goal because the word (*fi'a*) implies that they refer and resort to each other in pursuing and deliberating the matter that unites them. The same holds for the word (*ta'ifa*) —which also means group—yet it refers to a group of people who orbit and go around the same thing. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88). This is an alert and alarm from Allah so that we keep our minds from being divided on the same issue especially if we agree upon our belief one God and one path. The hypocrites as we know are the ones who apparently purport to be believers and covertly hide their disbelief.

We know that all abstract meanings are referred to by words derived from sensible things. The reason is that sense perception is the first means for conceptualisation and cognition. Meanings follow afterwards. If we trace the etymological root of the word (*munafiqun*)—the Arabic word for hypocrites—we will realize that it is derived from a sensible phenomenon that the Arabs used to experience in their environment. An animal called (*al-yarbu'*) which looked like the mouse or the lizard and which used to live in the Arabian desert. (*Al-yarbu'*) was known for its cunningness and capacity to dodge things. In order to safeguard itself against the animals that may attack it, it used to dig two or more holes for itself. Thus once it gets attacked it flees away from the predator to one of the holes. The predator then waits for it at the opening of the hole so (*al-yarbu'*) quits that hole to another one. It is as if this animal has planned and prepared for itself outlets to enhance its capacity for manoeuvring. It makes an opening through which it enters the hole in addition to a second and a third one in order that it may escape out of any of these. The same holds for hypocrites.

We know that there are three ways or modes in which one may believe or disbelieve in Islam: one may be a believer who avows faith verbally and

believes with his heart; thus his/her organs are completely in harmony. Secondly, one may be a disbeliever who does not believe in Islam and does not verbally avow otherwise; his/her organs are also harmonious with each other even though punishment awaits him/her in the afterlife. His/Her organs are harmonious; yet, they are channelled towards a detrimental purpose, i.e. disbelief. In contrast with these two kinds, a hypocrite is the one who is unswervingly a disbeliever yet his tongue avows the opposite of what his heart believes. That is to say his faculties are not in harmony with each other; his tongue utters things at odds with what maliciously lurks in his heart. For this reason he lives torn apart and constantly in anxiety. He wants to enjoy the benefits of both belief and disbelief. This is the case of the hypocrite.

There is a group in the history of Islam who upon witnessing the victory of the Muslims in the battle of Badr, said to themselves: 'fortune favours the Muslims; however we cannot be certain that after their triumph in Badr and their killing of the fiercest veterans of Quraysh and the spoils of wars they earned, they would still come back to us.' This group of people resorted to hypocrisy and purported to be Muslims while they were in Mecca in order to protect themselves when the Muslims conquer Mecca. Alternatively they may be the group that went to Medina as emigrants and could not stand the bitterness of living in exile and away from their homes, families and wealth and so, upon deliberating matters, decided to abjure Islam in order to be able to go back to Mecca. They thereby said to the believers in Medina: 'we have fortunes and wealth in Mecca and we will go to take it and come back.'

The news then reached the Muslims who were divided between two groups: a group of them contended that they should fight the hypocrites while another group argued that they should not. Those who contended that they should fight the hypocrites were mainly driven by their passion to defend faith. Those who argued against fighting maintained that the hypocrites are a group of people which purported to have faith yet we cannot tell what is hidden in their hearts. They may have said so out of sympathy towards the hypocrites as some of the hypocrites may have been their relatives.

Consequently the Quran came forth to put an end to the division of Muslims and decisively overcome the dispute amongst them. Considering that

the Quran interferes to decisively conclude a matter, it indicates that the Lord of the Quran is the One Who fashioned and guided the believers; therefore once He spots a defect in them, He *the Almighty* decides to put an end to this matter. In this vein Almighty Allah says: 'How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88).

The speech is addressed to the Muslim camp. His saying: 'How, then, could you...' means that you are united in pursuing the same goal. His saying 'two minds' indicates that there is a difference among them. The expression '...two minds...' is in opposition to the '...how then could you be...' with which the True Lord *the Exalted* commenced His discourse. It is as if Allah Almighty wants the one who is receiving the Quran to understand the meaning as follows: how could you then divide into groups on your stance towards the hypocrites? This is in a sense a chastising and threatening style; it also indicates that such a thing should not have happened. But does this discourse apply to all those who are addressed by it? Let us investigate the matter. Is the Quran on the side of those who maintain that they ought to fight the hypocrites or is it rather, on the side of those who argue otherwise? If the Quran is on the side of the former it will not blame this group; it will rather ennoble and honour it. The Quran advocates those who call for fighting the hypocrites and not the second group. For this reason it blames and chastises the latter. When the style of the Quran blames and chastises a group that holds a specific opinion, it subliminally honours those who hold the opposite stance. In this manner, we must immediately consider the latter, namely the one who holds the opposite, honoured point of view, excluded from blame because the fact that he/she aligns himself with the truth gives him/her a reason to be proud.

Allah Almighty says: 'How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88). This means that He is saying: what reason do you have to dispute and disagree amongst yourselves on the issue of the hypocrites. Logic and analogy requires that we study the matter both from the perspective of reason and faith. If you do so, you will arrive at the conclusion that you must be of the same mind. Chastisement and condemnation is intended to imply that you believers have no ground to be divided in disagreement.

Allah Almighty then says: '...seeing that Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88). Once you encounter the word

‘...disown...’ what should we infer even if we are not sure about its meaning in the context? We ought to infer that Allah *the Exalted* has doomed them to an inappropriate status. The style makes us feel that Allah *the Almighty* has doomed them and made their front their back and vice versa in the sense that they have turned against each other. Even if we do not understand the exact meaning of the word or its etymological root, we can infer the overall meaning from the suggestions of the style of the Quran or its words or even the harmony among the letters constituting the word ‘...seeing that Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 88).

(*Arkasahum*) —the Arabic root here translated as disowned—is derived from (*rakasahum*) which means that Allah Almighty has returned them to a past state. It is as if they were in one particular state, quitted it and then Allah Almighty returned them to that original state. They were originally disbelievers, then they believed and then Almighty Allah caused them to relapse back into disbelief. But did Almighty Allah do so indiscriminately or coercively? No; Allah *Glorified is He* did so because of their guilt. This is the case so that no one would push us into confusion and wonder: why does Allah *the Almighty* punish and chastise them if He is the One Who did so to them? For this reason Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...seeing that Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt?...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 88) (*Rakasahum*) is etymologically derived from the word (*rakas*) —with a high accented (*ra'*). This means reversing something. From the same root, the word (*riks*) —with a lower accent (*ra'*) —is also derived; this word denotes the secretions produced by the stomach of the human being before it receives food. We may say that someone is feeling sick or that someone vomited.

Upon considering this process we notice that the food man enjoys, desires, eats, for which his eyes yearn, his hands cut and his teeth chew joyfully, once chewed, it goes down to the stomach where it is mixed with digestive juices secreted by the stomach, and takes a completely different form. If one throws up what is in his stomach, one cannot stand the food or its smell in such a form. Rather, man digests the food in order to extract the useful materials and excretes the rest; indeed the smell of natural wastes is not worse than the smell of food if it is thrown up. If one sees someone throwing up food and another excreting food out of his stomach, one will be more disgusted and

abominated by the scene of the one who is throwing up more than by the sight of the one who is excreting the food. The reason is that vomiting causes food that has moved from the stage wherein it is desired, enjoyably chewed and has not as of yet been utilised.

For this reason there is a proverb that says: 'whatever departs from the tongue becomes rotten.' (*Riks*) is the vomit that one throws up before he avails himself of it. Food after it is consumed and excreted through the proper outlet becomes organic excrement and waste. In this fashion Allah *the Almighty* used the word that best befits them: 'Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88). This means that they committed apostasy before they could even avail themselves of faith.

This is the expression of the Quran that uses the most suitable word for conveying the meaning. Furthermore this expression makes us stay away from them; hence (*riks*) is repelling and rejecting; but is it so in an absolute sense or in a qualified manner? It is so by way of humiliation; how? Here is an example; if something is supposed to stand uprightly in a vertical position, (*riks*) in this case would mean to keep him upside down, i.e to reverse his position. For this reason, the rejection is not ordinary; it is a rejection that humiliates the one that is being rejected and disowned.

As much as any object must be placed in a horizontal position on its base in order to be upright, (*riks*) is to place what ought to be in the front in the back and vice versa. That is to say we change the structure of the thing and its original state. The Quran describes both the disbelievers and the hypocrites; 'But then they relapsed into their former way of thinking...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 65). The Arabic word here translated as relapsed is (*nukisu*) which means to invert upside down. This word is used because the head is naturally erected on the body. However, such inversion makes the head in place of the feet and the feet in place of the head. Thus His saying: '... Allah [Himself] has disowned them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88) means that Allah *the Almighty* did not merely disown and repudiate them; rather, He did so in a humiliating manner that subverts their state.

'...Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88). Accordingly no one may say: if Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who disowned

them what sin did they commit? Allah Almighty has disowned them only because of their guilt. They were active subjects rather than passive objects.

Here is an example-and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection. Schools and universities set a grading scale to determine the criterion of success and failure in each subject; for instance in a particular subject a student may need to score at least sixty percent in order to pass, while in a different subject a student may need to score at least seventy percent in order to pass. When students, then, sit for an exam and one of them fails, no one should say that the school was the cause of his/her failure. It is true that the school failed this student, but it did so according to the rules it has set and of which the student was aware before taking the exam. The real cause of the student's failure is that he/she did not exert enough effort; in such a manner the student is the one responsible for his/her own failure.

In the same realm, Allah *the Exalted* did not arbitrarily disown the hypocrites. Rather, it was the hypocrites who acted in a way that made the universal laws lead them to (*riks*) —disowning by Allah *Glorified is He*. They are like the student who did not study and so could not answer the questions in the exam. We are not to assume that the school failed the student, rather, the student is the one who caused his own failure.

For this reason if someone says: ‘Allah is the One Who misled them; so what sin did they commit?’ Strangely enough this very same person tends to follow the mainstream version of those who went astray due to their excessive self-indulgence. Consequently the following verse puts an end to their argument for ‘... Allah [Himself] disowned them because of their guilt...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 88). Allah Almighty misleads those who went astray due to their own sin; but how does Allah do so?

We learnt before that guidance may imply one of two meanings: either Allah *Glorified is He* revealed guidance through prophets, messengers and books or Allah *Glorified is He* revealed guidance exclusively to those He selected through extending His own aid and support. But those who indulge themselves in sinning wish that the religion would—God forbid—transpire to be false. This is because if the religion turns out to be true, this will imply that they are doomed to a terrible demise and a destiny which they will not be able

to endure. For this reason they tend to discredit the religion through engaging in criticism brought about by their superficial understanding of the religion. This is why their arguments are always like the arguments of those who indulge themselves in sinning: they say as long as God has decreed and preordained everything I do; why would He torture me if He is the One Who decreed sinning upon me?

To those who promote such a flimsy argument, we pose the following question: why did you choose to believe that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who enacts everything specifically only in this particular situation? As long as Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who decreed everything, why do you not believe in and accept the rulings of the Methodology He prescribed for life? Nonetheless, they take an irrational stance; the rational standpoint requires that one considers the opposite question, that is to say: why would Allah reward a servant of His for his disobedience if he has decreed that he should be obedient? Why did they overlook the case of obedience and the reward for it? The reason is that they know in such a case that the end is good; they therefore only focus on the other scenario that leads to an evil end. Only the one who indulges himself in sinning would say such a thing; no one who truly adheres to the Methodology of Allah *Glorified is He* would ever say it. A believer will always want things to happen in accordance with the prescription of Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason—till today—I wonder about the scholars of the past who turned this question into a matter of dispute and divided into *Mu'tazilites* and *Sunnites* thereupon.

Upon addressing any matter one must always bear in the back of his mind that Islam was revealed to address the instinctive natural human disposition in general. It was not exclusively revealed to philosophers; rather, it was revealed to be understood by any mind driven by common sense. Islam is based on egalitarianism; the shepherd is equal to the philosopher; the sweeper of the streets or shoe polisher is viewed and treated equally to the philosopher or lawyer. Religion is not revealed exclusively to a special sect or group. Rather, the Methodology of Allah *the Almighty* was revealed to all; so the evidence in support of its truth and veracity has to be clear to everyone. In addition, when informed that Allah *the Almighty* knows best of all, the believers have to humely submit for He *the Almighty* says to you: 'How could it be that He

who has created [all] should not know [all]? Of course, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14)

The craftsman who made a chair and Allah *Glorified is He* to Whom belongs the utmost example of perfection, knows that it is made of wood. Furthermore, he knows what kind of wood it was made from—whether it is beech, arrow or mahogany. He knows what kind of nails and bolts connect between the different parts of the chair and of what metal they are made of. In addition, the chair maker knows the type of adhesive he used to glue together the different parts of the chair as well as the paint used.

Therefore interpreting the verse: 'How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]? Of course, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14) should not spur any arguments. Similarly, a carpenter who wants to show his skill and craft to his customers often says to the latter: 'I will make you a chair of so and so kind of wood; but you will have to pass by me regularly to see the different stages of production.' He then starts to produce the chair under the supervision of the customer.

Similarly, a nomad would know how to travel in the desert and what should be furnished on the back of the camel he rides in order to be able to ride it properly. Furthermore an Arab would know how to make *Fustat*, a house of hair. Allah *the Almighty* has put forward a statement that refutes all disputes and eliminates the need to plunge into any sophistry or polemics with premises and conclusions. Allah *Glorified is He* advanced the following decisive statement: 'How could it be that He who has created [all] should not know [all]? Of course, He alone is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware!' (*al-Mulk*: 14) He knows and this is an easy matter for Him. For this reason I wonder why those old scholars went adrift in such a philosophical maze for Islam is the religion of natural disposition.

For this reason, scholars who debated this matter—may Allah *Glorified is He* reward them well for their deeds—ultimately said:

Daring minds are doomed
Perishing through the inquisitive seekers
Lifelong laborious quests

Waning of nothing but
The tales of so and so

I wonder what good theoretical philosophy did bring about to the world. Material and physical philosophy was sprung out of it and led to variegated innovations and inventions of which creations of Allah Almighty availed themselves; the question is: what did theoretical philosophy accomplish? The answer is nothing. We say Islam brought about a creed based on common sense; this implies that all people are equal according to this creed. Rational evidence and clues must be clear and evident for both the educated and the non-educated.

Philosophers are the ones who distinguished among proofs of purpose, proofs of providence and proofs of intention. However, a simple nomad wandering in the desert may conclude upon finding some droppings of a camel and some footsteps in the sand that indicate that a camel passed and someone was walking in this area; does all of this not indicate that one can infer the existence of The Subtle and The Aware. The nomad did not need to forge himself in the entanglement of philosophy or its debates as some philosophers were cast adrift in rational argumentation that the nomad solved in one sentence. Accordingly when a man once asked one of those who was well guided by Allah *Glorified is He*: do you not long for meeting Allah *Glorified is He*? The latter answered: one misses the one who is absent. But when was Allah *Glorified is He* ever absent?

This is why we say to those who disputed whether or not it was just on the part of Allah *the Almighty* to disown and reject the hypocrites: we want to respect your minds and see why you disagreed on this matter although Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...’ (*an-Nisa*: 88).

Presumably those disagreeing parties were well intentioned; each of them was still in favour of one attribute of Allah *Glorified is He*. For instance one of them claimed that: Allah *Glorified is He* is the creator of everything. To such a person we say: you are biased towards the attribute of capability and the infinite possession of it by The True Lord. Another person claimed: Allah *Glorified is He* is the All-Just. Accordingly, Allah *the Almighty* would not create or preordain that someone would be a disbeliever and then torture that person

for being a disbeliever. This person is in favour of the attribute of justice. That is to say each of these two people is thinking of only one attribute of the True Lord. Both of them forgot that these are attributes of His own essence—Allah *Glorified is He* is both The All Capable and The All-Just. The existence of one of these attributes does not rule out the other.

We say to the one who says that Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator of everything and every action; what is an action? It is essentially the orientation of an organ to perform a specific task. For instance the one who rubs his face with his hands directs his hands towards his face. Such an act of directing or orienting may not be performed by the one to whom the final action is ascribed. The evidence in support of this is the case of the robot; we may press more than one button in order for a robot to carry out a specific activity. By contrast if a human being wills to rub his face with his hands he may do so immediately. No one who wants to rub his face would press a button in order to perform such an activity.

Once a human being wills for an action to happen, he/she can immediately execute it. A driver of a loader may need to move a number of iron sticks in order to move the loader downwards. He may then need to move them again in order to let the dust out. Furthermore, he needs to move the sticks another time in order to hold together the dust pebbles and another time in order to lift them. All of these procedures are thus needed to move the sand and dust from one place to another whereas when one wants to rub his face he does so even if he does not know what muscles he needs to move. So who did all of this on behalf of the human being? It is Allah *the Glorified and Exalted*.

Therefore we say the following to anyone who is biased towards and thinks of Allah *Glorified is He* only in terms of His Capability. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who actually performed the action, while the servant of Allah *the Almighty* is the one who channelled the energy that was originally created by Allah *Glorified is He*. If the servant of Allah *Glorified is He* navigates his power in a course that goes at odds with the prescriptions of Allah *Glorified is He*, he would be sinful, yet steering it in the righteous direction of the divine guidance, he would be obedient and pious; similarly he is to be rewarded. For instance, a murderer is not the ultimate cause of the act of killing and murder

for he did not tell the one he murdered: be dead and so he died. A killer plans for his misdeed; he brings a knife, a sword or a gun and uses any of which to perpetrate the crime. The tool used is in this manner the actual agent that accomplished the act of murder. The murderer only took the appropriate tool required for performing the act of killing and directed it towards the task. Accurately enough for the just seeker to realise the fact that what Allah *the Almighty* torments a person for, is the sin itself since he used a tool that can be used for many actions. However, such a sinner chose to use such a tool for an action that goes at odds to what Allah *the Almighty* intended and would not like. Despite this Allah *the Exalted* is still the Ultimate Doer of everything.

Let us revert to the verse about which we are putting forward our thoughts: 'How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites, seeing that Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt...' (*an-Nisa*: 88). As long Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who disowned them because of their guilt and as long as you believe in Allah, you must hold the same opinion about the hypocrites. For this reason Allah *the Almighty* wonders: '...Do you, perchance, seek to guide those whom Allah has let go astray...' (*an-Nisa*: 88). Allah *Glorified is He* does not want to give them an excuse; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to show them His guidance which they are incapable of reaching on their own. Indeed had Allah *Glorified is He* misguided them they would have been able to find guidance; but why do some of the believers support them? When Allah *Almighty* wills, He guides whomever He wants to the righteous path and leads astray whomever He wills according to the rules He has set for guidance and misguidance.

When we encounter the expression 'Allah has guided'; we may understand it in two senses. The first is in the sense that He led and showed the way to a specific end; the second is that He enabled and supported. Thus 'to guide' may either mean lead or show the path or it may mean provide support and assistance to the guided one. We have previously given the following example. Assume that someone is walking in the street and wants to head to Alexandria and does not know the way. He may ask a traffic man for directions and the traffic man may direct him to the road leading to Alexandria. The traffic man guided the man and directed him towards the road to Alexandria; however, he

did not force this man to choose the road. So if the traveller believed what the traffic officer told him he would tell him: 'thank you; may Allah *Glorified is He* make a lot of people like you; I am elated that I found you otherwise I would have suffered.' The traffic officer must respond as follows: He should say you are a good man, but you need to bear in mind that there is a bump and an obstacle on the road to Alexandria; I will thereby ride with you in order to direct you to the place of such an obstacle. In this manner the role of the traffic officer transcends the stage of guidance to that of support. Allah *Glorified is He* explained: I will guide all people, lead and support them; hence I will support whoever takes the initiative and believes in Me.

For this reason Allah Almighty says: 'and as for [the tribe of] Thamud, We offered them guidance, but they chose blindness in preference to guidance...' (*Fussilat*: 17) Guidance in this context is meant only in the sense of leading to and showing the way. Those who were guided in this sense have the choice to either pursue the path of guidance or not. Guidance in this manner may occur in the sense of leading and directing someone to the way to his destination or in the sense of supporting and providing assistance to someone. But who does the True Lord support and assist? He supports those who believe in Him; conversely, Allah *the Almighty* does not support those who abjure faith in Him, '...since Allah does not grace with His guidance people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.' (*at-Tawba*: 37) In addition Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and [know that] Allah does not grace iniquitous folk with His guidance.' (*at-Tawba*: 24)

Conclusively Allah *Glorified is He* provides two kinds of guidance: a guidance that He conferred upon all people, namely, guidance by way of leading to the righteous Methodology and the guidance with which He singled out those who believe in him, namely the guidance of support. For this reason Allah *Glorified is He* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love....' (*al-Qasas*: 56) This statement negates the capability of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* to guide whomever he wishes. However, Allah Almighty also said: '...and, verily, [on the strength thereof] you, too, shall guide [men] onto the straightway-' (*ash-Shura*: 52). It is inconceivable that Allah Almighty would deny that His Messenger is capable of extending guidance to whoever

he wants and then affirms this capability in another place. We infer that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* may guide people to the truth by way of leading people and directing them to the way. However, he *peace and blessings be upon him* cannot guide by way of providing assistance and support. Allah *Glorified is He* has guided all people and led them to the path towards the good; in this vein Allah *the Almighty* makes things easier for whoever believes in and orients himself towards Him.

Hence we can fully comprehend the meaning of the verse: ‘...Allah [Himself] has disowned them because of their guilt. Do you, perchance, seek to guide those whom Allah has let go astray – when for him whom Allah lets go astray you can never find any way?’ (*an-Nisa*: 88) Allah *the Almighty* only lets go astray the one who deserves it due to his guilt; therefore, you will not be able to find any way to guide him/her. Allah *the Almighty* could have said: do you want to guide the one whom Allah lets go astray? You cannot guide those who Allah has let go astray. But it is more eloquent when Allah *the Almighty* explains to us: you can not guide the one who earned and deserved to be led astray. The reason is that there is no way to which you can guide him/her. Thus what is impossible is the avenue of guidance and not only guidance itself.

The way to guide someone is only through the path of knowledge. Consequently you cannot guide anyone unless you know the way. You will not find any way out for the one whom Allah *Glorified is He* has let astray because it is impossible to reverse or even suspend the decree of Allah Almighty to let him/her go astray. This means that there will not be a pretext or ground at all upon which he/she can suspend the will of Allah Almighty. For this reason we have taken those concerned here. The hypocrites keep up their faith pretence for a period of time and then give it up to disbelief for another. Deep inside their hearts, they deny belief even though they avow their faith in Islam with their tongues, as for true faith, it never took a strong grip of their hearts.

What is dearer to man? What resides in his heart or what does he verbally utters with his tongue? That which is dearer is whatever takes a strong grip deep in the heart. As long as they do not wholeheartedly believe and they just verbally purport to have faith, their creed is essentially disbelief. As long as their creed is disbelief, they would not want to side with faith. Rather, they

want to push and drag the believers towards the camp of the disbelievers. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

وَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ كَمَا كَفَرُوا فَتَكُونُونَ سَوَاءً فَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ
أَوْلِيَاءَ حَتَّىٰ يُهَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ
حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا مِنْهُمْ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿٨٩﴾

They would dearly like you to reject faith, as they themselves have done, to be like them. So do not take them as allies until they migrate [to Medina] for God's cause. If they turn [on you], then seize and kill them wherever you encounter them. Take none of them as an ally or supporter [89] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 89)

The pronoun 'They...' in 'They would love to...' refers to the hypocrites about whom the Muslims disagreed. Allah Almighty then ruled in favour of the group that wanted to take a strict and punitive stance towards them. He therefore revealed the verse (*an-Nisa'*: 89) —disbelief here translated as 'denying the truth'—means a cover; further the verb (*kafra*) means to cover up. Allah Almighty can never be effaced by his enemies due to the greatness of the faith in Islam and the Greatness of Allah *Glorified is He* Himself. In this manner the term that was used to determine the opposite of the presence of Allah Almighty is itself the evidence in support of veracity of having faith and belief in the presence of Allah *Glorified is He*. When someone says 'I deny the truth' in the sense of veiling and concealing its existence, this means that what he covered up was already there before he denied its being. For this reason the word (*kufri*) —denying the truth—is itself evidence in support of having faith in the presence of Allah *Glorified is He*. The word (*kufri*) itself means that faith already exists and that the one who has it is forcing himself to veil and conceal it.

'They would love to see you deny the truth even as they have denied it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89). This saying followed after Allah Almighty had said: 'How, then, could you be of two minds about the hypocrites?...' (*an-Nisa'*: 88) This indicates that they are described in one instance as hypocrites and in another as disbelievers. Allah Almighty called them hypocrites in a verse and

described them in this verse as disbelievers: 'They would love to see you deny the truth even as they have denied it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89).

Disbelief or the denial of truth in this context reveals what they hide in their hearts. Their hypocrisy caused them to only conform to the superficial aspects of Islam; but they failed to embrace the essential fundamentals of the religions. For this reason they are doomed to the lowest part of hell in the Hereafter even if they are treated as Muslims owing to their false profession that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His messenger. By contrast Allah Almighty will treat them in the Hereafter as disbelievers and will add to their suffering a condemnation to the lowest part of hell.

In addition, if the proponents of falsehood are strong enough, they will align their hearts with their tongues and explicitly reveal the falsehood in which they believe. However, if they are weak, they will hide their falsehood in their hearts and profess the truth with their tongues. Yet both processes are uncomfortable to them. What will truly give them peace is the annihilation of the believers. For this reason Allah Almighty says: 'They would love to see you deny the truth even as they have denied it so that you should be like them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89). They wish to eradicate and uproot the proponents and advocates of the truth so that no one would be better than another as we say in colloquial Arabic: 'no one is better than another.'

Here is an example. Think of a group of employees in a governmental department. There may be a deceiver or someone who does not work properly among them. For this reason, he does not want his colleagues to do their work carefully and wish they would be corrupt like him. He thereby entices them to be corrupt so that they would be equal to each other; in such a case he would not feel ashamed or abhor himself. Furthermore, he would not feel like odd among them.

It is quite astounding to find those dishonest people respectful of the honest. We often hear that when a thief learns that he is spotted or so, he looks for an honest man to entrust him with his loot. So Allah *the Almighty* says that the hearts of the hypocritical disbelievers wish that the believers would be like them so that they would all be equal. This is a testimony that teaches us that the proponents of falsehood always want the proponents of the truth to join them in advocating and adopting falsehood. The reason is that when the

former find the latter adopting the truth they despise and feel belittled before themselves. In this vein, a lot of strange things happened to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; people denied the truth of his message and abjured it. In addition, they tortured his companions. Despite all this they all acknowledged that he was the most honest amongst them. Indeed when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* emigrated from Mecca he left behind 'Ali to return the things and deposits with which people entrusted him to keep.

Although they denied his message, they all recognized that he was the most honest among them. For this reason they entrusted him with their property and belongings. As a matter of fact, the moral and virtuous person is respected even by the non-virtuous and immoral one. In order to fully apprehend this principle let us consider the following example. Assume that someone is in trouble. He verbally affronted another person and the latter sued him. The defendant then calls upon a dear friend of his and asks him to testify before court. This friend of his then goes to court and says: my friend would not ever utter such an offence. In this case, the friend of the defendant has given a false testimony about him. Let us also assume that the defendant repented and regretted what he did and became pious. People then start asking him to arbitrate among them. Subsequently, his friend who put forward a false testimony in his favour came to testify before him. Do you think they would accept the testimony of the former? No; of course they would not.

The virtuous are thereby always respected even by the immoral. When an immoral person wants to drag another virtuous person into sin, he tries to misguide him. This applies to the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'They would dearly like you to reject faith, as they themselves have done, to be like them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89). Their constant aim and target is to stand in the way of the believers and their faith in order to drag them right into the camp of the disbelievers. In so doing, they are like hypocrites, who are disbelievers in their hearts and are thus disloyal to the camp of the believers.

They do not maintain a neutral stance towards faith; rather, their stance is more likely one of stubbornness and antagonism against faith. Allah Almighty says: 'They would dearly like you to reject faith, as they themselves have done, to be like them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89) which is a direct warning to all believers

should they entrust the hypocrites with anything related to their interests or faith. Allah *Glorified is He* clearly passes His ruling on this matter: '...So do not take them as allies...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89) meaning not to take the hypocrites as advocates or confidants because Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to you what they concealed within their hearts. However, this should not be taken as an ultimate or personal stance towards the hypocrites. If any of them repents and regrets his sins and reverts to the camp of faith, then Allah *Glorified is He* will never reject his repentance. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* does not persecute anyone because of a sin; as the True Lord *Glorified is He* is All-Merciful and All-Forgiving. As long as they return to the True Lord and shun falsehood, the believers are obliged to accept the ones who have sincerely reverted. No one should be antagonised simply because he sinned; hatred ought to be directed at the wrong deed rather than the "person" who was created to worship Allah. Once sinners quit sinning and wrongdoing, they should to be accepted by the believers.

Within this context, when the murderer of Zayd ibn Al-Khattab passed in front of "Umar ibn Al-Khattab, *Allah be pleased with him*, some people said to "Umar: "Here is the murderer of your brother Zayd." So "Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* answered: "What do you expect me to do to him when Allah *the Exalted* has guided him to Islam?!"

Thus, we learn that hatred must not extend outside the circle of the action committed to reach the doer. Rather, hatred must be channelled towards the action itself. Accordingly, if someone quits committing sinful acts, people should start adjusting their attitude towards him, since the "being" supersedes the deed. For this reason our Lord decrees His ruling: '...So do not take them as allies until they emigrate for Allah's cause...' (*an-Nisa'*: 89).

Emigration for the cause of Allah Almighty enlisted people to sacrifice portions of their wealth and to abandon their homes and families in return for pursuing severe life of toil and exertion. In this manner, it would be a sort of repentance for their sins and the believers would be confident that they returned to Allah *Glorified is He* and repented and that Allah Almighty accepted their repentance and it was time for them to re-enter the realm of faith. So, if a believer does this he is back on the track of faith and belief. For this reason, people must learn

to distinguish between the doer of a sin as a person and the deed that was committed; why? That is because the person, in himself, deserves no hatred. Rather, we should condemn the actions only if they were repugnant and bad.

In reading the Quran we notice that it addresses this matter. When the command of Allah *Glorified is He* was revealed to Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* to build a ship and he started to construct it, people used to pass by and ridicule him. Prophet Nuh *peace be upon him* would then answer them: I will mock you tomorrow as much as you mock me today. Afterwards, Nuh *peace be upon him* had a son who did not follow his path. Thereupon, Nuh called upon his son to follow the path of Allah *Glorified is He* but his son refused and said: No. Nuh then embarked upon the ship saying to Allah Almighty: You have promised to save me along with my family. Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: Yes; I did promise to save you and your family but who told you to consider your son as a part of your family? The posterity of Prophets is not defined in terms of people or bloodlines; rather, the posterity of Prophets is defined in terms of who follows their path of teachings and actions. As for those who do not follow the path of the Prophets, Allah Almighty describes them as people whose work is “anything but righteous” (*Hud*: 46).

It is only the deeds which are evaluated and assessed. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...So do not take them as allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 89) The word (*Al-Hijra*) is etymologically derived from the noun (*hajar*) which is the root of (*yuhajiru*) —the Arabic word literally meaning “abandon or desert” which means moving from one place to another, or from a valley to another, or changing one character attribute to another. The one who deserts or abandons something often attributes false accusations to whatever he abandoned. We ought to notice that Allah *Glorified is He* discusses the act itself (*hajar*) not the outcome (*hajr*). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not abandon Mecca; rather, he immigrated from it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says in the Hadith: ‘Mecca! By Allah you are the most endeared land of Allah to my heart and you are indeed the most beloved land of Allah to Allah. By Allah, had I not been expelled from you, I would never have left.’⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated in *Sunan Ibn Majah*

Accordingly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* immigrated because the people of Mecca initially abandoned and deserted him; so he had no option but to emigrate. Furthermore, the word (*hajar*) incorporates movement—following the grammatical scale (*fa' il*), which often indicates the subject rather than the object of the verb. In this vein Al-Mutanabby—a great Abbasid poet— says:

If you depart a land whose people are capable of hosting you,
Then know that they are in fact the ones who departed; not you.

For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentioned the word “emigration” as an object or effect rather than a subject or cause. The people of Mecca hated what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* advocated and to that he responded by emigrating from Mecca.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains that the thing which can absolve the hypocrites from the ruling and condemnation of Allah Almighty, (which is not to take them as allies or supporters), is if the believers would let them emigrate for the cause of Allah *Glorified is He*. Emigration will be a stark proof to the truth and honesty of their faith because the emigrant pursues a difficult and harsh life. The believers know well how they lived off the sustenance Allah Almighty provided them through the aid and bounties of the *Ansar*—the Muslims from Medina; they could hardly lead a proper life. Hence, any hypocrite joining the believers in this endeavour would be exchanging his hypocrisy for faith and atoning for what he did in the past. Accordingly, emigration is not just a matter of abandoning one place and relocating in another; it must be for the Cause of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Against this background, we may understand the axiom of faith set by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the renowned Hadith: ‘The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So, whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he emigrated for.’⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

This is the principle that guides how the believers should deal with the hypocrites once they proclaim that they will renounce disbelief and return to the path of faith. But what should the believers do if the hypocrites regressed to their enmity? Allah *Glorified is He* answers: '...If they turn on you, then seize and kill them wherever you encounter them. Take none of them as an ally or supporter.'*(an-Nisa': 89)* When "seize" comes within the context of conflict, then it means to capture and captivate. Furthermore, the verse makes it clear that killing the hypocrites upon confronting them in the battlefield is a must. In addition, believers must never take the hypocrites as allies or supporters; for there is always the likelihood that a hypocrite may infiltrate the ranks of the believers to spy on them and expose their secrets to the enemies of Islam so they can breach the defences of the Muslims. Obviously, a hypocrite infiltrating the ranks of the Muslims will most likely try to know what the Muslims are plotting against the infidels.

Taking someone, whom we know does not like faith and does not follow the doctrine of Islam, as an ally or supporter brings much suspicion on the character of such a person who chose to ally himself with a hypocrite rather than a sincere Muslim. When someone who does not like and maliciously conspires against you sees that you trust and treat him well, he will immediately take you for a person who does not have any sort of shrewdness. He would say: If he knew what I harbour for him, he would not trust me that way. Accordingly, if the believers take the hypocrites as allies or supporters even though the hypocrites continue to adhere to their hypocritical ways, the hypocrites would say: these Muslims are not really astute or sharp; they do not know what we harbour in our hearts for them. For this reason the True Lord *Glorified is He* triggers the vision of the believers lest they should follow an opinion put forward by any of the hypocrites and harm themselves.

The hypocrites may also say: those Muslims do not have a Lord to guide and warn them. So why do they claim that they have a God? If they had a God, He would alert them on what we harbour in our hearts. In this vein, the True Lord *Glorified is He* exposes their innermost intentions and tells us what they try to conceal so much within their hearts: Why is God not punishing us for what we say?' (*al-Mujadala: 8*)

The fact that the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not punish them when they committed their disbelief conceals within it a big benefit and mercy, which they will recognise later. Some of them will use their fighting skills, one day, to serve Islam and promote it after they had been using it to fight against it. Allah *Glorified is He* thus spared some of them because He knew that their swords would serve Islam. For instance figures like Khalid ibn Al-Walid, 'Amr ibn Al-'Aas and 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl *Allah be pleased with them* all embraced Islam after they fought against it. Hence, let none of you think that he can conceal a secret from Allah *Glorified is He* and remember that He knows what you whisper to yourself deep within your heart. (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

This saying addresses two issues: the first is that there is a Lord Who knows what the eye strays to in secret and what the bosoms of men harbour. The second is that Allah *Glorified is He* did not punish them because He knew that faith will dominate the hearts of some of them and that they will use their swords to serve Islam. He also knew that from among their offspring there will be leaders who will undertake the call of spreading Islam. For this reason, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him: Allah has heard the response of your people to you, and what they have replied to you, Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you so that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Angel of the Mountains called and greeted Prophet Muhammad, and then said: O Muhammad! Order what you wish. If you like, I will let Al-Akh-Shabain (i.e. two huge mountains) fall on them. The Prophet said: No but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will worship Him Alone, and will worship None besides Him.⁽¹⁾

This was actually what happened later on! Allah Almighty thus determines the method of dealing with the hypocrites in this verse as follows: disbelief dwells in the hearts of these people even though they overtly claim to be Muslims and wish that the believers would be like them. For this reason, a Muslim should not take a hypocrite as an ally or supporter.

But if a hypocrite emigrates, then the vastness of faith will surely embrace him. However, if a hypocrite objects to obey this clear and overt order, then

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* ordains that the method of treatment ought to be as follows: '...If they turn on you, then seize and kill them wherever you encounter them. Take none of them as an ally or supporter.' (*an-Nisa'*: 89) Yet, after issuing this decree, there remains a significant hurdle towards implementing it, namely, the alliances, vows and covenants which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* pledged to some of the tribes. These covenants, in brief, comprised all the terms of agreement that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had settled with some tribes to the effect that they would not assault the Muslims if the Muslims do not assault them. Thus, the True Lord respects these covenants and alliances.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us: do not take this as an absolute decree, Muslims. The reason is that Islam is essentially a religion that calls for keeping and honouring promises. You have pledged to some tribes that if any of you took refuge in them, then they must grant you their protection and that if any of them took refuge in the Muslims then they must grant them their protection and stand in the way of any persecution intended against them. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings afterwards the following exception:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ يَصِلُونَ إِلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ أَوْ جَاءُوكُمْ حَصِرَتْ صُدُورُهُمْ أَنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ أَوْ يُقَاتِلُوا قَوْمَهُمْ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَسَلَّطَهُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ فَلَقَاتِلُوكُمْ فَإِنْ اعْتَزَلُوكُمْ فَلَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ وَأَلْفَوْا إِلَيْكُمْ أَلْسَلَمَ مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٠﴾

But as for those who seek refuge with people with whom you have a treaty, or who come over to you because their hearts shrink from fighting against you or against their own people, God could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they withdraw and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God gives you no way against them [90] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 90)

The verse starts with a conditional statement not to enrage those with whom Islam and the Muslims have concluded agreements and covenants. The seizing and killing mentioned in the verse which precedes this one does not apply to those who have concluded covenants or alliances with the Muslims.

What happened between the Muslims and Hilal ibn 'Uwaymir Al-Aslami serves as a good example to illustrate this point? The Muslims pledged not to

advocate either him or his enemies in battle and that whoever resorts to Hilal and takes refuge in him is entitled to the right of neighbourhood; same as Hilal. The exception also includes those who take refuge in the Muslims. Whoever among the hypocrites then takes refuge in those who have concluded covenants with the Muslims is entitled to sanctuary. In addition, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives protection to whoever takes refuge in him from among the hypocrites. Thus, despite their disbelief, Islam secures and protects the hypocrites. '...or (those) who come over to you because their hearts shrink from fighting against you or against their own people...' (*an-Nisa'*: 90) This is the case similar to when one of them for instance says: I cannot fight you or my own people; so forgive me and accept me among you. Those who do so are accepted by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because they acknowledged their own distress. They can neither declare their faith, nor join the Muslims nor can they join the camp of the disbelievers. They cannot take a decisive stance either towards the Muslims or the disbelievers. In other words, they acknowledge their weakness and admit it.

'... Allah could have given them power over you and they would have fought you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 90) what then occasions them to take refuge in a people who ally themselves with Muslims based on a covenant so that the Muslims would protect them? Either that or they acknowledge that they were incapable of handling this kind of pressure, declaring outright: we can neither fight you nor our people! The True Lord *Glorified is He* explains: It is I Who has done this and thrown fear and awe in their hearts. If I willed, I would have made them stronger and emboldened them to fight you. Thus, through dread and awe, Allah *the Almighty* granted us victory and kept them from fighting us; '...So, if they withdraw and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah gives you no way against them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 90) If they let you be, offer you peace and admit that they are unable to choose between fighting Muslims and fighting their own people then you, Muslims, do not have any reason to attack them. In which case, Allah *Almighty* forbids you from attacking them.

The Eye of the True Lord *Glorified is He* sees far beyond what our knowledge can encompass; it transcends the latter's fetters to comprise the subtlest details. It is an eye that does not only see what we know, but uncovers all what obscures the things which we are not aware. Allah *Glorified is He* thereby says:

سَتَجِدُونَ ءَاخَرِينَ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَأْمَنُوا بَكُمْ وَيَأْمَنُوا قَوْمَهُمْ كُلَّ مَا رُدُّوْا إِلَى الْفِتْنَةِ أُرْكَسُوا فِيهَا فَإِنْ لَمْ يَعْزِلُوكُمْ وَيُلْقُوا إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ وَيَكْفُوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَحُدُّوهُمْ وَأَقْلُبُوهُمْ حَيْثُ تَفْقَهُوهُمْ وَأُولَئِكَ جَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا مُبِينًا ﴿٩١﴾

You will find others who wish to be safe from you, and from their own people, but whenever they are back in a situation where they are tempted [to fight you], they succumb to it. So if they neither withdraw, nor offer you peace, nor restrain themselves from fighting you, seize and kill them wherever you encounter them: We give you clear authority against such people [91] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 91)

This verse starts with a verb in the future tense. 'You will find [that there are] others who would like to be safe from you as well as safe from their own folk...' (*an-Nisa'*: 91) which indicates that, by the time this verse was revealed, the Muslims had not yet found or identified the people about whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* was speaking. But what would those who witnessed the revelation of the Quran, say about such news if they could not find the people it pin-points? Surely, they would have suspected the integrity and authenticity of the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He has one Eye watching over the believers' reality and another watching over what is yet to come: I have told you about what happened in the past and used to be a subject of dispute among you. I have also told you about what your knowledge or minds did not see coming yet so you would not dispute over it. This is stark evidence that you are within My care and safekeeping.

'You will find [that there are] others who would like to be safe from you as well as safe from their own folk...' (*an-Nisa'*: 91). These other people were the tribes of Banu S'ad and Ghatafan that used to live on the outskirts of Medina. Whenever they met Muslims, they used to say: we are with you and whenever they met the disbelievers they used to say: we are with you. The truth was that they were incapable of confronting any of the two camps. For this reason, the Quran describes them as follows: 'You will find [that there are] others who would like to be safe from you as well as safe from their own folk, [but who,] whenever they are faced anew with temptation to evil, plunge into it headlong...' (*an-Nisa'*: 91). When these people were put to the test of

temptation they would plunge into sinning headlong. This means that they flunked their tests because the groundwork of their faith was not yet solid enough and they are still drifting in their perplexity. Upon facing temptations, they unravelled their deep, innermost convictions and inclinations; as a result their perplexity increased. Having the capacity to be tempted is not in itself a deplorable thing. When it is said that someone is being put to the test of temptation, the believers should pray for this person to pass the test successfully. Temptation is not in itself a calamity that befalls man; rather, calamity befalls man if he fails to overcome this temptation.

We know that the word (*fitna*) —the Arabic word for trial/temptation⁽¹⁾— originally has a sensory and material connotation. An inflection of the very same word, in Arabic, is also used to denote other meanings like “molten” gold or iron. Molten gold is what we get when we melt the ore in blast furnaces to allow all the impurities to surface. The same goes with iron; it is melted to the point where all its atoms are disintegrated and the impurities surface to the top.

We know that there are different kinds of iron: cast iron, for instance, is an alloy of iron ore that is high in various impurities which makes it rather brittle. By contrast, steel iron is free from impurities which makes it so tough. So molten iron and gold (in this sense; *fitna*) expel the impurities mixed with them. Thus, the word (*fitna*) —temptation—was used to refer to abstract rather than concrete things. Temptation is hence the main test in which one may succeed or fail; it is not harmful in itself. It is only harmful to the one who falls as its victim.

This was how the Quran foretold the Muslims about the intention of a group of people who lived on their borders. Temptations made them incapable of embracing faith. So, whenever their people called them to polytheism and to fight the Muslims, they quickly regressed in the most abject and abysmal way and became the worst of all their enemies. The Quran describes the attitude of the believers towards those who plunge into evil headlong and fail to overcome it as: '...Hence, if they do not let you be and do not offer you peace and do not restrain their hands, seize them and slay them whenever you

(1) Among other meanings for the same word (and within the same context), we also have: strife and adversity.

come upon them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 91). We notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* decreed that those who resort to either the Muslims or the allies of Muslims for protection due to their weakness, should be secured even if they were hypocrites. This is obvious in the previous verse: '...then Allah gives you no way against them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 90) This is a divine and fair alert as much as it is a form of advocacy from the True Lord *Glorified is He* lest someone succumbs to his inclinations and usurps the weak. As for those who try to rebel and succumb to the voice of disbelief to harm the Muslims and those who do not greet the Muslims nor keep their hands off them, the divine command came forth to state: '...seize them and slay them whenever you come upon them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 91). Allah *Glorified is He* has granted the believers a salient dominance over those hypocrites. Dominance as we know is power. Power, in turn, may assume one of two forms: it may be coercive in forcing a man to act in a certain way as when someone powerful orders a weak person to stand up or orders him to prostrate to him and so the weaker person obeys. This is the hegemonic kind of power that subjugates the matter or the body but can never subdue the heart or the spirit. The other form of power is the power of reason and the capacity to convince and persuade. Under this form of power, we may also subsume presentational abilities and the usage of irrefutable evidences to convince man to act.

The difference between the dominance of power and the dominance of reason is that the former may coerce one to prostrate, but the latter is what will make him prostrate out of conviction and belief. The outstanding power and dominance that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to the believers over those who fight them empowers you, Muslims, to do what you want with those hypocrites, so long as they have tried to hurt and kill you. Prudence and justice necessitate being severe and rigorous with them.

If we want to properly understand the meaning of dominance and power, then let us contemplate the dispute that will take place in the afterlife between Satan and his followers. We will find Satan telling his followers: 'I have tempted you; this is true. You have also chosen to follow me. So, you bear full responsibility for your actions. I did not have either the power of coercion or the power of reason and persuasion over you. I only called you and you responded to my call.' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* had talked about fighting and its legitimacy, especially fighting the hypocrites and others, the divine discourse moves to the issue of murder. Allah Almighty explains to His servants: In brief, I create this human body; I further grant life to all beings. It is thereby not reasonable for the One Who created an entity to entice others to destroy it! I only incite you to destroy those who fight you to safeguard the unity of humanity. So, do not dare to assault others; whoever destroys the creation of Allah *Glorified is He* is cursed. Do not touch this “body” that Allah Almighty created except under the conditions ordained by Allah *Glorified is He* such as, if this person transgressed the limits ordained by Allah Almighty. The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who creates life and hence is the One Who takes it. The lives of other people are thus not ours; even our very own lives are not ours to destroy or give away. For this reason, we prescribe a punishment on whoever kills another person by way of transgression and without a rightful cause. Yet, if someone kills another by mistake (manslaughter), he is only obliged to pay the prescribed blood money “*diya*.” By contrast, the one who kills himself is denied admittance to paradise.

Therefore, before Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us not to kill others, He teaches us not to kill ourselves. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* is not only concerned about the harm you may cause to others, but He is also concerned about the harm you may cause to yourself. For this reason, you need to bear in mind that when Allah Almighty decreed retribution in the case of murder, He did so to protect you and not to assist or embolden you to kill someone else. But when Allah Almighty decrees that, “whoever kills should also be killed”, He does so to establish justice and fairness. The purpose of this is the preservation of two lives; if you meditated to kill someone and then realised that if you killed them then, you would be killed, you might likely refrain from committing this murder. Once you refrain from killing, you have preserved two lives: the life of the one you were planning to kill and your own life by saving it from punitive retribution. This is how “the law of just retribution” ensues “life” (*al-Baqara*: 179).

Thus, whoever tries to lecture you about how retribution is an atrocity or an abominable thing, just tell him this: How can the one decreeing retribution be seeking your death? In fact, he wants to save your life because if a killer

knew beforehand that he would be killed, were he to commit murder he would abstain from killing. This way he ends up preserving two lives; his life and the life of the one he could have killed. So, when Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that the “law of just retribution” ensues “life” (*al-Baqara*: 179), we realize how truthful this statement is.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about fighting and killing, he draws our attention to an important concept: never be pre-emptive in destroying lives or spilling blood whatever the pretext is. Next, Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the forbidden-killing based on the basics of Islam and faith. He says:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ أَنْ يَقْتُلَ مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا خَطَاً وَمَنْ قَتَلَ مُؤْمِنًا خَطَاً فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ
مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَدِيَةٌ مُسْلَمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَصَدَّقُوا فَإِنْ كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَدُوٍّ لَكُمْ وَهُوَ
مُؤْمِنٌ فَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ
فَدِيَةٌ مُسْلَمَةٌ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ وَتَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ مُؤْمِنَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامٌ
شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ تَوْبَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿٩٢﴾

Never should a believer kill another believer, except by mistake. If anyone kills a believer by mistake he must free one Muslim slave and pay compensation to the victim’s relatives, unless they charitably forgo it; if the victim belonged to a people at war with you but is a believer, then the compensation is only to free a believing slave; if he belonged to a people with whom you have a treaty, then compensation should be handed over to his relatives, and a believing slave set free. Anyone who lacks the means to do this must fast for two consecutive months by way of repentance to God: God is all knowing, all wise [92] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 92)

This verse comes after Allah *Glorified is He* had talked about fighting for the cause of defending and instilling Islam. Since such type of fighting entails the killing of an infidel soul at the hands of a faithful one, the True Lord *Glorified is He* aptly put forward a discourse about murder. Murder—as we know—is the attempt to put an end to the life of someone alive by destroying his body. But any soul is bound to die when its time has come, whether someone attempts to put an end to its life or not. Thus, the destruction of the human body is an act intended to end human life. So, let no one think that the

killer who destroys the body of the killed is the one who actually controls either ending or extending his life. If someone kills another, we should know that the timing of the murder only coincided with the timing preordained for this person's death. The One Who truly ends lives is the True Lord *Glorified is He*. For this reason, we said that a killer deserves to be punished not because he caused the death of someone but because he was trying to be pre-emptive in an act that only Allah Almighty decides; the victim would have died any way in his preordained time. We know from the Quran that the True Lord *Glorified is He* chose man as His vicegerent in this Universe, and He ordained that the role of man is to "inhabit it" (*Hud: 61*).

Allah *Glorified is He* made man His vicegerent on earth to inhabit it and thrive thereon. Inhabiting the earth is accomplished through realising all what is good in the universe and bettering and improving all what is bad. As for the good, we either leave it as it is or we can further improve it as we should do.

For instance, plants sprout from the earth; they grow even if man did not plant or care for them. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants man to add to this potentiality in the earth; through seeding, ploughing, sowing and growing crops. This makes the earth even better and is a fundamental part of life itself.

Thus, inasmuch as man is the vicegerent of Allah Almighty on earth, every human being must respect and preserve the life of other fellow humans. As far as maintaining life is a necessity, no human being, especially a vicegerent of Allah Almighty, should kill another and so obstruct the capacity of the latter to revive the earth and inhabit it. Fighting has been permitted for the believers against the disbelievers because the actions and deeds of the disbelievers are corruptive and we know that deterring corruption always takes precedence over bringing benefit. Hence, the believers must fight those who corrupt life to end their evil and rid life from this impediment to it.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants this life for the man who makes it his life's mission to promote life and make it liveable. Yet, the disbelievers spread corruption on earth and do not live in accordance with the path set by Allah Almighty; they usurp the fruits of labour of the weak to make themselves stronger. Allah Almighty thus decreed fighting them either to make them believe and submit to His path or to rid life entirely from their evil. Conversely,

if someone tries to kill a believer who is apt to inhabit the earth and improve life on it he would be wronging life at large. Furthermore, if a man kills himself, he would also be committing an act of injustice against life at large; why? Because he incurred a loss on life; he could have inhabited earth and improved life through his contribution to it. So, if someone has the audacity to impinge on his life or the life of another, we should discipline and straighten him; and that is why Allah Almighty tells us that those who commit evil deeds, their punishment shall be in proportion. (*Yunus: 27*)

Islamic legislation has decreed that the one who deliberately meditates and commits murder should be punished by death. In this manner, Islamic legislation protects life and discourages murder instead of fostering it. Thus, the Islamic penal code has been enacted to expand and enhance the fundamentals of life and not the other way around. When the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* talked about legitimate fighting, He wanted to explain to us that we should not exploit the legitimacy of fighting as a pretext for transgression and doing things that Allah Almighty did not permit. So, what should be the case if someone chooses to end his life in a context other than that of a legitimate struggle for the cause of faith? Islamic legislation rules that such a person should be put to death. He should have borne in mind not to end someone else's life unless by mistake. But what if you do something and the result was manslaughter? This means causing someone to die even though you did not intend to kill him. There are two aspects involved here: first, not intending to kill someone and second, the death of someone by mistake.

In this respect, Islamic legislation hinges on the fact that a man "unintentionally" ended the life of another and that the life of the dead person was intricately and in manifold connected within the circle of believers in general and his family specifically. He may, for instance, be the breadwinner of the family or the closest to it or its main member. How many circles of relations and ties got affected here? We have the circle of the community of believers in general, the circle of the big family at large and the circle of the family-tree on a more intimate level in terms of ancestors and offspring. When the life of a human being comes to an end in the context of the general community of believers, this circle will be affected by the loss of a believer

who submitted to the path of Allah Almighty and benefited others in his life. The reason is that the members of the community of believers always try to be beneficial to themselves and others.

However, the family circle is concerned with a more specific form of benefit; the closeness and value of anyone to this particular circle is in a way more special than his closeness to the community of believers. If we proceed further, we will notice that one's closeness to his family, especially when it comes to direct relatives or offspring, is even more important and special. Thus, the death of such a person is a terrorisation of several circles; the general, the big family and the smaller more direct family. For this reason, I would like you to note something which we often miss, though it happens frequently in our day-to-day life. Sometimes, as a group of people sit together, they find someone saying: so and so person died. Among the attendants there may be someone who knew the person who died remotely, on the level of acquaintance and another who knew him in a special and more intimate way. There may also be members of his family, like his father or his son. So, consider the different impact on each of these people's faces! Each one will show an effect proportionate to the relation he had with the deceased. One may say, "May Allah have mercy on his soul", and another may retort frantically, "how did this happen?" A third person may sob bitterly and a fourth may just cry and rush to see the deceased. Here we witness one single piece of news and a whole set of different reactions; so why did the reactions vary in this flagrant way? Why were the reactions not identical?

We say: reactions vary randomly and instinctively in accordance with the degree of closeness the deceased represents to each person manifesting these reactions. The one who used to meet him intermittently may be the one who said, "may Allah have mercy on his soul." By contrast the one who used to meet him on every good occasion will reminisce over the memories they shared together. If we turn to his children, we will see that the reactions will also vary; the one who has a family will have a reaction different from the one who recently graduated or the one who is still studying, whether boy or girl. Each of the children will receive the sad news and react towards it in a different way. The son who has a family and a house will receive the news in a way different from the one who still goes to school. Similarly, the reaction of the married

daughter who has a family will differ from that of her sister who still needed her father to provide her with the requirements she needed to get married.

Therefore, the reaction of anyone to the loss of another is always proportionate to the level of the latter's closeness to each person. For this reason, we may mourn and grieve for the loss of a friend more than we would for the loss of a brother. If people thus ponder who is dearer to you: your brother or your friend, the true answer ought to be: the more beneficial, the dearer he will be. This is how a single piece of news about the death of someone could produce different reactions; you mourn and grieve proportionately with the benefit and goodness the deceased used to have in the society.

If you find the entire society grieving for the loss of someone, then know that such a person was useful and beneficial to all members of the society, whereas the one who is only mourned and missed by his family was most likely only useful to his family and offspring; and others might die without anyone missing or mourning them. That is why they say that everyone has a homeland and that your homeland is proportionate to your usefulness to others. Someone's homeland may thus only be his own ego thinking that everything was made for him and that he was made for nothing or anyone, even his very own children. Another person's homeland may only be his big family that benefits from his work. Another person's homeland may be his family and village; another's homeland may be his nation and another's may be the whole world. So, when the death of a single person grips the entire society, this indicates the size and scope of his actual homeland.

As for the issue of manslaughter, when we get the shocking news of someone being killed by mistake, the killer should be excused. Yet, being excused does not mean that he did not commit an act of transgression and that another person got killed because of such transgression. The effect of his action has already taken place and the aftermath has befallen those who are closest to him in terms of closeness. However, because the murder happened by mistake, the killer will not be subject to retribution. Still, he should pay what we call "blood money" -in Arabic "*diya*." This blood money is divided between those who were seriously affected by the death of the victim. This is in accordance with the following simple principle: spreading benefit and containing harm.

Once you see something that you think may benefit you, you rejoice. When you see something that may potentially harm you, you feel taken aback and uncomfortable. When the news of the death of a dear one reaches another, he immediately grieves and mourns the death of his beloved one. By contrast, we try to alleviate the effect of this bad news by telling this person that he will get the prescribed blood-money wherein he finds some relief and comfort. This way, the effect ensuing from manslaughter is remedied.

The blood money for manslaughter according to the rulings of Islamic law, must be paid by the distantly related kin "*aqila-usba*" and on the condition that it is not to be paid by the direct or closest kin of the killer. The reason is that Islamic law does not want the family to suffer the calamity of having one of their own kill someone by mistake—which is something dreadful—and at the same time having to go through the pain of paying an indemnity for such an atrocity. It is as if Islamic legislation wants to remedy the shock caused by deviation from the righteous path using an antidote against any negative reactions that could result from the loss of someone dear; in doing so it achieves stability and order in the society. Thus, the society should not seek retribution from the one who commits manslaughter; suffice for him to pay the proper blood money. To share the responsibility, the killer is not the only one who pays the indemnity; the extended kinship all participate in it. So, inasmuch as every family knows that if any of its members kills by mistake, it will incur a considerable fine by way of sharing responsibility, it will instil in its members the perception of protecting the rights of others. Thus, if every member of the family knows that he will bear some of the responsibility by being obliged to share in the blood money, stability and balance will be maintained in the society.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us to dismiss the possibility of a believer killing another except by mistake; it is inconceivable that such a thing could happen deliberately. Thus Allah, Glorified be He says: 'Never should a believer kill another believer, except by mistake...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). The meaning of this is that no one can conceive of such an act because the intimacy of the relation between the believers precludes this possibility. But what would be the proper remedy if something like this happens?' Never should a believer kill another believer, except by mistake. If anyone kills a believer by mistake,

he must free one Muslim slave and pay compensation to the victim's relatives...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). Allah *Glorified is He* does not mention retribution in this context because He speaks about retribution in an earlier chapter telling us that retribution (in case of premeditated crime) is to kill a free man in retribution for killing a free man, a slave for killing a slave and a woman for killing a woman... (*al-Baqara*: 178).

Only the guardian or custodian is entitled to judge on the issue of blood money; he reserves the right to either pardon the killer or accept the blood money. He may thus say to the killer that he accepted the blood money as retribution. We have also to distinguish between the prohibitions "*hudud*" set by Allah Almighty and retribution. The guardian or the one in charge may surrender his right to retribution, but no one may surrender or compromise the prohibitions of Allah Almighty because this is only the exclusive right of Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says about manslaughter: '...then the compensation is only to free a believing slave...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). However, someone may wonder: what benefit will accrue to the family of the victim from freeing a believing slave from slavery? Will such an act benefit the family of the victim? Freeing a believing slave from slavery may not directly benefit them in anything, yet it may benefit the society because the one in slavery is owned exclusively by one person, his master. This limits and restricts the impact of the slave, but if he becomes free, his impact on life will be unrestricted and his freedom from slavery will put his motion under the direct service of the society.

Thus, the constriction that was caused by killing a person by mistake will be nullified by an opposite act of "release" accomplished by setting another person free. As if we are saying to the person in slavery: you are now free to work and benefit the entire society. In so doing the True Lord *Glorified is He* sets another venue for freeing slaves besides the various other venues Islam decreed. After putting forward this statement, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and pay compensation to the victim's relatives, unless they charitably forgo it;...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92) Such a statement bears a release and comfort to the family following the constriction they suffered with the news of the murder of a beloved one. So, if a family suffered the calamity of losing one of their own

due to an accident and lived in grief for days, they should then use the proper documents to obtain the blood money or compensation for their loss. This shows that Islam guarantees at least a decent and practical sort of conciliation and if this was something people usually had no need for, they would have simply declined it; but this never happens.

When someone loses a beloved person and permanently dwells on his grief, he could lose his own life out of agony; but this is not the norm of life. Each person mourns the deceased proportionately with the benefit he lost due to his death. The one in grief grieves because the victim used to add to his life. Thus, with the victim's death, this person lost all the enrichment the victim used to add to his life.

But, just imagine someone grieving over the loss of a beloved one and we tell him something like: keep the corpse with you for a week or so until you settle your longing to the one who died; afterwards we will take the corpse to bury it. Would this person accept? Certainly no! Who can accept something like that? Now, suppose we tell the same person: We will not give you any food for a week or so because sad and grieving people have no appetite to eat. No one will accept something like that! We see wives crying floods over their husband, but still, at the end of the day, they eat, drink and partake to all other necessities of life. Bottom line is: life has to go on and for that to happen our basic needs must be secured regardless of our grief which will heal by time.

This issue must be clear in order to properly and openly accept the fate preordained by the True Lord *Glorified is He*. Such preordained fate never violates the universal laws of Allah Almighty. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to spread sympathy among people. Assume the family of the victim says to the family of the killer: we do not want any blood money because the loss that befell you due to this act is no less drastic than ours and we are all brothers in faith. What would then happen in the society? This act will accrue exponential benefit compared to what will be accrued from paying the blood money. This is even an improvement to the indemnity. If a child knows that his family was bound to pay blood money because his father committed manslaughter and that the family of the victim forgave his family and gave up their right to take the blood money, this child will know when he grows up

and becomes capable of reasoning that every good thing his family has or enjoys was due to this act of forgiveness and generosity. If this same act is repeated, amiability and affection will prevail in the society.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* thereby wants to spread and propagate affection, amiability and mutual benefit in the society. So, if someone grieves for losing a dear person in manslaughter, he may avail himself of the blood money. Alternatively, if he does not take it, he would benefit even more. For this reason, the True Lord says: '...and pay compensation to the victim's relatives, unless they charitably forgo it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92).

This is what happens when a believer kills another believer by mistake within a solid and competent community of believers. But what should be the right course of action if a believer kills someone who belongs with a people whom he is at war with and it so happened that the victim was a believer living among the disbelievers? Here, we also see clearly the justice of divine legislation and we become more confident that Allah Almighty is the True Lord of all. Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...if the victim belonged to a people at war with you but is a believer, then the compensation is only to free a believing slave...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). This means that if the victim was living among people who antagonise Muslims he would not deserve blood money because he chose to live among the disbelievers.

Thus, we have three criteria for the rulings set forth by Islamic legislation: 1) the case of the victim being a member of the community of believers, 2) the victim being a believer living among and fighting beside a group of people who antagonise the believers or 3) the victim being a member of a group of people who have a treaty with the Muslims. Each case has its specific ruling; if the victim is a believer living among a group at war with the Muslims, the indemnity is freeing a believing soul from slavery. This is intended as a sort of compensation with the purpose of promoting faith and for the benefit of the community of believers. This action sets the movement of another believer free to make up for the one who met his demise and whose deeds and endeavours in life ended abruptly. In other words, it compensates the society for the loss of one of its believing members. But should blood money be paid in this case? No; people among whom the deceased used to live are not entitled to take any

blood money since it will be conveyed through inheritance and these people are disbelievers. The Muslims and the disbelievers cannot share inheritance amongst each other. Hence, no blood money is to be paid in this case.

When we consider the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...if the victim belonged to a people at war with you but is a believer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). We notice that the word (*'adw*) —the Arabic expression literally means (*an enemy*) at war with you. The word is in the singular form though it denotes all people who share the characteristic of animosity with the Muslims because when the sources of enmity are united they become a single enemy. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...if the victim belonged to a people at war with you but is a believer, then the compensation is only to free a believing slave...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). He did not mention blood money in this context because the enemies of Islam are not entitled to blood money since they are prohibited from inheriting the Muslims.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says: '...if he belonged to a people with whom you have a treaty then compensation should be handed over to his relatives and a believing slave set free...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). If Muslims have a treaty with any other people, then they must abide by it. This abidance calls for delivering the blood money to the people of the victim in respect to the treaty. The blood money as we know is paid by the extended kinship. In explaining the proper course of action in case of manslaughter, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...and a believing slave set free. Anyone who lacks the means to do this, must fast for two consecutive months...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92). This means that whoever could not find or afford freeing a believing slave ought to fast for two consecutive months without any breaks in between unless there is a legitimate cause such as sickness or travelling. But once he recovers from his sickness or reaches his destination, he must resume fasting.

Why were these rulings presented in this sequential order? The reason is that the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted be He* wants the killer to be fixated on his action and to ponder on it the entire time. For this to happen, the fasting must be consecutive and without breaks. Had the fasting been intermittent, the killer would be out of focus: '...Anyone who lacks the means to do this must fast for two consecutive months by way of repentance to Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92).

Why did the True Lord, *Glorified is He* say: 'by way of repentance to Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 92)? Repentance—as we know—emanates from the servant to Allah *Glorified is He*. We thus say: a servant of Allah repented to Him. Yet, when repentance is ascribed to the True Lord *Glorified is He*, it means that Allah Almighty has “forgiven” his servant. Hence, repentance involves three phases: First, Allah Almighty ordains it; we thus say that Allah *Glorified is He* absolved His servant and allowed him to repent. No one repents unless Allah *Glorified is He* ordains his repentance. If Allah *Glorified is He* does not ordain that a person's repentance is legitimate, his sins and bad deeds would amass on his shoulders. Ordaining repentance restrains the lowly whims and inclinations; otherwise anyone who commits a sin would have spread corruption on earth. Since Allah *Glorified is He* ordains repentance, He thus accepts the repentance of those who repent to Him and this is the first phase. The second phase is established when the person himself repents (subsequent to the first phase). So, Allah Almighty ordains repentance, the believer repents and then Allah Almighty accepts his repentance, which is the third phase.

We thus realise the precision of the Quranic discourse when we are told that Allah *Glorified is He* turns to the believers in mercy so that they might repent... (*at-Tawba*: 118), and after they repent, Allah *Glorified is He* accepts their repentance. Hence, the first phase of the forgiveness of Allah Almighty and accepting repentance is ordaining repentance as such. The third and final phase is accepting the repentance and between these two phases the human being repents.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then appends the verse as follows: '...by way of repentance to Allah: Allah is all knowing, all wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 92) Allah *Glorified is He* decrees legislations that let the human soul live in a sound environment and in accordance with its natural constitution. Indeed, if we imagine that someone was killed by mistake and his family was left without any compensation, then the society of believers would not benefit from his death.

Owing to the knowledge of Allah Almighty of the human psyche, victims of manslaughter will accrue benefit and closeness to the community of believers inasmuch as they become a cause of freeing a believing soul from slavery to making sure that something good is done after all. The one to be freed should not be a disbeliever. In fact, when a disbeliever is owned by a master, his evil

is contained and freeing him might spread this evil. In addition to freeing a believer there is also the blood money which will reach everyone impaired by the vacuum of benefit left behind by the victim. As we said before, the blood money is to be paid only by the extended relatives of the killer. This is intended in order not to double the suffering endured by the killer's family—the distress which will fill them because of the murder committed by one of their members—and the calamity of paying blood money to atone for what the killer did; and this is the wisdom beyond the decree. Since the Creator is in fact the One Who sets the proper rules of conduct, then no other rules or principles could possibly govern and regulate these matters better than the ones considered here.

Let us look at a machine—for instance—that is made up of fifty parts and each part is joined to the other using bolts, screws or other joints. As long as each part stays in its proper place, the machine functions well. But, if the machine dysfunctions, we get a mechanic to restore each part to its proper place. With everything set in its proper place, the machine will function again. This in many ways is similar to the realm of human beings. Every kind of movement based on wisdom should not undergo any form of degeneration. Degeneration only occurs when things are not based on wisdom or knowledge. Furthermore, wisdom is not absolute; it is questionable. That is why some people are wiser than others. In the past—for instance—electric wires did not have any insulation and because of that short circuits used to happen. Later, when insulators were discovered, we modified our methods of producing electric wires. The next problem we had was that the colours of the wires (like in cars for instance) used to all be the same; which caused a lot of confusion when attempting to fix cars. But when each wire was assigned a different colour, the repair process became much easier. Hence, we see the wisdom beyond assigning everything to its proper place. So how about when the One Who puts things in their proper place is in fact our Creator? There could be nothing better than this.

Consequently, if we spot any defect in the society, we must realise that something is done at odds with the wisdom Allah Almighty intended. In such a case, we will find the defect if we followed exactly the course we use to identify a defect in any machine then find a mechanic to fix it. Likewise, we

must refer everything to the Creator and search for the remedy of our social problems in the rulings of Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* admonished us to refer any subject of dispute to Himself and His messenger in order to end our suffering.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about premeditated murder. Someone may wonder: should Allah have talked about premeditated murder first? To this question, we respond as follows: Had the True Lord *Glorified is He* talked about premeditated murder first, this might have suggested that such form of murder is bound to have precedence in the sequence of the believer's thought. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains that this should not occur to the mind or imagination of the believer.

Someone may also wonder: Why did Allah not start the verse with, "Never should a Muslim..." —instead of "...a believer..."? To this question, we respond by saying: we must realise that the True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the believers because faith is an act of the heart. For this reason, the discourse addresses the believers in particular rather than the Muslims in general because Islam can be solely an ostensible appearance. Someone who purports to be a Muslim may thus kill a believer. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the discourse that encompasses both the outer appearance and the essence such as faith. But when the True Lord *Glorified is He* legislates, He put forward the proper requital for the one who deliberately perpetrates murder. In this vein, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا
وَعَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٣﴾

If anyone kills a believer deliberately, the punishment for him is Hell, and there he will remain: God is angry with him, and rejects him, and has prepared a tremendous torment for him [93] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 93)

Murder in this context refers to the act of deliberately killing a believer. This is a diametrically different case than that of killing by mistake wherein the killer realises that he killed only after the act of killing actually took place. The requital for deliberately killing a believer is damnation to hell; there is no

atonement for such an atrocity. This way, Allah Almighty reveals how abominable and despicable the crime of deliberately murdering a believer is. The reason is that deliberate murder means that the murderer dwelt upon the thought of killing and murdering another. In legal jargon this is called: a premeditated crime. This means that the killer or murderer planned the murder in his imagination and then committed it. While planning and plotting the murder, the killer's religious commitment was supposed to have deterred him from the atrocity he was about to commit. Thus, committing a deliberate murder demonstrates that the trait of "fearing Allah" was absent from the mind of the murderer throughout the period in which he planned the crime. Indeed, had Allah Almighty occurred to him, he would have desisted from committing the crime? But since Allah did not occur to the mind of the murderer, likewise he will not "occur" in Allah's mercy.

Scholars suggested that the following incident was the reason for the revelation of this verse. The man named Maqis ibn Dababah who had a brother called Hisham, found his brother murdered in the region of Banu *an-Najjar* who belonged to *Al-Ansar* (Medinan Helpers). Thereupon, Maqis went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him about this incident. Then, Prophet Muhammad sent with him a person from Banu Fehr and instructed them to bring the murderer of Maqis' brother to Maqis. However, Banu An-Najjar claimed that they did not know who had murdered Hisham and expressed their willingness to pay *Diyah* (blood money) which was a hundred camels and went back to Medina. Then, Maqis killed the person who belonged to Banu Fehr to avenge his brother's murder, took the camels and headed to Mecca, abjuring Islam. During his journey to Mecca, he chanted the following verses:

I have killed in revenge a man from Fehr and have taken his *Diyah* (blood money),

And let Banu Al-Najjar bear the responsibility of paying his *Diyah* (blood money),

I have taken revenge by killing him and vented my rage,

And I have converted to worshipping idols.

When the news reached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he declared that killing Maqis was permissible; this means that whoever killed Maqis would not be punished. On the day of the Liberation of Mecca, Maqis was found clinging to the curtains of the *Ka'ba* seeking refuge in it, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered that he must be killed. 'If anyone kills a believer deliberately, the punishment for him is hell and there he will remain: Allah is angry with him and rejects him and has prepared a tremendous torment for him.' (*an-Nisa'*: 93)

In this context, we notice that there are multiple levels of torment: the fire of hell, eternal suffering in hell, the Wrath and Rejection of Allah Almighty and Allah's preparation of tremendous torment. This means that torment is not only limited to hell, as there are the aforementioned forms of torment from which we seek refuge with Allah Almighty. Some people think that hell is the only form of torment; however, torment has many other forms. For instance, when someone is imprisoned, we may think that imprisonment is the only suffering he has to endure, but after knowing what happens inside prisons, we have realised that there are other things that are more evil than imprisonment.

Scholars have pondered over the following question: Is it possible for such a murderer to repent? Scholars were not of the same opinion in this regard; some scholars have said that it is not possible for such a murderer to repent, whereas other scholars have said that it is possible for him to repent. Ibn Al-'Abbas was once sitting with a group of people and someone asked him: Is it permissible for the one who deliberately killed another believer to repent? Ibn Al-Abbas said: No. After a period of time a person asked Ibn Al-'Abbas: Is it permissible for the one who deliberately killed another believer to repent? Ibn Al-'Abbas said: Yes. Then, the attendants wondered: Why did you answer yes now when you previously said no? Ibn Al-'Abbas said: the one who asked me first wanted to deliberately commit a murder, but the one who asked me in the second time had already killed someone deliberately. Therefore, I was terrified and deterred the first and did not let the second lose hope in the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He*. But how did Ibn Al-'Abbas distinguish between the two cases? He did so by means of the faith-inspired acuity and insight that Allah *Glorified is He* bestows upon the *Mufti* (a Muslim

scholar qualified to issue legal opinions). Once a person asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, while he was sitting among his Companions: 'What (sort of) deeds in Islam are the best?' He replied, 'To feed (the poor) and greet those whom you know and those whom you do not know.'⁽¹⁾ Another person asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the same question and he answered: 'A (true) Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe.' Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to answer whoever asked him in a manner that was most suitable and useful for him. When 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud *may Allah be pleased with him* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Which is the best deed?' He answered, 'Offering Prayers on time. Then, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud *may Allah be pleased with him* asked, 'What is next, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'To avoid harming people with his tongue.'⁽²⁾

But the text of the verse concerning deliberate killing requires further reflection, as Allah Almighty says: '...the punishment for him is Hell and there he will remain...' (*an-Nisa'*: 93). Does the word '*Khalidan*' mentioned in the Arabic text of the Verse indicate dwelling in hell for a long time or remaining in it eternally? If the word had indicated remaining eternally, Allah *Glorified is He* would not have said: "And so they will remain..." (*Al-'Imran*: 88) and then in another verse, He says: '... Hell, where they will remain for ever...' (*an-Nisa'*: 169) This saying indicates that the word '*Abada*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse adds the meaning of eternity to mere remaining in hell. If the word '*Khalidin*' (remaining) and '*Abada*' (forever) have the same meaning, then the word '*Abada*' (forever) will not add anything to the meaning. But the Quran is the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* which is free of any redundancy or absurdity. Thus, if we reflect on this verse, we will find that the word '*Khalidin*' means remaining for a long time and '*Khalidin Abada*' means remaining forever. Each word of the Quran is precise and has a specific meaning. Furthermore, the word '*Khalidin*' is mentioned in the following sense when it refers to remaining in hell. Allah Almighty says: 'The Day it comes no soul will speak except by His permission. And among

(1) *Related by Muslim*

(2) *Related by Al-Tabarani*

them will be the wretched and the prosperous. As for those who were [destined to be] wretched, they will be in Hell. For them therein is [violent] exhaling and inhaling. [They will be] abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will. Indeed, your Lord is an effector of what He intends.' (*Hud*: 105-107)

This means that Allah Almighty has excluded whomever He wills from abiding in hell. But such exclusion is bound to a specific time and the word '*Khulud*' does not mean infinite perpetuation; rather, it refers to a long period of time. Allah Almighty uses the same meaning of '*Khulud*' when He refers to abiding in heaven when He says: 'And as for those who were [destined to be] prosperous, they will be in paradise, abiding therein as long as the heavens and the earth endure, except what your Lord should will – a bestowal uninterrupted.' (*Hud*: 108)

The saying of Allah Almighty: '...except what your Lord should will...' (*Hud*: 107) indicates that the Arabic word '*Khalidin*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means that this abidance is not eternal. In addition, the exception mentioned in the verse must be limited to a time constraint. But time is finite, whereas eternity is infinite; therefore, '*Khulud*' does not mean abiding eternally.

We have to tackle the verses in this sense. In this regard, we should consider the approach of one of the key scholars of Islamic creed during the Abbasid era: 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd. He was among the scholars who were well-known for their keenness to maintain the dignity of knowledge and scholars to the extent that the caliph of this era said about him in the presence of some people who purported to be scholars, 'All of these alleged scholars are hunting after their own interests except for 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd.' He enjoyed a high scientific status and had faith-based dignity that enabled him to rise above all minor things in life. He was also specific and subtle in his opinions. Qays ibn Anas relates the following story about him: Once I was attending the gathering of 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd and heard him saying, 'I will be brought forth on the Day of Judgement and will be asked, 'Why did you say that the one who deliberately commits murder cannot repent? So I recited the verse, '...wherein he will abide eternally....' (*an-Nisa'*: 93) 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd should have noticed that

the person who deliberately kills is permitted to repent from the inspiration or the vision that Allah Almighty caused him to see which states that on the Day of Judgement he would be asked why he gave a legal opinion to the effect that the one who kills deliberately cannot repent. This is because being questioned on the Day of Judgement about this matter involves reproach for issuing this legal opinion.

This indicates that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has willed that over every possessor of knowledge does one [more] know.... 'Amr mentioned the saying of Allah Almighty: '...his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally...' (*an-Nisa*: 93). At this moment, Qays ibn Anas who was the youngest among the attendants said to him, 'If I were with you, I would say as you said: '...his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally...' (*an-Nisa*: 93). I would also say Allah Almighty's saying: 'Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills....' (*an-Nisa*: 48) Qays then said, 'By Allah, 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd did not reject what I said.' This means that 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd agreed to Qays' opinion.

The story indicates that the words '*Khalidin fiha*' (wherein they will abide) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse does not mean infinite perpetuation because Allah Almighty has made an exception to such abidance in another verse.

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has given the ruling on deliberate murder and involuntary murder and the scholars found that there is another type of murder called quasi-deliberate murder as it is neither deliberate nor involuntary. For instance, someone may hit another person with a tool that does not normally cause death. In such a case there is a deliberate intention since the hitter actually picked the tool and hit the other person and accidentally the tool caused death although it does not normally kill. In such a case, scholars say that death accompanied such an action and did not cause it. Accordingly, no *Qisas* (just retaliation) is due, but *Diyah* (blood money) must be paid.

Allah Almighty has clarified all the cases in which someone may kill another, such as permissible murder when a Muslim kills a disbeliever in a battle, the deliberate murder, involuntary murder, and quasi-deliberate. Therefore, He *the Glorified and Exalted* draws the Muslims' attention to the fact that they

should be careful in this regard to ensure that their swords are not going to be used against your brothers. In relation, Allah Almighty says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ ءَلَقِيَ
إِلَيْكُمْ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ
اللَّهِ مَعَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ
فَتَبَيَّنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا ﴿٩٤﴾

**So, you who believe, be careful when you go to fight in God's way,
and do not say to someone who offers you a greeting of peace,
'You are not a believer,' out of desire for the chance gains of this
life – God has plenty of gains for you. You yourself were in the
same position [once], but God was gracious to you, so be careful:
God is fully aware of what you do [94] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 94)**

Allah Almighty commands the believers who go forth to fight in His cause to investigate and not to use their swords, spears or arrows before investigating and checking against whom they use them. He *the Exalted* also commands them '...and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer,' aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions. You [yourselves] were like that before; then Allah conferred His favor upon you, so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.' (*an-Nisa'*: 94)

It is an all-inclusive verse, as it encompasses the ruling, its reason and purpose. Allah *Glorified is He* starts the verse with His saying: "O you who have believed..." (*an-Nisa'*: 94). The fact that the discourse is addressed to the believers indicates its binding nature; Allah Almighty does not address all the people in this verse. Rather, He says: 'O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) Allah Almighty orders the believers to abide by His Command as they have believed in Him and should obey Him and follow His Commands. The reason for abiding by every ruling is that the believer has faith in the One Who has enacted this ruling. Accordingly, the believer should not inquire about the wisdom or reason for a certain ruling in order to avoid perplexity and confusion. This

matter should be stressed because it frequently occurs to the minds of people to ask about the rationale and wisdom underlying every matter in religion. Therefore, they should know that if they know the rationale underlying a certain ruling, they will abide by it not in obedience to the One Who enacted it, but due to being convinced of the wisdom itself.

There is an attitude among those who have transgressed against themselves by disbelief or those who believe in Allah *Glorified is He* but commit major sins like perjury, usury or drinking intoxicants. When physicians examine the liver of someone who drinks intoxicants – for instance – they often find them suffering from cirrhosis and any extra dosage of intoxicants may lead to this person's death. In this case, this person may abstain from drinking intoxicants because he has realised the rationale and wisdom behind preventing it. Furthermore, the one who asked him to do so may be a Magus; therefore, in such a case abstention from drinking intoxicants is not in obedience to a Divine Command. However, the believer should refrain from drinking intoxicants because Allah *Glorified is He* forbids it. Also, the believer should carry out all the commands of Allah Almighty even with regards to harmless matters; Allah Almighty does not forbid only harmful matters as He may forbid things in order to discipline man. As an example – and to Allah Almighty belongs the utmost example of perfection – a husband may ask his wife not to give their son any of the sweets that he brought. In this case, he prevents his son from taking sweets not because it is harmful; rather, he wants to discipline his son.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them [certain] good foods which had been lawful to them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 160). A person should follow the commands of Allah Almighty out of obedience to Him, not because the rationale underlying the command is useful to him because if one follows a Divine Command due to the benefit, he expects to gain or the harm it may enable him to avoid, his faith will be deficient. It is frequently noticed that Allah Almighty imparts His Wisdom in the rulings He enjoins in order for man to realise one of the infinite aspects of His Wisdom that have been concealed. A person may think about the wisdom underlying any incident, but by the passage of time, he realises the truth and usefulness of the Rulings of Allah *Glorified is He*. This encourages man to take the Rulings of Allah Almighty for granted.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who have believed....' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) Faith is the reason which will cause the people to obey the commands of Allah Almighty: 'O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah....' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) '*Al-Darb*', the Arabic root of the word '*Darabtum*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means a violent reaction against another something. Allah Almighty's saying: 'When you go forth [to fight]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 101) indicates that life abounds of actions and reactions and Allah Almighty says, '*Darabtum fil Ard*' because *Al-Ard*' (land) is where He has placed the sustenance of all His creatures. When humans want to take out its wealth and goodness, they plough the land, sow the seeds, irrigate the land and then fruits sprout. Through this process, the soil yields crops. Therefore, every kind of motion needs effort and strife. Allah Almighty also says: '...and others who travel in the land seeking of the bounty of Allah...' (*al-Muzzammil*: 20).

The verse suggests that in order to gain the bounties of Allah Almighty that are placed in the land, people should work hard and diligently. Therefore, it is said that the land needs digging and ploughing. The more man exerts effort in handling the land, the more bounties it will yield. The Arabic words '*Al-Darb fi Sabil Allah*' means fighting for the cause of Allah Almighty or preparing the requirements needed for fighting for the cause of Allah Almighty. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war...' (*al-Anfal*: 60).

Battles should be preceded by making preparations which are carried out by physical preparation of the bodies that require the basic needs and necessities of life. Furthermore, fighters should also prepare the necessary tools and instruments require excavation and search for different elements needed and examination of different industries in order to choose the most suitable among them. All preparation processes require research and craft; therefore, the following is mentioned in the *Athar* (narrations from the Companions), 'Allah may forgive four people for the sake of a single arrow unsheathed in His cause.' The reason for this saying is that there is a person who cut the wood of which the arrow is made, a person who installed the tools that enable the arrow to fly forward, a person who placed the darts, and finally a person who uses the bow to shoot the arrows.

Allah Almighty wants the believers to be strong in order for them to be able to strive hard throughout the land. Allah Almighty says: '...O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate....' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) We know that going forth in the Cause of Allah *the Almighty* is not only concerned with *Jihad* (striving in the Cause of Allah), but it is also concerned with all aspects of life because whatever is required for an obligation to be fulfilled is also considered as an obligation. The word '*Tabayyanu*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means to check matters and investigate thoroughly so that the believers do not harm or wrong other people.

There is an incident relevant to this command pertaining to a man called Muhallim ibn Jathamah who bore animosity towards another person called 'Amer ibn Al-Adbat Al-Ashga'i. Muhallim then joined a brigade that consisted of a small number of soldiers and coincidentally met Amer ibn Al-Adbat Al-Ashga'i who had embraced Islam. Therefore, 'Amer greeted Muhallim who thought that 'Amer converted to Islam in order to escape from him, so Muhallim killed 'Amer. Then, he went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who asked him, 'Why did you not try to investigate the matter? Did he not greet you with the greeting of Islam? On what basis do you claim that he said, 'Peace be upon you' just to save himself from getting killed?' Muhallim then said, 'O Messenger of Allah, please ask Allah to forgive me.' When someone asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask Allah Almighty to forgive him, he immediately recognised the status of the person asking for forgiveness by his faith-inspired insight. He used to say, 'May Allah forgive you,' when he knew that the person seeking forgiveness is exempt from blame, but if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say so, the one asking him to ask Allah to forgive him, knew that he was sinful. Due to the fact that Muhallim and 'Amer bore animosities and antagonism towards each other, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Muhallim, 'May Allah not forgive you' because he realised that the animosity and antagonism which he bore towards 'Amer was the reason why he did not investigate his matter.

Narrators said that Muhallim died seven days after this incident; and when he was buried, the earth threw his body out. So they went to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him about what happened.

Then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The earth admits inside it those who are more evil than your companion, but Allah wanted to admonish you.' The Companions then threw the corpse of Muhallim between two edges of a mountain and covered it with stones.⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not want people to be deluded into false inferences when an event that contradicts the universal laws known to people takes place. For example, when Ibrahim, the son of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* died, a solar eclipse happened. People then said that the sun eclipsed for the sake of the son of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. But as the matter pertains to the essence of creed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained the truth about it in the following Hadith: 'Al-Mughirah ibn Shu'bah narrated that the sun eclipsed in the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the day when Ibrahim (his son) died. So the people said that the sun had eclipsed because of the death of Ibrahim. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The sun and the moon do not eclipse because of the death or life (i.e. birth) of anyone. When you see the eclipse, pray and invoke Allah.'⁽²⁾ They said so to honour Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his son Ibrahim, but he wanted to rectify the people's concepts and creeds. Similarly, when the earth expelled the body of Muhallim, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained the matter for the people for them not to be tempted or to conclude that anyone who is not thrown out by earth is a pious person, as there were a lot of disbelievers who were not thrown out by the earth when they were buried. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The earth admitted people who were more evil than Muhallim, but Allah Almighty wills to admonish the people for them not to do what he did. Had he not said that, a little confusion would have occurred and people would have thought that if the earth did not throw a person's body out, this would indicate the righteousness of this person. This would also imply that Abu Jahl and Walid ibn Al-Mughirah are in a good status, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) *Exegesis of the Noble Quran by Imam Ibn Kathir*

(2) *Related by Al-Bukhari*

wanted to explain these matters clearly. Therefore, he said, 'The earth admits into it people who are more evil than Muhallim, but Allah wants to teach the people a lesson and warn them against following his footsteps.'⁽¹⁾

'O you who believe! when you go to war in Allah's way, make investigation, and do not say to anyone who offers you peace: You are not a believer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94). In this regard, I recall that an honourable brother once told me that he was listening to a radio broadcast and the reciter made a mistake during the recitation of the following verse as he said, '*Fatathabbatu*' (investigate) instead of '*Fatabayyanu*' (investigate): '...if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate...' (*al-Hujurat*: 6). In response to this complaint, I would like to remark that the recitation he listened to is one of the recitation styles of the Quran which always suggest the same meanings. The Arabic verb '*Tabayyan*' means to investigate and check something which is also the same meaning of the Arabic verb of '*Tathabbat*.' It is well-known that the Quran has seven different recitation styles and was written without dots or vocalisation. However, this is not our case, as now the words of the Quran are vocalised with *Fat-ha* (vowel point that sounds like 'a'), *Kasrah* (vowel point that sounds like 'i'), and *Dammah* (vowel point that sounds like 'u').

It is also well-known that some Arabic letters are similar to each other like '*Ba*', '*Nun*', '*Ta*', and '*Tha*', and the dots and vocalisation did not exist before the time of Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf Ath-Thaqafi. People used to recite the Quran depending on their talent for Arabic Language and the teachings of the Revelation. Therefore, the Arabic word '*Fatabayyanu*' is composed of the Arabic letter '*Fa*' which did not cause any disagreement on the way it is read without dots in the word, and letters '*Ta*', '*Ba*', '*Ya*', and '*Nun*.' These letters make it possible for us to read the word as either '*Tathabbatu*' or '*Tabayyanu*' depending on the position of the dots. If the dots are omitted, words can be read in different ways, but we must always follow what was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, when someone who did not memorise the Quran was given a *Mus-haf* (copy of the Noble Quran) in order to recite it, he recited a verse as,

(1) *Related by Ahmad and Ibn Jarir*

'*San`atu Allah waman Ahsanu min Allah San`ah.*' There was no disagreement over the Arabic letter '*Sad*' in the Arabic word '*Sibghah*' which is mentioned in the Arabic verse, but there was disagreement over the reading of '*Ba*' in the same word, as it could be read as '*Ba*' or '*Nun*.' The same holds for the letter '*Ghin*' which can also be read as '*Ayn*' if the dots marking the words are not written. According to Hafs recitation style, the verse is read as '*Sibghata Allah waman Ahsanu mina Allah Sibghah.*' '[Ours is] the religion of Allah. And who is better than Allah in [ordaining] religion?' (*al-Baqara*: 138) But when a person who did not properly memorise the Quran read it, he pronounced the Arabic word '*San`ah*' instead of '*Sibghah*' and the verse in both cases has the same meaning.

Yet, it should be borne in mind that the recitation of the Quran is bound by a religious text and not amenable to personal opinion, and must be read in line with the revelation that Jibril (Gabriel) conveyed from Allah Almighty to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, no one should read the Quran according to his personal opinion even if the morphological form allows such recitation. Accordingly, it is said that there are three pillars of any correct recitation of the Quran:

1. It should be in line with the rules of Arabic Language.
2. It should be in line with the '*Uthmany* calligraphy.
3. It should be narrated from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through an authentic chain of narrators whose agreement upon a lie is impossible, and in a manner that does not include any doubt.

These rules were put in poetic form by the person who composed *Tayyibat-un Nashr poem*. He said,

Everything that conforms to the rules of Arabic grammar,
And includes a form of the '*Uthmany* calligraphy,
And is narrated from Prophet Muhammad through an authentic chain of narrators,
These are the three pillars of accepted recitation style of the Quran.

The following is Hafs' recitation style of Allah's saying (which means):
'... [Allah] said, 'My punishment – I afflict with it whom I will...' (*al-A'raf*: 156).

However, Al-Hasan's recitation style of the same verse differs from the former one in the word '*Asha*' (will), which is mentioned in Hafs' recitation style, while it is replaced by *Asa*' (commits misdeeds) in Al-Hasan's recitation style.

Actually, the meaning of the word *Asa*' which derived from '*Al-Isa'ah*' differs from the meaning of the word '*Asha*', but the two recitation styles of the same verse do not differ in the overall meaning. Also, the word '*Fatabayyanu*' stated in one recitation style is read as '*Fatathabbatu*' in another recitation style whether in the verse under explanation or in the verse in which Allah Almighty says, '...if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate...' (*al-Hujurat*: 6)

The Arabic word '*Al-Tabayyun*' means investigation and checking and requires intelligence and acuity so that one can recognise the signs of faith in the one who greets him with the Islamic greeting of peace: '...and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer...' (*an-Nisa*': 94).

Every Muslim should be discerning enough in order not to judge anyone according to mere suspicions. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* acted decisively with Usamah ibn Zayd who killed someone after he declared to be a Muslim. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'What about his declaration that there is no god but Allah? Did you not cut his heart open to find out whether he had done so sincerely or not?' Usamah replied to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'This person said the Testimony of faith only to escape death. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Did you not cut his heart open to find out whether he had done so sincerely or not? Did you kill him in spite of his professing *La ilaha ill Allah* (there is no god but Allah)?' This Testimony of Faith has sanctity, as it is forbidden to kill anyone who utters it.

Some narrators related that this verse was revealed about Muhallim ibn Jathamah, while others said that it is about Usamah ibn Zayd and others said it is about someone else. Ibn 'Abbas may *Allah be pleased with them both* also recited a part of the verse, '...and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer...' (*an-Nisa*': 94) He said, 'A person who

had just collected the spoils of a battle was once caught by the Muslims, then he greeted them with the Islamic greeting of peace. However, the Muslims killed him and took his spoils. Then, Allah Almighty revealed the following verse about this incident: '...and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94).⁽¹⁾

Scholars who have profound religious knowledge say, 'Survival of a thousand disbelievers is better than killing a single believer wrongfully.' Other narrations state that this verse was revealed about Al-Miqdad ibn Al-Aswad. Al-Bazzar related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with them* both, that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent a group of Muslim fighter including Al-Miqdad ibn Al-Aswad. When they reached the place in which they would fight a group of people, the latter were dispersed and left the place and none remained except a person who possessed a lot of money and declared *La ilah illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah). However, Al-Miqdad killed him, then one of his Companions said, 'Did you kill a person who declared *La ilah illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah). By Allah, I will mention that to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.' Upon their return to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they said, 'Al-Miqdad killed a person who declared *La ilah illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah).' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Bring forth Al-Miqdad.' Then, he asked Al-Miqdad, 'Did you kill a man who professed *La ilah illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah)? What would you do with regard to (the utterance): *La ilaha illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah) when it comes (before you) on the Day of Resurrection? Then, Allah Almighty revealed: 'O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate...' ⁽²⁾ (*an-Nisa'*: 94).

'O you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer,' aspiring for the goods of worldly life...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94).

The saying '*Alqa Ilaykum As-Salam*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to the one who surrendered to the believers or uttered

(1) [Related by Al-Bukhari]

(2) [Related by Al-Bazzar]

the Islamic greeting of peace. The verse reveals that no one has the right to make accusation of disbelief against any person who has surrendered to him or extended to him the greeting of peace.

The word *A'rad* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse refers to everything that is transitory and temporary. Humans in this sense are also considered as *A'rad* (plural of *A'rad*) because they do not exist permanently. It is also said that man is considered as *A'rad* (having temporary existence) in relation to the universe because it does not depend on human existence. In addition, the universe itself is considered as *A'rad* (having temporary existence) because on day it will perish.

Man can be considered as *A'rad* (having temporary existence) in terms of health conditions which may change from healthiness to sickness. The same holds for body shape (slimness and fatness), complexion as it may change from fairness to darkness by exposure to sunlight and economic status which may change from richness to poverty. Everything relevant to the human being is transitory and temporary and the human being becomes a more stable core than it. Also, if the human being is compared to something more permanent than him, the human being will become *A'rad* (having temporary existence). Accordingly, this is a relative matter and everything but Allah Almighty can be considered as *A'rad* (having temporary existence), and will perish one day as Allah Almighty says: 'And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour.' (*ar-Rahman*: 27)

And '... do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer' aspiring for the goods of worldly life...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) '...aspiring for the goods of worldly life...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) refers to the status of the killer who covets the properties of the person who greets him with the Islamic greeting of peace. The word *A'rad* in the Arabic text of this verse may also refer to the human pride felt when taking revenge from a person towards whom one bears hatred and animosity.

Therefore, when the word *A'rad* (having temporary existence) is associated with the worldly life, it suggests that seeking a valueless and transitory object. Therefore, a poet wrote the following verse in which he expresses the feelings

of a person who grieves for losing a worldly possession even though he himself as a human being is bound to die and perish from the worldly life:

The soul that possesses things is bound to perish,
So how come I grieve for something that is lost.

The same holds for the transitory matters relevant to the worldly life. The word '*Dunya*' (i.e. worldly life) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is derived from the root '*Dunuw*' (inferiority) whose opposite is '*Uluw*' (sublimity); thus, the opposite of '*Dunya*' (inferior) is '*Ulya*' (sublime). The one who properly evaluates the worldly gains is intelligent, wise and discerning. Therefore, he will not take the properties of the person he wants to kill when he greets him with the Islamic greeting of peace because he uses his faith-inspired insight and receives the worldly gains from the One Who has created the whole world. When the rational person desires the worldly gains, he should ask the One Who possesses the whole world rather than seeking them from a human being. Actually, the worldly life itself will not avail him since he may be killed at any time.

'...aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94). As Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* addresses the human soul that He has created, He knows how it is inclined to the things that have long-term benefits. For example, a person may feel happy if he has the food he needs for lunch and will be happier if he has the food he needs for both lunch and dinner. His happiness will further increase if he has the food he needs for his sustenance for a month or a year. He will even be happier if he owns a piece of land from which he obtains his livelihood and which his children may inherit.

Man loves his life and likes his remembrance to be extended after his death by his offspring. Therefore, man grieves when he does not have children because he knows well that he will inevitably die, so he wishes that his life would be extended and continued through the life of his son. In addition, when he has a son who has his grandson, he rejoices even more because he will be remembered by two generations (his son and grandson). The person who thinks in this manner should understand that even if his name may last for a thousand of generations, he should give attention to his status in the

afterlife. In addition, he should bring up his son to be a righteous person in order to supplicate for him after his death.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* confronts the human soul that craves for worldly acquisitions and exposes its reality when He reveals the thoughts and reflections of humans in His Ruling. When Allah *Glorified is He* has willed to forbid the polytheists from entering the Sacred House of Allah, He has known the people's inner thoughts and secrets and has known that the polytheists used to enter Mecca and the Sacred House of Allah Almighty in order to sell their commodities during the commercial season, as their yields will sustain them for the rest of the year. He has known that forbidding the polytheists from entering Mecca would cause the inhabitants of Mecca to worry about the profits that accrued from their trade. He *Glorified is He* says: '...indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach Al-Masjid Al-Haram after this year...' (*at-Tawba*: 28).

Before the inhabitants of Mecca even wondered how they would live and sell goods, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed: '...and if you fear poverty then Allah will enrich you out of His grace...' (*at-Tawba*: 28). Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* reveals to people their inner thoughts and reflections, as He knows best the thoughts that will be stirred up in the mind of those who listen to the ruling. He is their Creator; therefore, no one can say any further comment.

The saying of Allah Almighty: '...aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions...' (*an-Nisa*': 94) applies to every age. Subsequently, He says: '...for with Allah are many acquisitions...' (*an-Nisa*': 94). *Glorified is Allah the All-Sustainer, the All-Giver.* Therefore, I like seeing people adorning their houses with artistic arrangements upon which the following verse is written: '...and if you fear poverty then Allah will enrich you out of His grace if He please...' (*at-Tawba*: 28). The same holds for the saying of Allah Almighty: '...aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions...' (*an-Nisa*': 94).

This may touch the hearts of responsible officials and cause them to turn to Allah Almighty. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...You [yourselves] were like that before; then Allah conferred His favour upon you, so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.' (*an-Nisa*': 94) This is a

call for those who witnessed the revelation of the Quran to reconsider and recall their recent past. They should not have accused other Muslim brothers - who greeted them with the Islamic greeting of peace - of disbelief because they might conceal the matter of their conversion to Islam from their families because they were disbelievers. This was the case at the advent of Islam, as earlier Muslims used to hide their acceptance of Islam from their families who were disbelievers, as they were a despised minority that hid their faith. However, Allah Almighty did not send to them anyone to inspect the sincerity of their intentions. Therefore, Allah Almighty instructs the believers concerned with this verse to consider that those people – who greeted them with the Islamic greetings of peace - may undergo the same experience they underwent previously.

'...You [yourselves] were like that before; then Allah has conferred His favour upon you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94). Allah *Glorified is He* has conferred upon them the favour of causing them to become exalted and distinguished when they embraced Islam and a Muslim has become dignified and no one can despise him due to embracing Islam. Allah Almighty mentions again the word '*Fatabayyanu*' (investigate) in the Arabic text of the verse after He used it at the beginning of the verse. It means that a Muslim should not kill any person who greeted him with the Islamic greeting of peace merely because of a material gain. Allah Almighty has mentioned the word '*Fatabayyanu*' (investigate) again; when it is mentioned for the first time, it is used as a preparation for the reason why some believers regarded the person who greeted them with the Islamic greeting of peace as a disbeliever which is expressed in His saying: '...aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions...' (*an-Nisa'*: 94). Then the word is mentioned again in order to suggest the result following from such an attitude: '...so investigate. Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.' (*an-Nisa'*: 94)

The Legislation of Allah *Glorified is He* has certain grounds, as He knows best that which rectifies the human soul. No one should think that Allah Almighty created and guided us to faith in order to let us down in the system of life; rather, He created and bestowed upon us the righteous path in order for them to be a model for others and so that all people would notice that the worldly life and gains submit to those who follow the path set by Allah *Glorified is He*. '...Indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.' (*an-Nisa'*: 94)

Allah Almighty instructs the believers to beware of concealing their bad intentions behind false pretension because the One Who sought for reward is the One Who judges and watches over people and knows everything about them. The person who killed another one who greeted him with the Islamic greeting of peace did not do so because the latter did not convert to Islam. Rather, he did so because he and the one whom he killed bore animosity and hatred towards each other. He should have known that Allah Almighty knows the inner thoughts and intentions.

Allah Almighty commands the believer to investigate the matter when he goes forth to fight in His cause before killing someone whom he suspects his belief, especially when the suspected person greets him with the Islamic greeting of peace. Allah *Glorified is He* reminds the believers that they too used to conceal their faith from people.

If the earlier believers underwent the same experience when they converted to Islam, they had to consider that other Muslims might also resort to concealing their faith. They had to be sure that Allah is Ever-Acquainted with what they do. The hatred and animosity that may cause a Muslim to kill another Muslim is not hidden from Him *Glorified is He*.

Allah *Glorified is He* has tackled in the previous verses the fights taking place between the Muslims and disbelievers, and has enjoined that a Muslim is prevented from killing another believer so that the Muslims do not lose a member of the believer's community. The intention of Allah Almighty behind this ruling is also that the life of each believer involves goodness to faith on earth. Therefore, we should preserve the life of every believer because he will help spread faith on earth. If a believer kills another believer involuntarily, he should follow the ruling which Allah Almighty has clarified in verse number 92 of the chapter of *an-Nisa'*.

Subsequently, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has willed to clarify the difference between those who hold back from striving in the cause of Allah Almighty and those who fought in His Cause. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا يَسْتَوِي الْقَاعِدُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ غَيْرُ أُولِي الضَّرَرِ وَالْمُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ
بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ دَرَجَةً
وَكُلًّا وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْحُسْنَٰى وَفَضَّلَ اللَّهُ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ عَلَى الْقَاعِدِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿٩٥﴾

Those believers who stay at home, apart from those with an incapacity, are not equal to those who commit themselves and their possessions to striving in God's way. God has raised such people to a rank above those who stay at home – although He has promised all believers a good reward, those who strive are favoured with a tremendous reward above those who stay at home [95] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 95)

There is an incident relevant to this verse. Deducing reflections from this story requires vigilance and acuity that ought to teach us the manner in which Allah Almighty addresses His creation. Zayd ibn Thabit was entrusted with writing the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Furthermore, he was entrusted with collecting the Quran from a certain type of white stones, bones and from what the Companions had memorised. Zayd related: 'I was once sitting beside Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when peace and tranquillity suddenly descended upon him, a state which he often experiences before the descent of the Revelation. At this instant his thigh lent heavily on mine to the extent that I was afraid it would break it. In other words, this means that the thigh of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was heavy.'

When the Revelation descended to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it may have had a material effect on his status to the extent that if he was riding an animal, people would notice that he was receiving the Revelation because the animal he rode would kneel down underneath him. Therefore, if the thigh of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* lent on that of Zayd ibn Thabit, he must feel the weight of the thigh of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was receiving the Revelation. Zayd said, 'I was afraid that his thigh would bend or break my leg. When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was relieved, he told me to write: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other

than the disabled - and the *Mujahidin*...' (*an-Nisa*': 95) Then, Ibn Umm Maktum who was - as known - blind said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what about those who are incapable of striving in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He*?' The faith-inspired alertness and vigilance of Ibn Umm Maktum made him understand the extent to which the verse was relevant to him, that he was incapable of striving or fighting in the cause of Allah Almighty. He knew that if this was the end of the verse, he would not be equal to those who strive in His cause. Therefore, his attentiveness made him ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; 'What about those who are incapable of striving in Allah's Cause? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered into a state of tranquillity again and then was relieved. He asked Zayd ibn Thabit, to write: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the *Mujahidin*, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah...' (*an-Nisa*': 95). This part of the verse was revealed as a comforting response to those who are incapable of fighting like Ibn Umm Maktum. But someone may say, 'Would the completion of the verse depend on Ibn Umm Maktum's question?

Allah *Glorified is He* has willed to draw the attention of every believer that once he receives a verse of Allah Almighty, he should ponder on its meaning and think of his status being relevant to any issue mentioned it. This is clarified by the manner in which Ibn Umm Maktum reacted when he heard the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveying the verse Allah Almighty revealed to him. Allah *Glorified is He* instructs us to ponder on our status pertaining to any ruling or issue mentioned in any verse. When Ibn Umm Maktum heard the verse, he thought of his status in its light, an action which Allah Almighty wants His slaves to adopt when they receive His verses.

Zayd ibn Thabit said, 'I wrote it.' The accurate performance of Zayd ibn Thabit indicates the truth of the narration. If he first wrote: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] and the *Mujahidin*...' (*an-Nisa*': 95), would there be a space for him to add '...other than the disabled...' which Allah Almighty has revealed? So where would he write it? This implies that Zayd ibn Thabit had to decrease the font in order to be able to write: '...other than the disabled...' in between. Zayd ibn Thabit said: '...other than the disabled...' was revealed alone and I was looking at the place to write it at the crack of the

shoulder bone (at this time the Arabs used to write on the shoulder bones of animals). The shoulder bone on which Zayd ibn Thabit was writing was cracked, which served as a sign on it.

Allah *Glorified is He* has willed to instruct the believers to receive the verses He has revealed with faith-inspired attentiveness so that their ears would hear only what their minds reflect on, in order for them to understand their status in relation to the verses. The believers should reflect on the verses again with their hearts so that the creed becomes instilled in their souls.

This is the story of Zayd ibn Thabit, Ibn Umm Maktum, and the Revelation with regard to this verse: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled – and the *Mujahidin*...' (*an-Nisa'*: 95)

There are instances in language when a single verb requires two subjects rather than a single one. For example, Zayd and 'Amr shared so and so. The same holds for the case when we describe football players, we find that players pass the ball to each other. We say, 'The players pass the ball to each other, one after another.'

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Not equal', this indicates that there are two unequal things. Therefore, both of them are grammatically the subjects of the verb '*Yastawiy*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse. Thus, '*Al-Mujahidin*' (those who strive in the cause of Allah) cannot be deemed equal to '*Al-Qa'idin*' (those who remain at home and hold back from this striving) yet both words are subject and object of the verb '*Yastawi*' respectively.

'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 95), i.e. the '*Al-Qa'idin*' (believers remaining at home and holding back from strife). The opposite in the verse is '*Al-Mujahidin*' (those who strive in the cause of Allah). However, the opposite of the word '*Al-Qa'idin*' (those who are sitting - in colloquial language) is '*Al-Qa'imin*' (those who are standing up) and the opposite of the Arabic word '*Al-Mujahidin*' (those who strive in the cause of Allah) is '*Ghayr Al-Mujahidin*' (those who do not strive in the cause of Allah). Thus, it is possible to say that '*Al-Qa'idin*' (those who are standing up) are not equal to '*Al-Qa'imin*' (those who are standing up), or that '*Al-Mujahidin*' (those who strive in the cause of Allah) are not equal to

'*Ghayr Mujahidin*' (those who do not strive in the Cause of Allah). So what is the reason for using the word '*Al-Qa'idin*' (those who remain at home and hold back from fighting) – in the context of this verse) and *Al-Mujahidin*' (those who strive in the Cause of Allah)?

Allah *Glorified is He* reveals that with the advent of Islam every believer regarded himself a soldier in a state of readiness to fight. The early Muslims were never in a relaxed state; rather, they were prepared to fight as if each of them was constantly standing to respond to the call of duty whenever it came. This also implies that the one who passively sits down should not actually be counted among the believers. This point is further elucidated by the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'The best of people is a man who is holding his horse's rein in the cause of Allah (in *Jihad*) and is galloping towards the place whenever he hears a call for war or detects a note of danger; he goes on proceeding, seeking martyrdom wherever it is expected. And a man who retires with some sheep in at the top of a mountain or a valley. He performs prayer regularly and pays the *zakat*, continues worshiping his Lord till death overtakes him. He does not interfere in the affairs of the people except for betterment.' ⁽¹⁾

The believer who is not in a state of readiness to fight is considered '*Qa'id*' (sitting and remaining at home), where as the opposite is '*Qa'im*' (standing up) as known. Allah Almighty says in another verse: '...remember Allah standing, sitting...' (*an-Nisa*: 103).

This verse indicates that the opposite of '*Qiyam*' (standing up) is '*Qu'ud*' (sitting down). It should be taken into consideration that each word has a specific meaning; some people think that the Arabic word '*Qu'ud*' is the same as '*Julus*' since both mean (sitting). But if the semantics of the two words are considered more scrupulously, it will be noted that the word '*Qu'ud*' is always used as the opposite of '*Qiyam*' (standing up or standing), whereas '*Julus*' is the opposite of '*Idtija*' (reclining). Thus, people say that a person was

(1) [*Related by Muslim in the chapter on Government, Ibn Majah in the chapter on Tribulations, and Ahmad*] ... The word "*Hi'ah*" which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the Hadith, means the sound heard as the enemy comes, "*Faz'ah*" means proceeding to encounter the enemy and "*Sha'fah*" means at the top of a mountain.

'*Mudtaji*' (reclining) then '*Jalis*' (sitting up), or a person was '*Qa'im*' (standing up) then '*Qa'id*' (sitting down). Allah Almighty says: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled...' (*an-Nisa*: 95).

Qu'ud is always used as the opposite of '*Qiyam*' (standing up). This indicates that the '*Mujahidun*' (those who strive in Allah's Cause) are constantly standing prepared and attentive, waiting for the call to strive in the cause of Allah. The Hadith cited above expands the sphere of responsibility of the *Mujahid* (the person who strives in the cause of Allah), as it depicts him as being constantly ready, on the back of his horse and holding its bridle in order that nothing may surprise him.

Is the inequality of the one who holds back from fighting in the cause of Allah and the one who strives in His cause a questionable matter? No; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to clarify a hidden matter concerning faith in a manner lucid enough for everyone to understand.

Some people may say to a student, 'Whoever studies succeeds and whoever does not study fails.' Although this is a self-evident matter, people may say it to clarify this point to the student so that he keeps attentive to his responsibilities. Similarly, when Allah Almighty says: 'Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the *Mujahidin*, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah...' (*an-Nisa*: 95), this does not mean that a single mind at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would ever think that those who strive in Allah's Cause were equal to those who remain at home and hold back from fighting. However, Allah Almighty puts it forward as a matter pertinent to faith within the context of a statement on faith. Subsequently, Allah Almighty draws the believers' attention to those who hold back from fighting and cannot be deemed equal to those who strive in His cause. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...other than the disabled...' (*an-Nisa*: 95). The word '*Darar*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the harm that afflicts something, such as illness which harms a person's health. Allah Almighty clarifies this point when He says: 'There is not upon the weak or upon the ill or upon those who do not find anything to spend any discomfort when they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]. And Allah is

Forgiving and Merciful. Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, 'I can find nothing for you to ride upon.' They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah].'*(at-Tawba: 91-92)*

The Arabic word '*Da'f*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means weakness that harms the person's health and well-being. Illness is considered as a type of harm. By the same token, the verse refers to the believers who are not to be blamed for not striving in the cause of Allah Almighty, such as those who did not have enough money to spend and those who went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to join the battle, but there were not enough riding animals to carry them. Consequently, they turned back, while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend for the cause of Allah Almighty. The believers among them would grieve that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not have enough horses or any other riding animals to transport them to the battle field.

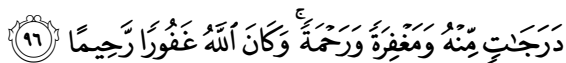
'Nor in those who when they came to you that you might carry them, you said: I cannot find that on which to carry you; they went back while their eyes overflowed with tears on account of grief for not finding that which they should spend.'*(at-Tawba: 92)* They went back, while their eyes were overflowing with tears. The word *tawalaw* (went back) has a considerable significance. So the True Lord does not say that their eyes overflow with tears and stops without adding "went back"; they do not shed tears in the presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Rather, their tears were while they were going back. Their emotional response was due to the excessive grief they felt as a result of not being able to participate in fighting. The word *tafeed* (overflowed) indicates that tears deluged the entire eye. Thus, they were not faking grief; rather, they were overwhelmed by their emotions. The one who fakes crying squeezes his eyes and exerts a lot of effort to attract attention. By contrast, the grief of the believers who failed to participate overwhelmed them and so tears flooded from their eyes.

There is another verse in which Allah Almighty specified the cases in which a believer is not required to fight: 'There is no harm in the blind, nor is

there any harm in the lame, nor is there any harm in the sick (if they do not go forth); and whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter gardens beneath which rivers flow, and whoever turns back, He will punish him with a painful punishment.' (*al-Fath*: 17) Those then are the disabled ones. "The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury, and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons are not equal' (*an-Nisa'*: 95). As long as they cannot be deemed equal, one wonders who is better. This is explained in the rest of the verse that encompasses the clear, faith-based statement: 'Allah has made those who strive with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a (high) degree and to each (class) Allah has promised the ultimate good.' (*an-Nisa'*: 95)

Allah Almighty has promised the ultimate good unto both groups because both of them are believers. But the one who strives hard in Allah's Cause is exalted a degree above those who remain passive. If someone wonders: why did Allah Almighty promise the ultimate good unto both? To this person I respond: We have to be attentive and properly understand and deliberate the Quran upon reading it. Would Allah not reward the one whom He destined to suffer an ailment that kept him from fighting yet tolerated His decree? Such a person is bound to reap a reward for his deed. The True Lord must therefore give a chance to the one who did not receive such a reward to earn another one so that everyone would have equal opportunity in their religious pursuit. For this reason Allah Almighty says: 'and to each (class) Allah has promised the ultimate good.' (*an-Nisa'*: 95) The ultimate good for the disabled is the reward they receive for their patience and endurance for the calamity that befell them, whereas the one who was not befallen by a detriment takes a reward for fighting in the cause of Allah Almighty. In this manner, everyone receives the ultimate good from Allah *Glorified is He*: '...and to each (class) Allah has promised the ultimate good.' (*an-Nisa'*: 95)

Nonetheless, Allah Almighty sets an additional reward for the one who strives in His cause in distinction from the one who holds back. At the beginning of the verse He assigns a "high degree" of exaltation to the one who strives in His cause, then, He speaks about a mighty reward that awaits him. So, what is the meaning of this mighty reward? The following verses respond to this question:



**high ranks conferred by Him, as well as forgiveness,
and mercy: God is most forgiving and merciful [96]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 96)**

Allah *Glorified is He* assigned a degree to those who are disabled, yet, He privileged those who strive in His cause over the disabled by a number of degrees. When we encounter or hear the word *daraja* (degree) we should know that it refers to status; but status, of itself, is not enough for a comprehensive elucidation of the meaning; it is rather, an ascending status; a status of elevation and exaltation. By contrast, if we want to indicate a change to a lower or more inferior status we use the word '*darakat*' (descending degrees) and not *darajat* (degrees). But are these degrees exclusively for those who strive in the cause of Allah Almighty? No, we must notice the difference between departing from one's home-land and abandoning one's family for the sake of striving and fighting in the cause of Allah Almighty on one hand, and the process of fighting in itself on the other hand. '*Jihad*' (fighting in the cause of Allah) itself requires a faith-inspired will. For this reason, The True Lord puts forward the following saying in the chapter of *at-Tawba*: 'It did not seem the people of Medina and those around about them of the dwellers of the desert to remain behind the Messenger of Allah, nor should they desire (anything) for themselves in preference to him; this is because there afflicts them not thirst or fatigue or hunger in the way of Allah, nor do they tread a path which enrages the disbelievers, nor do they attain from the enemy what they attain, but a good work is written down to them on account of it; surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good;* Nor do they spend anything that may be spent, small or great, nor do they traverse a valley, but it is written down to their credit, that Allah may reward them with the best of what they have done.' (*at-Tawba*: 120-121)

In this verse, the True Lord explains that it is inappropriate for the people of Medina and the nomads living around them to fall behind and not participate in striving in His cause along with the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They should not be content with relaxation, comfort and luxury, while the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is in asperity. Inasmuch as he went forth to fight in the cause of Allah Almighty,

they must also go because the reward is enormous. They will be rewarded for any pain or suffering they may endure in doing a good deed. Similarly, they will be rewarded for any hunger they may suffer or any trouble they go through. They will be rewarded for any step they take that angers the disbelievers, (by taking over a place that the disbelievers wanted to dominate). Allah Almighty will also reward them whenever they defeat an enemy; for Allah Almighty rewards people for more than they actually do.

Scholars have subsumed these divine endowments under seven degrees. Someone may achieve all of the degrees. Another who has only endured thirst gets the reward for such endurance. Another who has suffered exhaustion will only receive the reward for enduring exhaustion. A third may have only suffered a dire necessity; a fourth may have achieved three degrees and a fifth may have attained all these degrees.

The seven degrees could be enumerated as follows: suffering thirst, exhaustion, hunger, stepping in a place that infuriates the disbelievers (taking over a place or a well-defended fortification of theirs), defeating and punishing the enemy, small or big expenses and crossing any valley in the cause of Allah Almighty. These, as scholars explained, are the seven strata deeds for which Allah Almighty rewards its doers more than they did. Whoever attains these seven degrees has attained a great status. Every '*mujahid*' (striver) in the cause of Allah Almighty gets rewarded in proportion to the effort and work he exerted. Some striver may attain one degree; others may attain two, three, four, five, six or all of the seven. Let us read the two foregoing verses together:

'The holders back from among the believers, not having any injury and those who strive hard in Allah's way with their property and their persons are not equal; Allah has made the strivers with their property and their persons to excel the holders back a (high) degree, and to each (class) Allah has promised good; and Allah shall grant to the strivers above the holders back a mighty reward: *(High) degrees from Him and protection and mercy, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 95-96)

Reading these verses, we realise that Allah Almighty wants the believers to strive in His cause and exert effort until His word becomes the highest of all. Thus, if man believes, he should never fall behind and stray from the

faith-based unity. As long as he has availed himself of faith why would he not become one of those who benefit others with their faith? Allah Almighty wants to call up everyone whose heart has been touched by faith, even if he were in a place dominated by disbelievers, to rid himself of being surrounded by them and alternatively join his brothers in faith. Allah Almighty also induces every believer to spread faith to others and to practically demonstrate that he loves people and desires for them what he desires for himself. But there were some who said: 'we are weak and incapable of either emigrating or fighting in Allah's Cause. Here the Quran clearly states that no one has an excuse not to participate in fighting in Allah's Cause and for the cause of advocating the religion of Allah *Glorified is He*. The True Lord thus says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَوَفَّيْتُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ ظَالِمِينَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ قَالُوا فِيمَ كُنْتُمْ قَالُوا كُنَّا مُسْتَضْعَفِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
 قَالُوا أَلَمْ تَكُنْ أَرْضُ اللَّهِ وَسِعَةً فَهَاجِرُوا فِيهَا فَاُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١٧﴾

When the angels take the souls of those who have wronged themselves, they ask them, 'What circumstances were you in?' They reply, 'We were oppressed in this land,' and the angels say, 'But was God's earth not spacious enough for you to migrate to some other place?' These people will have Hell as their refuge, an evil destination [97] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 97)

Those are the ones who wrong themselves inasmuch as they do not take part in fighting in Allah's Cause. This is what happens to them when the angels '*tawaffahumu*' (seize their souls in death). '*At-Tawaffi*' means '*qabd*' (an Arabic word that has several meanings: (grab – get hold of – collect money). For instance, one may say in Arabic: '*tawfaytu dayni*' meaning I have completely collected or taken back the loan I lent to so and so person. One may also say Allah *Glorified is He* has collected, to death, this human being, meaning that Allah Almighty fully seized the soul of the human being and took it away. Collecting to death happens upon the orders of higher commander such as the True Lord's deputy, the Angel of death; it is widely assumed that the Angel of Death whose name is Azra'il follows. After Azra'il comes, the angels then assist him. Death may thereby be attributed to either Allah (Almighty as the higher commander or to the angels as in His saying: "...until, when death

approaches any of you, Our messengers cause him to die...' (*al-An'am*: 61). Or it may be attributed to the angel of death: 'Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die...' (*as-Sajda*: 11).

When the True Lord employs these three styles in describing the process of death, would this be considered a difference and contradiction in the Quranic style? No; it is rather a clarification of the hierarchy of assignment set by Allah Almighty. He is the highest commander who issues the order to the Angel of death and then the Angel of death orders his assistants. There are analogous examples in our day to day life -and to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the supreme and most exalted parables. A student may go to his school after the final examination, then turns back home and say: I have found that I failed and the cause of my failure is the teachers who deliberately caused my failure. His father may then answer him and say: your teachers had no hand in this. Rather, the laws set for grading exams by the ministry of education caused your failure. The student may then say: the headmaster of the school is the one who caused me to fail. This is a true statement because the headmaster of the school applies the laws according to which he makes decisions concerning the passing or failure of students. The student may also claim that the minister of education is the cause of his failure. This is also a true statement because the minister along with his assistants, are all the ones who set the main guidelines according to which the grades of each student are calculated. Accordingly, if the student says: the state has caused me to fail, this would be a true statement too because he understood the hierarchy of law enactment and enforcement from bottom to top. He also realised that any of these levels or echelons may be deemed the actor or cause of his failure. We may thus understand that when the True Lord says: 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death...' (*az-Zumar*: 42), this statement is equally true to the following saying: 'Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die...' (*as-Sajda*: 11). This is similar to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Our messengers cause him to die....' (*al-An'am*: 61) All these sayings are true because they related to the hierarchy set by the commander.

'Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves...' (*an-Nisa'*: 97). Wronging is to give someone, who has no right, something which you have taken from the one who has the right to this thing. Wronging

requires or involves someone who acts as a wrong-doer, another who is wronged and an issue or matter in connection with which the wronging takes place. But how may the angels collect in death a human being in a state of wronging himself? This human being must have done something to deserve such a death. The human being develops the moral of a believing soul after he believes in Allah Almighty and His path; however, his self may tempt him to violate and deviate from the path of Allah Almighty. In such a case, there rises a conflict between two issues: the sense of responsibility inspired by his believing soul with which he accepted the path of Allah *Glorified is He* and the temptation of the self that pushes him to deviate from that same path. In this vein, a dialogue ensues between the responsibility inspired by the believing soul and the temptation of the self that pushes one to deviate from the path of Allah Almighty. If the believing soul triumphs and wins, one knows that his self has become tranquil and happy. He thus says to himself: 'had you yielded and succumbed to the temptation to deviate, you would have satisfied a transient desire that would ultimately lead you to be tortured by the fire in the Hereafter. By resisting this desire you did justice and salvaged yourself. Had you succumbed to your transient desire you would have sinned against yourself.'

Analogous things take place in our day-to-day life: If a mother pampers and spoils her son while his father is asking him to study and deters him in order to undertake his responsibility to study, such a mother would be wronging her son. The True Lord gives us an idea about the conflict between the believing soul and the deviant self that only wants to pursue its interest. He therefore says⁽¹⁾: 'And relate to them the story of the two sons of Adam with truth when they both offered an offering, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said: I will most certainly slay you. (The other) said: Allah only accepts from those who guard (against evil).' (*al-Ma'ida*: 27)

Here Abel says to Caine (the two sons of Adam mentioned in this verse): But why would you kill me? I am not the one who accepted the sacrifice; it is rather, Allah Almighty is the One Who did. What sin did I then commit? Afterwards this dialogue follows: 'If you will stretch forth your hand towards

(1) The story of Abel and Caine (Adam's son)

me to slay me, I am not one to stretch forth my hand towards you to slay you surely I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28).

Let us pay attention to the following wise saying of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted*: 'Then his mind facilitated to him the slaying of his brother...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30). It is as if there is a conflict inside Cain between two commands 'kill' and 'do not kill.' The believing soul is telling him: 'do not kill' and the temptation-driven self is saying: 'you have to kill' him. His temptation-driven self ultimately triumphed, led him to kill his brother and facilitated such an atrocity to him. Then, after he had killed his brother, his flaming anger calmed down and he became of the regretful. Then, the signs of such loss started to reveal themselves and become evident. Allah *Glorified is He* then sent forth a raven to scratch and dig the earth in order to bury another raven. Upon witnessing such a scene, Cain said: "Woe me, do I lack the strength that I should be like this crow and cover the dead body of my brother?" (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

We thus realise that wronging oneself is to violate and oppose what Allah Almighty has decreed for the self to benefit in a complete and eternal manner. Nevertheless, the self may haste after its love for temptations and its desire for immediate benefit and utility that does not last for eternity. When man fulfils this immediate, transient need for an immediate benefit, he is actually wronging himself. 'Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?"' (*an-Nisa'*: 97). Thus the angels ask those who sin against themselves: in what condition were you, by reference to your faith. In this context, the interrogative form is used for rebuking and censuring, in the sense of why or how come you wronged yourselves? Why did you not do as your brothers did? Why did you not emigrate and join the parade of faith and the parade of '*jihad*' (fighting in Allah's Cause)? Why did you stay in your places, locked up, engulfed and incapable of either moving or escaping? The answer of those who wronged themselves is: '...We were oppressed in the land.' (*an-Nisa'*: 97) By Allah (when Allah Almighty clarifies what happens on the Day of Judgement in such illustration, would we have time to avail ourselves of what Allah Almighty will do) when this day comes? We will definitely not be able to do

so. The reason is that we will not be able to reverse our deeds and mistakes at this point. The True Lord depicts to us this scene due to His Subtlety and Kindness. It is also a warning to all of us: beware lest the time comes and what I have already foretold and warned you against happens. In such instance, none of you will be able to redeem his life in order to do good deeds. Rather, each of you should now consider his state.

'Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land.' (*an-Nisa'*: 97) The statement: '..."We were oppressed in the land"...' (*an-Nisa'*: 97) indicates that other people caused them to be weak; this means that they were not capable of going out and emigrating and did not even know the means of doing so. Furthermore, they were worried about their wealth and their homes. Those who caused them to be weak told them: if you go out and depart from your cities do not take anything of your wealth with you. These are some of the aspects of causing someone to be weak. In this context, the angels reply that this discourse is inappropriate and futile. The angels say: "Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" (*an-Nisa'*: 97) 'It is as if this is another warning and a declaration that this kind of statement and such kind of pretext is valueless because the one who is concerned about his/her position and wealth more than he is about obeying Allah Almighty, has connected his belief to worldly means. By contrast, the one who places Allah Almighty over and above his position, offspring and everything else is the one who has confidence in Allah *Glorified is He* because He is the giver and granter of all means.

'Was the earth of Allah not spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?...'*(an-Nisa'*: 97) This saying by the angles comes from the higher law. The True Lord created all the creation and made them inhabit the earth. This earth is thus not for someone or some group exclusive of others. Whoever thinks that a place is not wide enough for him to forsake the domain of evil should go to another place.

If a man, due to his injustice, arrogance, and tyranny, has limited and imposed restrictions on places, to the effect that no one is capable of moving from one place to another except after a long series of complications that precludes the

transportation from one place to the other, this is something contradictory to the essence of Allah *Glorified is He* choosing man to be his caliphate (representative) on earth. The reason is that this mission did not distribute people and assign them to certain pieces of land. Rather, every human being is the vicegerent of Allah Almighty on earth in accordance with the saying of the True Lord: 'And the earth, He has set it for living creatures;' (*ar-Rahman*: 10)

Allah *Glorified is He* made the earth subservient to man. "The earth" in this context, refers to any part of the earth and "creatures" refers to the totality of terrestrial creatures. If the people do not heed this matter and recognise it as a social and universal principle, the entire world will lapse into corruption and hardship. The thing that really corrupts life on earth is the promulgation of such statements as: the population density prevents so and so country from securing sufficient food for its people. People say so even though there might be other pieces of land that needs labour force to be reclaimed. This is why humanity faces a paradoxical situation: there is land in certain countries that needs labour power and there may be people in a certain country who just need a piece of land.

The earth should be open for roaming so that the land that needs labour may find enough labourers in the countries that have no enough land. All of this fuss spreading in the universe is because there is land without labour and labour without land. If a human being finds that there is a place which is not wide enough for his needs, he should thereby move to another place. If this was the case all of mankind would be in a state of happiness and contentment. Furthermore, whoever breaches this rule ought to know that he does not follow the conditions of being the vicegerent of Allah Almighty on earth. The cause of corruption on earth is that man, the caliphate of Allah Almighty on earth, has become oblivious to the finite bound of his capacity as the vicegerent of Allah Almighty and deemed himself an original, abiding element in the universe. Insofar, as man thinks so of himself, this constitutes corruption on earth: 'Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, "In what [condition] were you?" They will say, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will say, "Was the earth of Allah not spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?" For those, their refuge is Hell – and evil it is as a destination.' (*an-Nisa'*: 97)

Thus, if one stays content with injustice and does not apply his thought and reason to reflect upon the universe, realise how the earth is wide enough to contain him, one should know that he risks facing an evil destiny. The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* has created the entire universe for man in order for him to serve as His vicegerent in it. As for those who escape punishment and the scolding of the angels, they ought to know that they are bound to reach a moment of death. They are the ones that the True Lord describes in the following verse:

إِلَّا الْمُسْتَضْعِفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ لَا
يَسْتَطِيعُونَ حِيلَةً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٨﴾

**but not so the truly helpless men, women, and children
who have no means in their power nor any way to
leave [98] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*': 98)**

We ought to discern the difference between someone who claims to be weak and another who really is weak. There is someone who may have accepted to be weak even before anyone may have caused him to be so and thus turned himself into a weak person. This is the one who claims and alleges to be weak. As for the one who really is weak, he must be among those whom the True Lord specified: 'Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not, in their power, the means, nor can they find a way (to escape)' (*an-Nisa*': 98) Those are the men, women or children who are truly weak due to the nature of their incapacity.

Would a boy among boys be considered weak? The answer is yes; the reason is that weakness may either be accidentally caused by external factors or self-caused and induced. For instance, someone may be weak because they are possessed by others and are incapable of acting or moving around on their own. The same holds for women; a woman ought not to walk alone and be asked to protect herself. Rather, someone must accompany and protect her, whether it be her husband or one of the men whom she is forbidden to marry. The same holds for children because, by nature, they are not obligated to any assignments from Allah Almighty. They are thus excluded from the scope of the angels' scolding because they do not have, in their power, the means nor can they find a way (to escape).

This is the precise articulation of the Quran. Man has been assigned by Allah *Glorified is He* to depart from the place wherein he is wronged by others even by manoeuvring. Manoeuvring is the application of thought in a way that gives man a bigger opportunity than what is actually available for him. Thus, man may have little or impaired strength; but by manoeuvring one may expand the opportunities of strength. Here is an illustrative example. Someone may try to carry a rock. However he may not be capable of doing so with his own hands. He thus brings forth an iron bar of which he makes a lever under which he places a wheel to roll down the rock. This is a trick or manoeuvre. The same holds for the podiums that we use for construction; they are also a product of mental manoeuvring.

One wonders how the one who built the pyramids placed the last rock on its top. He did so by manoeuvring. The same holds for the one who sculpts from granite an obelisk, that is more than ten meters tall, then moved and erected. He must have done so by way of manoeuvring. Thus, intellectual manoeuvring is a way of thinking that adds to man's capacity and power over what he needs to achieve. The same applies to knowing the right way to migration. Knowing the immigration roads from Mecca to Medina at the time of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* required expertise so that one may avoid wastelands and intertwined paths. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* immigrated to Medina he used a guide for the road, though this guide was a disbeliever because travelling down this land was not possible without a guide. Let us consider the saying of the True Lord:

فَأُولَٰئِكَ عَسَىٰ اللَّهُ أَن يَعْفُو عَنْهُمْ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفْوًا غَفُورًا ﴿٩٩﴾

**God may well pardon these, for He is most pardoning
and most forgiving [99] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 99)**

The word "these" refers to those who have been mentioned in the verse preceding this one: 'Except the weak from among the men and the children who have not, in their power, the means, nor can they find a way (to escape) ' (*an-Nisa'*: 98). Despite this, when Allah *Glorified is He* refers to those who are truly weak in the fullest sense He says: 'So these, it may be, Allah will pardon

them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 99) It would have sufficed had the True Lord said: 'so these, Allah pardoned them,' but the True Lord uses, "it may be", to urge them to hope for Allah's forgiveness. Hoping may either be a possibility or impossibility. We know that (*'asa*) —the Arabic word here translated as "it may be"— expresses hope and that it is often used when what follows is something desirable to us and we would like it to happen. You may indeed hope for something from another person and say: May you well do so and so thing. One may say: May I well do such and such thing. In this context, the speaker is the one who has the power to undertake the action at stake. This is a little bit stronger. But man's power may fail him; for this reason one should better say: May Allah *Glorified is He* well do so and so; this is a reliance on absolute power. If Allah *Glorified is He* Himself is the One Who says: 'it may be, Allah will pardon them,' (*an-Nisa'*: 99). This is an enticement and encouragement put forward by the All-Generous and All-Capable.

The True Lord describes for us the condition of the one who dies and the angels collect him to death, when he was wronging him/herself, by staying in a land where he/she suffers injustice, though it was in his/her hands to immigrate to another Muslim land wherein belief and faith prevail. Nevertheless, whoever does so but still takes it upon himself to achieve something for the cause of faith, Allah *Glorified is He* would support him/her. Allah Almighty says:

وَمَنْ يُهَاجِرْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يَجِدْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُرَاعِمًا كَثِيرًا وَسَعَةً وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكُهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٠﴾

Anyone who migrates for God's cause will find many a refuge and great plenty in the earth and if anyone leaves home as a migrant towards God and His Messenger and is then overtaken by death, his reward from God is sure. God is most forgiving and most merciful [100] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 100)

Whoever forsakes the domain of evil and immigrates for the sake of Allah Almighty will find abundant life, if he/she faith purifies his intention. At the beginning, the Muslims immigrated to Abyssinia (Ethiopia) because they did not feel secure about their religion in Mecca. For this reason, it was said that Allah *Glorified is He* has stretched the universe before Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him and introduced the issue of migrating in the universe. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* then refused to let the migrants head anywhere except for Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The True Lord must have informed him that Abyssinia at that time was a land free of any injustice or turmoil.

But someone may wonder: why did the Prophet Muhammad not decide to let the migrants immigrate to any other Arab tribe, whether in the northern or the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula? The reason is that Quraysh dominated the entire Arabian Peninsula and all its tribes. All tribes used to perform pilgrimage at Quraysh main headquarters. There was not any other Arabian environment capable of opposing the interest of Quraysh. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* surveyed all other countries and then ordered his companions to immigrate to Abyssinia. The reason for choosing and going to Abyssinia is that the reigning king there did not wrong anyone. Justice was thus the advantage and merit of this king. This is why the believers called Abyssinia the land of security even though it was not a land of faith. As for immigration to Medina it was to a land of faith. We who live in this age must know that there is no immigration after the conquest of Mecca, unless the one who immigrates intends to do so to support and promote obedience to Allah *Glorified is He*. This is what the saying of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarifies: "The Muslim is the one who spares his other fellow Muslims the evil of his tongue and hand, and the immigrant is the one who emigrates from what Allah forbids."⁽¹⁾

However, there is still a form of immigration that we may, as Muslims, undertake; it is the pilgrimage or immigrating for the cause of acquiring knowledge or immigrating to a land where there is more room for obedience to Allah Almighty. Let us assume that there is a place where the rulers prohibit people from going to the mosque. People of faith should abandon this place and go to another one wherein man may enjoy the freedom of performing religious enactments; all these are examples of immigration for the sake of Allah Almighty. Intention in immigration cannot be limited to the pursuit of abundance in livelihood; otherwise it cannot be deemed for the sake of Allah

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari, Abu Dawud, and An-Nasa'i

Almighty. For this reason, people, in these days, should not -as actually is the case- be merely concerned with pursuing abundance in livelihood.

Imam Ali *may Allah honour his face* said: 'I am astonished at those people who relentlessly pursue what is already guaranteed to them and abandon what they have been asked to do. All people constantly strive for and pursue is their livelihood even though their Creator guaranteed it for them: 'And whoever emigrates in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources, and whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 100)

The migrant who forsakes the land of evil for the sake of Allah Almighty, will find abundance except from Allah Almighty. In this respect, a poet says:

I may indeed swear that land is never too small for its people;

Rather, the conduct and morals of the people becomes too narrow.

Someone may say: I am seeking abundance in livelihood via emigration. We say: you are in fact seeking a job that seemingly assumes the form of serious work, while its essence is laziness because in the course of life where you live, you encounter a lot of suitable jobs.

We also come across some who seek abundance in livelihood but insist on accepting only idle office jobs and vainly taking a salary for it. They do so even though the society is direly searching for technical workers. It is as if those who seek abundance in livelihood want to enjoy such abundance despite their laziness and without exerting effort.

'And whoever emigrates in Allah's way, he will find in the earth many a place of refuge and abundant resources.' (*an-Nisa'*: 100) Upon reading "many a place of refuge", one ought to realise that it is intended to open up a path before the weak people who have been subjugated by the tyrants. The root of the Arabic word '*muragham*' translated as "many a place of refuge" is composed of the letters '*r*', '*gh*' and '*m*' and it refers to '*al-rugham*' (soil/earth). It is customary to say: I will do so and cause the nose of so and so person to be '*raghim*'—meaning let the nose of so and so person be buried under earth and soil—I will thus do what I insist on doing. As long as someone is going to do something against the will of another, this means that the latter wanted to

subjugate the former and force him to do something, but he refused and did what he wanted.

When one encounters a tyrant, one should preserve his pride and challenge their arrogance. One must thus try to be stubborn, do things against the will of this tyrant and make him feel as if his nose were buried under earth and soil. Popular proverbs say: I want to break the nose of so and so person.

Someone may be weak and humiliated in his own country; however upon immigrating to a different country he may find people or resources that enable him to break, overpower and challenge his enemy. His enemy may then say: though I have impinged on his life he fled to a place better than I could expect. He thus managed to challenge and break the injustice of the tyrant who used to inflict injustice upon him, by emigrating.

The grammatical form of the word '*muragham*' is that of the object position in the sentence; it refers to a place that if you reach, you would challenge and break the pride of the one who used to humiliate you. Is there anything better than this?' He who emigrates (from his home) in the cause of Allah will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by.' (*an-Nisa'*: 100). This means that Allah endows the emigrant by making the one who used to make him feel subordinate and humiliated, feel ashamed as if his nose were smeared with mud. The one who is weak in a particular land is often constrained by someone else. However, when he emigrates from this land for the sake of Allah, he will find ease and abundance concerning his livelihood. The True Lord continues: 'And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever forgiving and Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 100) No one knows the time of his death. Accordingly, someone may leave his land for the cause of Allah but does not meet 'those who humiliated him' since death may take him. If this happens, this person will still receive his reward from Allah *the Exalted*. Allah promised to guide the sincere emigrant to a place where he can take retribution from those who humiliated him, which is a cause. However, dying before reaching this place would mean that he went to the Creator of the Cause Whose Bounty is limitless. We thus realise that an emigrant will profit, whether living or dead.

It is as if the True Lord *the Exalted* says to His servant, 'If you emigrate to any one of Allah's vast pieces of land on earth and die before reaching the many lonely roads and the abundant life that I have made available for you, rest assured that you will return to me.' The lonely roads are one of Allah's Causes, and He is the Cause of all causes.

In order to understand the meaning of 'his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah', we have to contemplate the saying of the True Lord: 'And when the word befalls them' (*an-Naml*: 82). Interestingly, Allah *Glorified is He* does so to draw our attention to an important matter. The reward is keener to reach its recipient than the latter is to gain and receive it. If a servant of Allah *the Almighty* dies, his reward will seek him while he is with his Lord. The reward knows the one to whom it is going to quite well. This is how we ought to understand the meaning of the saying of the True Lord: 'He who emigrates (from his home) in the cause of Allah, will find on earth many dwelling places and plenty to live by. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever forgiving and Merciful.' (*an-Nisa*': 100)

Allah is Most Forgiving and the Dispenser of Mercy towards the one who is careful and patient. In other words, Allah is Most Forgiving and the Dispenser of Mercy so that the one who is careful and patient may meet up with the caravan of faith and make up for what he missed since Allah *Glorified is He* forgives a servant's past mistakes and sins if he tries to correct them. Emigration requires setting forth on the earth and striving hard in Allah's Cause.

After Allah *the Exalted* had set the pillars of Islam, He identified what a Muslim must do of these pillars. The pillars of Islam are the following: professing of faith, praying, fasting, giving *zakat* (obligatory alms) to the poor and pilgrimage to the House, for those who are able. Any Muslim may profess the testimonies of faith and may pray. However, a Muslim may not have any money and for this reason, the True Lord exempts him from the obligation to pay *zakat* (obligatory charity) to the poor. Another may suffer from an endemic illness that keeps him from fasting and in this case, Allah, the Merciful, exempts him from the obligation of fasting. A third person may not be capable

of performing the pilgrimage and in this case Allah *the Exalted* similarly exempts him from the obligation of performing pilgrimage. In contrast, a Muslim may only profess that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger once in his life. As for the remaining pillar, prayer, man is never exempted from doing it except if he is no longer fit to perform it. For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The most important thing is Islam, and its pillar is praying.'⁽¹⁾ The reason is that prayer is the pillar of which no one is ever exempted since Allah *Glorified is He* and has incorporated all the other pillars in prayers. During prayer, a Muslim professes that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger. During prayer, one refrains from eating and drinking. In addition, one fasts and abstains from speaking while praying. Thus, we find that praying is more comprehensive in abstinence than the pillar of fasting itself. When one prays, he abstains from doing many things that he may do while fasting. For instance, fasting does not prevent one from moving from one place to another. In contrast, praying precludes all forms of action and motion except for standing before Allah *the Almighty*.

Thus, praying involves a more encompassing form of abstinence and a refraining from mundane worldly activities than the abstinence and refraining involved in fasting. Giving *zakat* (obligatory charity) to the poor consists in giving away some of one's wealth which he acquires through his labour and work. Such labour and work consumes time. Praying is giving away one's time which is for the other activities he does (but he gives them up to pray). To sum it up, prayer involves a more encompassing form of worship than paying *zakat* (obligatory charity).

Performing pilgrimage to the Sacred House, or *Al-Ka'ba*, is also more involved than praying since a Muslim must direct himself towards the Sacred House while praying, and so forth. For this reason, prayer has a different status than that of the rest of the Islamic pillars. It was not enacted through revelation. It was rather decreed in an immediate encounter between the Lord of Muhammad and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself.

(1) Related by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi

Prayer has such a high status that the True Lord warns us against striving and labouring on earth distracting us from it. Allah *Glorified is He* even legislated special kind of prayer, called the 'prayer of war' and the 'prayer of fear' so that no one could claim that war or fear kept him from praying. During war, a Muslim ought to adhere to the Path of his Lord. The same holds for travelling, The True Lord ordained a shorter prayer:

وَإِذَا صَرَيْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَقْصُرُوا مِنَ الصَّلَاةِ إِنَّ
خِفْتُمْ أَنْ يُفْنِيَنَّكُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ كَانُوا لَكُمْ عَدُوًّا مُبِينًا ﴿١٠١﴾

**When you [believers] are travelling in the land,
you will not be blamed for shortening your
prayers, if you fear the disbelievers may harm
you: they are your sworn enemies [101]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 101)**

The phrase 'Travel throughout the land' means that a believer walks firmly, resolutely and strongly on the earth. Shortness in prayers refers to the reduction of the number of *rak'as* for each prayer. Linguistically, there is a distinction between *ikhtisar* and *iqtisar*. The latter refers to taking parts out of something and leaving the rest, whereas the former refers restructuring all parts of this thing in a summarising manner. A good example of the latter is when summarising a book, where we encapsulate its meaning in the smallest possible number of words.

Someone may consider writing a letter. He may then say to himself, in lieu of writing of letter, I shall send a telegraph about the same matter. In such case, one must reduce the number of words in a way that would make a small number of words bear much meaning. Elaboration, however, does not take as much time as a brief summary does. When one wants to summarise, one has to squeeze his mind for a long time until he manages to express all the meanings he wants via a smaller number of words. It is said that Sa'd Zaghlul, the leader of the 1919 revolution in Egypt, wrote quite a lengthy letter to one of his friends which he sealed with the following words: 'I apologise for the length. I did not have enough time to summarise.' Similarly,

history tells us about a Muslim Caliphate who wanted to threaten a Roman leader. He thus wrote to him: 'After extending my greetings, be informed that I will dispatch against you an army whose beginning will reach you while its end still did not depart from my city.' In this sentence, the Caliphate managed to summarise the size of the impending danger which the King of the Romans would face in case he confronted a gigantic army that could fill the entire earth.

History also records that an Arab leader who was enmeshed in a difficult position in Dwamat Al-Jandal wrote to Khalid ibn Al-Walid only these words: 'It is you I need.' He did not say more in order to fully express using this short sentence the extent of painful suffering which he was experiencing.

Shortening the prayers means that a believer performs the noon, afternoon and evening prayers offering two *rak'as* instead of four. As for the sunrise and sunset prayers, one performs them as they are: the sunrise prayers consisting of two *rak'as* and the sunset consisting of three. The rationale underlying shortening of prayers is that Muslims should not be distracted away from watching the enemies while at war. Similarly, they should not be distracted away from prayer as per the saying of the True Lord: 'Verily, the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours.' (*an-Nisa'*: 103).

The fact that Allah *Glorified is He* decreed a special kind of prayer for fear and another for war means that under no circumstance is a believing slave of Allah supposed to forego praying. If praying is obligatory during battle times, one should realise how important prayer since lives are at stake and prayer is still incumbent during war and fighting. The prayers of war or the prayers of fear were decreed in the Quran. The concession to shorten the prayers when one is travelling was enacted in the *Sunnah* as well. A believer is thus permitted to shorten his prayers while travelling. If disbelievers were to see believers aligned in prayer, they would immediately attack them. For this reason, the True Lord decreed that prayers should be shorter at this time.

The next verse addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

وَإِذَا كُنْتَ فِيهِمْ فَأَقَمْتَ لَهُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَلَنْتَقِمَ طَائِفَةٌ مِنْهُمْ مَعَكَ وَلْيَأْخُذُوا أَسْلِحَهُمْ فَإِذَا
 سَجَدُوا فَلْيَكُونُوا مِنْ وَرَائِكُمْ وَلْتَأْتِ طَائِفَةٌ أُخْرَى لَمْ يُصَلُّوا فَلْيُصَلُّوا مَعَكَ
 وَلْيَأْخُذُوا حِذْرَهُمْ وَأَسْلِحَهُمْ وَالدَّيْنِ كَفَرُوا لَوْ تَغْفُلُونَ عَنْ أَسْلِحَتِكُمْ وَأَمْتِعَتِكُمْ
 فَيَمِيلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَيْلَةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِنْ كَانَ بِكُمْ أَذًى مِنْ مَطَرٍ أَوْ كُنْتُمْ
 مَرَضَى أَنْ تَضَعُوا أَسْلِحَتَكُمْ وَخُذُوا حِذْرَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ أَعَدَّ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

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, and 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, God has prepared a humiliating punishment for the disbelievers [102] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 102)

When the True Lord says: 'let a group of them stand [in prayer]', this implies that believers should be divided into two groups: a group praying with the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and another keeping guard watching the enemy. However, how may a group pray behind the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, while another does not, even though all of them are believers seeking the honour of praying with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? The True Lord commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lead each group in prayers once so that each fighter would enjoy the honour of praying behind the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Shortening prayers, as we know applies to the four *rak'as* prayers, namely, *Zhuhr*, *Asr* and *Al-'Ishaa* Prayers. As for *Maghrib* and *Fajr* Prayers, they are not shortened, for it is inconceivable that someone prays a *rak'a* and half. Furthermore, mathematically, we estimate, or round fractions to the highest number.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed the prayer of fear in different forms. There is nothing wrong with quickly describing these ways since teaching how to perform this prayer is the duty of leaders and scholars who lead the armies at battle times. There are several methods and ways for performing the prayer of fear. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to divide the armies into groups: a group praying with him and another in charge of watching the enemy. He then led each of the groups separately in prayers of two *rak'as* each.

There is an alternative way of praying, namely, that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* would lead a group in prayers consisting of only one *rak'a*. Afterwards, the other group which protected the first joins in the middle of the prayer to pray a *rak'a* with the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Afterwards, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ends the prayer.

Subsequently, the first group prays the second *rak'a* that it missed and then ends the prayer. Next, the second group prays the *rak'a* that it missed due to the shortening of prayer and then ends the prayer.

There is a third manner, viz., the first group prays with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* a *rak'a*. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* then does not pray the second *rak'a*; rather, he continues to stand until this group ends the prayer and calls upon the second group that was confronting the enemy to pray behind him, the ongoing *rak'a*, which is the second for Prophet Muhammad, but the first for the second group. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* remains sitting until the second group finishes the second *rak'a*, and then he terminates the prayer. In this manner, the first group enjoys the honour of starting the prayer with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, while the second enjoys the honour of terminating the prayer with him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In this context, one cannot help but wonder if prayers in such a manner are limited only to the era of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since praying with him is in itself an honour. If this were to be the case, how should Muslim fighters pray after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Scholars said, 'If you consider Muslim leader's successors of

Prophet Muhammad in ruling Muslims, the prayer of fear should be performed just as it is legislated in the Quran. However, if every group has its own leader, then each group should pray the shortened version of the prayer fully behind such leader.'

The word 'arms' in this context refers to actual weapons like swords, spears or guns. A fighter should take them along with him. As for the one who uses a heavy weapon, naturally he would not take it with him while praying.

'And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms.' (*an-Nisa*': 102) The Quranic statement is not composed of words that are merely uttered. It rather consists of words that the Lord of Mankind addresses to His entire creation which bear special significance for them. Those who initially joined the prayers left behind those who will protect them.

However, the second group that will leave its positions to pray behind the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is in charge of protecting both themselves and those who are praying, lest that proceeding to pray with Prophet Muhammad may distract them from the task of protection. For this reason Allah *the Exalted* said: 'taking precaution and carrying their arms.' It is clear now the first group is only required to retain its arms, whereas the second is required to take its arms and be fully prepared against danger.

Someone might ask, 'It is true that the weapons could be taken, but how may one take precautions even though it is an intangible process?' Regarding this, we say that Allah depicts the intangible matters and embodies them as physical so that man would not be oblivious to them. It is as if being on guard and prepared is a tool of warfare. Thus, beware as a fighter lest you miss it. This is matter quite widespread in the styles of the Noble Quran: 'And [also for] those who were settled in Medina and [adopted] the faith before them ' (*al-Hashr*: 9)

The house, or dwelling, is a place that man can inhabit and reside in. For example, Allah describes *Al-Ansar* who honoured the arrival of the *Al-Muhajirun*. A house is a place to which one resorts. Analogously, faith is the framework to which one refers in regards to all matters.

The True Lord described faith as a place in which one dwells. 'And [also for] those who were settled in Medina and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.' (*al-Hashr*: 9).

The True Lord gives physical presence to the abstract ideas in order for us to understand. This is exactly like the saying of the True Lord: 'let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you would become neglectful of your weapon and your baggage so they could come down upon you in one [single] attack.' (*an-Nisa'*: 102).

This explains to us why Allah *Glorified is He* commanded Muslims to retain their arms and be fully prepared against danger. The reason is that a fighter must worry about his arms and equipment. If a fighter loses them, this means that he lost his fighting tool, and losing his fighting tools will become a source of power for his enemies. Indeed, when a fighter takes away a weapon from his enemy, such a weapon turns into a source of power against that enemy.

Allah *the Exalted* warned them against losing their arms and equipment lest the power of their arms and equipment become an advantage to the force of their enemy. This would be an impairment of a believer and an empowerment of his enemy. Enemies of Islam want Muslims to be careless with their arms and equipment. Every believer ought to be completely immersed in and preoccupied with his presence before Allah *the Almighty* while praying. However, during battles, one should not become heedless and mindless of his confinements while praying. Thus, one should not forget his arms if prays during battle. Fighting in itself is a kind of standing before Allah, so he should not separate between fighting in Allah's Cause and praying to Allah. 'Those who disbelieve wish that you would become neglectful of your weapons and your baggage.' (*an-Nisa'*: 102) Carelessness, or neglecting, is an accidental forgetting of something that one should not to forget. This involves a clear warning. The reason is that carelessness, or neglecting, during war and at a time of battle is the dream of disbelievers, or something that they want to happen in order to achieve their goal as mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Exalted* 'so they

could come down upon you in one [single] attack.' (*an-Nisa'*: 102). The camp of disbelievers wishes to wage a sudden and quick attack on believers.

Let us subsequently consider the saying of the True Lord: 'But there is no blame upon you, if you are troubled by rain or are ill, for putting down your arms, but take precautions. Indeed, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. 'We notice that 'take precautions' recurred several times. Allah *Glorified is He* with the might of His Power, readied humiliating punishment for disbelievers. This is a good sign from Allah *the Almighty* that disbelievers will not be able to destroy believers. However, if this is the case, why did Allah command us to be take precautions? Taking precautions does not mean that Allah has abandoned believers. Rather, it is meant to draw the attention of believers so that they may exhaust all means to achieve victory without being careless to the cause of all these means since Allah *the Exalted* prepared a humiliating punishment for disbelievers.

This is the way we ought to understand it, and furthermore, one should from understanding it any other way like by deluding himself into believing that the fact that Allah *the Almighty* stressed the importance of taking precautions means that He has abandoned us. This is not true. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that we ought to pursue all means and causes of attaining victory without neglecting any of them.

Subsequently, the True Lord says:

فَإِذَا قَضَيْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ فَادْكُرُوا اللَّهَ قِيَمًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِكُمْ فَإِذَا
أُطْمَأْنَنْتُمْ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ كَانَتْ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ كِتَابًا مَّوْقُوتًا

After performing the ritual prayer, continue to remember God – 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 [103] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 103)

This saying indicates that a believer must not delay or postpone performing prayers after their time and that every believer should remember Allah *Glorified is He* while sitting, standing and lying down. The purpose of this saying is to constantly keep the prayers at the centre of every believer's consciousness. A

believer is even required to remember Allah *the Exalted* while engaged in fighting the enemy. Indeed, every believer should continue to wet his tongue with the remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* while bearing his sword and saying, 'How perfect Allah is. All praise is for Allah. There is no God worthy of worship but Allah. Allah is great. There is neither might nor power except with Allah.'

When a man exalts Allah *the Almighty*, even while he is engaged in a battle with the enemy, Allah *Glorified is He* never forgets him. A believer may be delayed in performing his prayers while he is engaged in a battle with an enemy. However, even in this case, a believer must push his heart and self towards remembering Allah. While praying, a believer should have an attentive heart [standing before] his Lord; he should thus remember him while sitting, standing, lying down and in every state. Once a Muslim is assured about his position in battle, he should perform his prayers. In this manner, a believer never ceases to be in the presence of his Lord even at war. Indeed, a believer must be closest to his Lord at war since he so dearly needs Allah *the Exalted* in this situation. If a Muslim knows that Allah *Glorified is He* manifests His Grace and Power in various instances, no one should deprive himself of these manifestations at any time. Remembering Allah renders a servant closer to his Lord. Allah *the Almighty* is present with His servant in so far as the latter remembers Him. If man is full of tranquillity in time of fear and battle, he should remember Allah *Glorified is He* in order to establish his stance and support him by the Highest Power.

The saying of the True Lord, 'But when you become secure, re-establish [regular] prayer', (*an-Nisa'*: 103) means that once the engagement in fighting ends, a believer must move from remembering Allah *the Exalted* while engaging in battle to prayers the time of which occur during fighting. The purpose of remembering Allah *Glorified is He* while fighting is to ensure that the time of prayers would not pass without ennoblement and exaltation, and furthermore, that the servant of Allah would not be deprived of the honour of being in the presence of his Lord. However, what is the point of all this? The decisive statement comes forth: 'Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon believers a decree of specified times.' (*an-Nisa'*: 103) The True Lord explained to us the prayer of fear. Allah *the Almighty* also decreed that we should

remember him when a prayer commences during the time of fighting. Furthermore, if a prayer is due when one is travelling, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* explained to us how we ought to shorten our prayers in such a case, but what is the reason underlying all these details? The reason is that prayers are an absolutely indispensable enactment: 'Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon believers a decree of specified times.' (*an-Nisa*': 103) This means that prayers have specific times at which they must be performed.

No one should understand the meaning of this saying, as some actually do, to mean that the time of *Zhuhr* Prayer extends from noon through afternoon. It is true that one is relieved of his responsibility for performing the *Zhuhr* Prayer if he performs it before the afternoon. However, what if one dies after he had a sufficient span of time to perform it? In such a case, this person would be sinful; no one guarantees that he would live long enough to perform a late prayer.

Someone may say, 'Sometimes, I hear the call for prayer, while I am involved in a task or job that I cannot leave. For instance, I might be performing a medical operation or boarding a plane.' I say, 'By Allah, if you were taking care of task or job that you do not think you can interrupt and you felt you wanted to use the restroom, what would you do? Would you not go to the restroom? If this is the case, why did you detract some of your time in order to go to the restroom?'

However, when people see you praying, you will see signs of happiness on their faces because of their instinctual servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*. You may find that amongst them are those who may facilitate things for you and bring you a prayer mat on which you may pray. You may also find amongst them someone who trembles due to his instinctual servitude to Allah *the Exalted*. So do not ever say that there is not enough time for prayer since Allah *the Almighty* never enacts anything upon His servant if it surpasses his capacity. The True Lord made the prayer incumbent upon His servants and provided enough time for performing it.

To Allah belong the supreme and most exalted parables. Sometimes we see a head of a number of workers distributing work amongst the members of

his team according to the available time each of them has. What about the Lord and Creator of the World? For this reason, the True Lord says: 'And whosoever fears Allah and keeps his duty to Him, He will make a way for him to get out (from every difficulty). And He will provide for him from where he does not expect.' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3)

Prayers are a bounty to the servant of Allah that liberates you from any fear. Its grace and value is infinite because its enactor is the Creator Who created all of us. So how come you keep yourself from being connected to your Lord? Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ ۚ إِن تَكُونُوا تَأْلَمُونَ فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْلَمُونَ كَمَا
تَأْلَمُونَ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

Do not be faint-hearted in pursuing the enemy: if you are suffering hardship, so are they, but you hope to receive something from God for which they cannot hope. God is all knowing and wise [104] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 104)

This verse reminds us of how we may respond to those who claim to be liberal and try to demonstrate that Islam would befit the age in which we live if we were to interpret it in a way that suits the demands of the age. In doing so, they overlook the requirements of Islam. They might say that Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed war in Islam for the purpose of combating aggression against Muslims. To them we say that it is true that war in Islam has been decreed to combat aggression, but war in Islam is also intended to expand the realm of freedom of belief.

The idea that fighting is an obligation in Islam frightens some because Muslims would find that they need to resist injustice everywhere. This is an attempt on the part of the enemies of Islam to distract Muslims so that they would not resist the coercion and injustice exercised over them. The reason is that the enemies of Islam know very well the strength abiding in Islam and that Islam imparts to anyone who embraces it as a religion. However, some Muslims are deceived by the allegation of the enemies of Islam who claim that Islam only decreed war to combat aggression against Muslims. For this

reason, we say to those who promote such claims and to the Muslims who are deluded into believing them, 'No, Islam decreed fighting in order to liberate man's right to believe.'

It is the duty of every Muslim to declare the word of Allah *Glorified is He* and to confront anyone who resists such declaration. However, this does not mean that Islam imposes its creed by the power and menace of the sword. Rather, it uses the sword to protect the freedom of a believer. The True Lord says: 'And do not weaken in pursuit of the enemy.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) This means that one should not be weak nor wane in seeking those who antagonise and fight Islam. The word 'pursuit' implies a clear target that one dedicates all his plans and energy towards achieving. It is as if a Muslim is not only required to push back and combat disbelievers when they attack Muslim land, but also he must pursue fighting them in accordance with the saying of Allah: 'If you should be suffering, so are they suffering, just as you are.' Therefore, Muslims should work to elevate and raise the Word of Allah and preach faith in Allah to everyone. Their preaching should not impose the Word of Allah *the Almighty*; rather, they should raise their swords in the face of tyranny that denies man his freedom to believe. Muslims should work to relieve all forms of injustice on mankind even if this involves an onerous burden on them because the True Lord said: 'Fighting is ordained for you, even though it is hateful to you.' (*al-Baqara*: 216)

Allah *Glorified is He* has created in every believer the capacity to seek the enemy of Islam to alleviate the injustices that other humans suffer. It is true that humans generally dislike war which is not an easy thought or endeavour, yet it is sometimes necessary. Those who witnessed the Second World War know that Churchill succeeded Chamberlain who was known to be a man of peace during his tenure as the prime minister of England. The latter tried to procrastinate and forge peace with Germany, while England was preparing itself for war. When England became ready, Chamberlain declared that his policy was inept and fruitless, so Churchill took over and steered his country into and through the war. Churchill said to his people, 'Expect black days and expect hunger.' Churchill said that to the British so that if the reality turned out to be better and less severe, they would rejoice and be delighted.

War exhausts the enemy as much as it exhausts you. However, as a believer, you are privileged over disbelievers in terms of the following: 'But you expect from Allah that which they expect not. And Allah is All Knowing and Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) You are equal in terms of the pain each of you incur. However, the difference is that you hope for what disbelievers do not hope for. Believers know that once they engage in war, Allah *the Almighty* is on their side and supports them. Whoever dies of them goes to a heaven whose breadth is equivalent to that of the heavens and earth. This is a hope to which disbelievers can never aspire.

The True Lord requires the believing group who chose to have faith in Him as the One Allah Who created them, to Whom they are destined to return and Who made such faith the principle that governs their lives. He *the Exalted* demanded them to undertake the requisites of such faith. He demands them to defend this creed that proves to all people that there is no one to be worshiped—meaning that there is no one to be obeyed—in any matter or aspect except for the True Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*.

When such a principle governs people, it unifies their inclinations and prevents their actions from being contradictory. They all become cooperative, supportive and collaborative of each other. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* made the believing group the best *ummah*, or followers of Islam, to ever emerge in human history since its Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is the best messenger that had ever been sent to mankind. The True Lord required the people of faith to fight disbelievers and hypocrites so that the land of faith would be purified of any element that may disrupt its serenity of life. The True Lord addresses His creation through their humanity. He created them and knows their qualities and tendencies. He does not address them as being angels; rather, He addresses them as humans who constantly change. Due to this changing nature of humans, faith may guide them in certain instances, whereas in other instances their desires, or tendencies may disrupt the purity and harmony of such faith. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* assures them that were they to pursue the path of creed, they should bear in mind that such a path is not furnished with roses and flowers. It is rather full of thorns so that only those who can tolerate calamities and crises may bear the message of

truth on earth. If having faith was easy to handle with no difficulty in attaining it or any pain or trouble involved in achieving it, every one may allege to having faith. If this happens frequently, those who are not trustworthy may falsely bear the responsibility of creed.

For this reason Allah *the Exalted* did not grant victory to Islam in its early stages. Rather Allah decreed that Muslims would be weak and persecuted at the beginning. He made its followers defenceless so that only those who tasted the sweetness of faith could tolerate such persecution. The sweetness of faith protects the one who tastes it from feeling the bitter pain of persecution and the severity of torture. The order, 'And do not weaken in pursuit of the enemy' indicates that the Muslim *Ummah*, or the followers of Islam are not only required to defend themselves against aggression but are required to seek out and pursue those who impede the path of Islamic preaching by disciplining them so that they would let people freely choose their creed.

Thus Allah *Glorified is He* demands the following: do not be faint of heart or wane when you seek out and pursue those who impede the path of Islamic preaching. Allah *the Almighty* then said: 'If you should be suffering, so are they suffering, just as you are.' This means that if you incurred and suffered pain when you engage in war, or while preparing for it, you ought to bear in mind that you are fighting people who also suffer the pain experienced in war and the preparation for it. You are both equal in terms of the pain, difficulty and exhaustion incurred. However, you should not be blinded to the importance of estimating your power; do not neglect this important matter because it is the force that will give you dominance over your enemies. You have an advantage over them inasmuch as you hope for things from Allah *the Exalted* which disbelievers cannot hope for. Matters should be evaluated in terms of their purposes and the reward one gets for doing them. No one should say this is equal to that; no one should neglect the reward he gets for undertaking a particular action or task. For this reason, the True Lord says the following in the course of explaining this equation so that the minds of people would be clear about the reward that awaits believers for incurring and enduring the pains involved in preparing for and engaging in war: 'Say: "Do you wait for us (anything) except one of the two best things (martyrdom or victory)."'

(*at-Tawba*: 52) Disbelievers must know that either of the two best results awaits the believers: either triumph and or dying as a martyr. Winning is the ultimate achievement in the Hereafter. However, what are believers hoping that Allah would do to disbelievers? This is the answer: 'While we wait for you either that Allah will afflict you with a punishment from Himself or at our hands. So wait, we too are waiting with you.' (*at-Tawba*: 52) Whose side, then, is weightier according to the above equation? It is the side of the believers.

The True Lord ends His encouraging believers to seek out disbelievers and how they are privileged over disbelievers inasmuch as they hope from Allah for what the latter do not hope for by saying: 'And Allah is indeed All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 102) Allah is the All Knowing since He is ever aware of the pain that befalls believers. So do not think, as a believer, that you will miss a reward; you will be rewarded for every pain that incurs to you, even if it is little as the one a thorn causes when it pricks you. Allah *Glorified is He* lets you suffer pain as much a disbeliever does for a simple reason, namely so that you go to battle having confidence that your faith will enable you to endure the consequences of embracing and defending religion.

It is related that A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'A believer does not receive (the trouble) of being pricked by a thorn or more than that, but Allah elevates him in rank or erases his sins due to that.'⁽¹⁾

After the True Lord talked about fighting for the cause of advocating His religion, He gave believers instructions that would support them in life. Why did He do this? The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* knows that there are people who believe in Him and follow Islam under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore Allah *the Exalted* explains that embracing Islam and advocating it entails a number of consequences. You will be the first upon whom Allah's rulings are applied. So do not think that the simple declaration of believing in Islam and following Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* you have acquired something that gives you privileges over the rest of Allah's creation. As much as We have

(1) *Related by Muslim*

commanded you to fight disbelievers and hypocrites, We command that you fight and resist the temptations of your inner selves since someone may embrace Islam by thinking that doing so that he will acquire a privilege over others. To such a person we say that this will not happen. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا
 أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَائِنِينَ خَصِيمًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

**We have sent down the Scripture to you [Prophet]
 with the truth so that you can judge between people
 in accordance with what God has shown you. Do not
 be an advocate for those who betray trust [105]
 (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 105)**

When the True Lord talks about Himself, He uses a glorifying, plural form to refer to His actions. A good example is the following: 'We have revealed to you.' Here, the plural form is used because the bestowal of the Quran requires several powers that are only in the possession of the One Who rules over the entire universe. Let us give an example, and to Allah belongs the supreme and most exalted parables. In issuing an edict, a president or a king may say, 'we have decreed the such and such edict.' The president or king knows well that he is not the only one who issues the edict; rather, it is all those who collaborate with him and work as his subordinates that participate in issuing the edict with him. However, how should we analogously think of the same situation as it pertains to the True Lord, the Sublime Allah? For example, when the True Lord talks about Himself as far as His Self is concerned He uses a singular pronoun. He thus says: 'Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.' (*Ta Ha*: 14) The plural pronoun is never used in such a context, and nor is the *nun* particle intended for glorification ever used. However, in this verse, the True Lord says: 'We have revealed the book unto you in truth.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) The use of the glorifying *We* is obvious. The Quran is the speech of Allah *the Exalted*. The revelation of the Quran requires different collaborating attributes. Allah *the Almighty* also says: 'And thus We have sent down to you the Quran.'

(*al-'Ankabut*: 47). In another instance, He says: 'That We revealed to you the Book which is recited to them.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 51). In a third instance, He says: 'We have certainly sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 10)

What is the purpose of bestowing the Quran? The purpose is to make available on earth a path and system that governs life. The Quran was bestowed upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and for those who embraced his Message. When the True Lord says: 'We have revealed to you.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) This means that Allah's assignment has been bestowed. When we encounter the expression 'revealed', we must know that everything that comes from the True Lord descends to us from Allah *Glorified is He*. It gives the feeling that it is coming down from high above, unequal to which it is sent, yet not lower than it. It involves a sender who is Allah, a receiver who is Prophet Muhammad and his *ummah* or the followers of Islam, and an item which is the Book. However, did Allah bestow the Book only, or did He bestow from above everything related to the factors of life beforehand? When we read this noble saying: 'O, children of Adam, We have bestowed upon you clothing to conceal your private parts and as adornment. But the clothing of righteousness, that is best. That is from the signs of Allah that perhaps they will remember.' (*al-A'raf*: 26)

It is clothing that came from high above. For this reason, the True Lord used the word 'bestow.' Furthermore, it is not merely clothing, but it also adorns the person wearing it because it is made of bird feathers which in turn covers and adorns the bird. It not only covers a person's nakedness, but it is also beautiful. What is more beautiful is that it is the clothing of piety. The True Lord brought forth what is necessary for covering nakedness in life. Subsequently, He bestowed piety. The first kind of clothing covers material nakedness, whereas the second covers the nakedness of values and spirit. All of this is a kind of bestowal from above. In another verse, the True Lord says: 'We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great might.' (*al-Hadid*: 25)

The phrasal verb 'sent down' indicates that everything which came down to us from the True Lord *the Sublime* is bestowed upon us to treat either our material being or our spirit and values.

The True Lord says in the verse at hand: 'We have revealed unto you the Book.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) When the word 'Book' is used in a generic manner, this means that it refers to the all-embracing and comprehensive Book that dominates all the rest of the divine books, viz. The Quran, even though the word 'Book' may be used to refer to any book revealed to any messenger sent by Allah *the Exalted*.

When the True Lord says, 'in truth', it means that He is eternal and never changes; no other reality may contradict or refute His Essence or Attributes. In day-to-day life, you may recount a true story about something that happened. However, no matter how many times you may recount this story, even if recounted over and over for twenty years, it will never change since your narration is in line with reality. Every time you recount this story, you recollect the real events that took place before you. However, if someone tells a false story that is not substantiated by reality, what would his stance be? He will tell the story in a certain way in one instance, then after a week, he may forget some of what he said in the first instance and thus fabricate new things. The reason is that what he recounts did not really happen. For this reason, he says different things than what he did for the first time. In such a case, the listener would realise that it is a false story.

Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the Book setting forth the truth. This means that the Book Allah revealed encompasses principles and statements that no falsity may ever infiltrate. It is thus a fixed, unchanging Book that no reality may contradict or refute. In our day-to-day life, teachers say to their successful students, 'We have truthfully rated you above all your colleagues.' This means that the student took his right because he deserves this status. The saying of the True Lord, 'We have revealed the Book unto you in truth' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) means that the bestowal of the Book on the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was inextricably connected and essentially bound to the Will of the True Lord. This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deserves the bestowal of the Book. The juxtaposition of different

meanings beside each other in the Quran is one of the essences of its elegance and the eloquence of the Words of the Quran; never do they contradict. Rather, they are juxtaposed beside each other due to the Wisdom of the Creator so as to elucidate for us the meanings of His statements.

The same verse shows us that the government of Islam headed by the first Muslim ruler, namely, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not set forth to judge solely and exclusively amongst believers. Rather, it was set forth to judge amongst all mankind. The condition of judging amongst people is to justly adjudicate on the subject matter of their disputes. No believer may thereby say that one is a believer, and another is a disbeliever so that if a disbeliever is the rightful claimant he may be denied his right, and if a Muslim is the rightful claimant, he may be given him his right. You are not only required to judge and establish justice amongst believers, but you are required to do so amongst all mankind. If you judge amongst people in accordance with facts and truth, the one judged will attest to the truth of your religion. If a disbeliever is the rightful claimant in a dispute with a believer, and you arbitrate impartially between them even if this involves meting out punishment to the believer, the disbeliever would regret not being a subscriber to the religion that recognises truth and judges according to it, even if it is against one of its own people. In addition, if a Muslim sees that a judgment has been decreed against him in favour of a non-Muslim, he will realise that being a Muslim is not merely a formal relation, but it is an objective one. No one should think that Islam came about to partially support Muslims at the expense of other people. In contrast, Islam came about to judge everyone in accordance with the logic of truth, to apply justice and truth to all and to teach every Muslim to always adhere to the side of truth.

Allah puts forward this matter in correspondence with an actual event that took place at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Events contemporary to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were a sort of an elicitation and procurement of the rulings of the Heavens. Events took place, and its ruling was sent down accordingly. If rulings were arrayed together and revealed at the same time, an incident may take place, and believers would still search for the proper ruling even though they have it

already at hand. In contrast, if a ruling is revealed when the correspondent incident or event takes place, its application is applied immediately. In such case, people will be more likely to comply with a ruling and submit to it since it has been confirmed, constructed and codified through an applied incident. The ruling that was revealed is the following: 'Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has taught you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104)

One should realise that Allah's instruction and teaching is truer than one's human vision. Thus, you should be certain about the existence of whatever Allah *the Exalted* teaches you, as you would be if you could see it physically with your own eyes. If you were to see something with your eyes, you will not ask where it is.

There was an event that took place long ago. There was a man in Banu Zhafar called Tu'ma ibn Ubayriq. He stole a shield which belonged to Qutada ibn An-Nu'man. Tu'ma was afraid of keeping the shield since he was known to be a thief. He then went to a Jew and left the shield with him. The shield was kept in a bag of flour. When Tu'ma carried it, the flour kept pouring out from a hole in the bag; the dropped flour left a trace on the ground that pointed to the house of the Jew who was called Zayd ibn As-Samin. When they followed the traces of flour, it led them back to Tu'ma's house. However, Tu'ma swore that he did not take it or have any idea about its place. People then left him and followed the flour traces until it led them to the house of the Jew. They then found the shield and declared that Ibn as-Samin was the thief. Thus, Ibn As-Samin said, 'I did not steal the shield. Rather, it was Tu'ma ibn Ubayriq who left it with me.' People then went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'If you punish a Muslim in favour of a Jew, the matter will be taken against Muslims and shame will be spread amongst them.'

We know that the True Lord sent His Messenger to set straight the course of human desires. Human desire, due to its rashness and short-sightedness may think that a sentence that involves a decree against a Muslim and an acquittal of a Jew translates to mean an impairment of Muslims. In contrast,

the True Lord wills to establish justice irrespective of any relative factor. He thus revealed the following saying to His Messenger: 'Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has taught you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104)

So do not ever say, 'This is a Muslim, so we should not accuse him of a crime that he actually committed lest it should smear him.' Also, do not even fear standing up for a Jew against a thief who emerged amongst Muslims. It is due to the honour of Islam that it punishes anyone who commits a mistake because as long as this person has affiliated himself with Islam, he should ennoble such affiliation. Punishing a Muslim for committing a mistake is a testimony that Islam was not set forth to favour anyone. Every Muslim must know that he embraced Islam for the truth itself.

About the saying of the True Lord: 'do not be for the deceitful an advocate.' (*an-Nisa'*: 104) a number of superficial people said the following: if there is a thief, a traitor or someone who abuses his power, you should leave him alone, do not look at him nor pay him any attention so that he would not cause you any trouble. To such people who would say as such, we give the following reply, 'No, Allah says, '...do not be for the deceitful advocates.' This means that the True Lord commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to stand on the side of the one who is a traitor to his trust. Rather, he should fight whoever betrays the trust for the interest of the truth.

Scholars tried to make things approachable. Thus, they said, 'Some may think that a Muslim is proscribed to take a stance that is beneficial and useful to the one who is traitor to his trust. Rather, the Muslim should be against the one who betrayed his trust, and not be on his side.' The purpose of defending a rival is to support his case, and not to be against him. No Muslim should benefit someone who betrayed his trust just so that the latter would be defeated or humiliated by defeat. For this reason, the Messenger would not support the one who betrayed his trust and would never bring about something that would benefit him. Some people may ask why Allah does not use the most explicit word that enables us to immediately recognise the meaning. To this query, we respond by saying that it was important to

do so in order for us to know on which side the Quran and the Messenger who delivers the Message of His Lord stand. An example of this is the saying of the True Lord: 'And when our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, they say, "This is not but a man who wishes to avert you from that which your fathers were worshipping." And they say, "This is not except a lie invented." And those who disbelieve say of the truth when it has come to them, "This is not but obvious magic."' (*Saba'*: 43)

The interlocutor in the above verse is the disbelievers, and the party addressed is the believers. Some people using logic would assume that disbelievers would say, 'You are obvious magic.' It is as if it reads: 'And those who disbelieve say of the truth when it has come to them, "You are but obvious magic."' However, we notice that they did not address Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as much as he was the one who brought forth the truth to them. Rather, they have a contention against the Message of the truth he brought forth. Further, they did not say so to him, rather, they said as such to each other. Thus, truth, in this context, refers to the truth of the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and not his person. Therefore, they said that the truth that was brought forth by Prophet Muhammad was the following, 'This is not but obvious magic.' There is another verse in which the True Lord says: 'And those who disbelieve say of those who believe, "If it had [truly] been good, they would not have preceded us to it." And when they are not guided by it, they will say, "this is an ancient falsehood.'" (*al-Ahqaf*: 11)

The interlocutor in this verse is the disbelievers, and the party addressed is the believers. The intended meaning is that the disbelievers said to the believers, 'If Islam were any good, you would not have beaten us to embrace it prior to us.' However, the True Lord *the Most High* relates their words by saying: '...If this (message) were any good, these (weak and poor people) would not have preceded us to it!' (*al-Ahqaf*: 11) This indicates that they exchanged these words amongst themselves, and not in the presence of believers. Otherwise, if the discourse was addressed by disbelievers directly to believers, the wording would have been, 'If Islam were any good, you would not have preceded us to it.' Afterwards, the True Lord, *the Glorious and Exalted* says:

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ إِنْ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

Ask God for forgiveness: He is most forgiving and merciful [106] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 106)

This command is asking Allah's Forgiveness for even a merely momentary, hesitating thought concerning supporting a Muslim against a Jew, and vice versa. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had not yet supported the position of one party against the other. However, the mere possibility of such a thought requires asking Allah for forgiveness. The One issuing this command is the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted*. There is nothing objectionable or hurtful about our Lord setting right for us a certain issue.

Alternatively, this discourse is addressed to everyone who used Islam as a means of blackmail and bargaining with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. A similar case occurred with the tribe of Banu Zhafar who wanted to use their affiliation with Islam as a pretext to obstruct Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from meting out a penalty on a person who committed theft amongst them. This is the reason why the True Lord commands those who approached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about this matter to ask Him for forgiveness or to beg Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask Him for forgiveness on their behalf since they only said so under the pretext of avoiding a scandal that might affect the image of Muslims. Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَلَا تَجِدُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ يَخْتَانُونَ أَنْفُسَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَنْ كَانَ خَوَّانًا أَثِيمًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

Do not argue for those who betray their own souls: God does not love anyone given to treachery and sin [107] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 107)

Allah *the Most High* wants to thoroughly lay out this issue. The previous statement from Allah would have sufficed. However, Allah wants to settle these matters decisively; there can be no argument with those who are false to their own selves. *Al-Jadal*, the Arabic word for argument and dispute, means,

as we know, to intertwine threads together to make a rope. When someone intertwines things together, such as some hair or threads of wool or fibre to make a rope, this person does so in order to strengthen the material he is intertwining so as to keep it from being frail and rendering it more amenable to pulling and stretching. For this reason, people usually describe this intertwining process as 'a way of giving strength to the rope.' The same holds for any two disputants. Each of them wants to strengthen his position. They may attempt to corroborate it by twisting or embellishing their words or using an eloquent style. Hence, the Divine Command descended to Prophet Muhammad: Do not back the position of any person who is habitually false to himself.

By the Quran using *yakhatanun* (persistently betray themselves), instead of *yakhunun*, (betray themselves), it clearly stresses a more significant meaning. Betrayal is to take something unrightfully or possibly unlawfully. Although it is possible that a person betrays another, how is it conceivable that a person should betray himself? This must involve a great deal of pretension. When a person betrays another for the sake of personal interests, to satiate a desire or commit a punishable sin, this constitutes a betrayal of oneself. Since, in such a case, transient pleasures distract a person from future punishment. We thus can see that those who betray people betray themselves simultaneously. It is not easy for a person to betray himself; this involves pretension and artifice. This is the reason why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And argue not on behalf of those who persistently betray themselves. Verily, Allah does not like anyone who is habitually treacherous and sinful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 107).

The previous noble verse that addressed this situation did not use the plural form *khwwanin*; rather, it used the plural form *kha'in*. There is a difference between *kha'in* and *khawwan*; the former betrays only once, whereas the latter betrays several times. Alternatively, the meaning could also be as follows: *kha'in* is the one who betrays in a small, minor matter, while *khawwan* betrays in a major, capital matter. The intensive form is sometimes used to indicate the recurrence of the action or, in other times, to magnify the action. It is out of Allah's Graciousness and Mercy that He did not use *khawwan*. The word *kha'in* is used to describe a person who has betrayed only once and never again. Allah does not expose a person's sin unless it grows into a trait, habit,

or profession. A woman came to Caliph 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* because her son was caught stealing, and he wanted to carry out the prescribed penalty for theft on him. His mother, crying, said, 'O, 'Amir of the Believers, my son stole this time only.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'You have told a lie. By Allah, Allah would never punish a servant for the first time he sins.'

Due to this, some people say that if a person's misdeed is exposed and it becomes known to people, then it must have antecedents. Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* would not expose a person's sin committed the first time only. Allah *the Most High* loves to cover up and conceal the wrongdoing of His servants. Allah may conceal a sin of His servant once and twice, but if he persists in committing that particular sin, Allah exposes him. 'Verily, Allah does not like anyone who is habitually treacherous and sinful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 107) Sin is the worst form of disobedience. However, why did the clansmen of Tu'ma ibn Ubayriq go to intercede with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on his behalf, hoping that he would pass a judgment in his favour against the Jew? They did this since they found it scandalous that a Muslim litigant should be exposed and a Jewish litigant be acquitted. They felt ashamed that something like that might happen. Therefore, the Quran directly addressed this issue, bringing to the surface the underlying cause that made them act accordingly in order to banish and uproot such conduct forever. The Quran says:

يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يَسْتَخْفُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مَعَهُمْ إِذْ
يُبَيِّتُونَ مَا لَا يَرْضَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ مُحِيطًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

**They try to hide them- selves from people, but
they cannot hide from God. He is with them when
they plot at night, saying things that do not please
Him: He is fully aware of everything they do [108]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 108)**

They wanted to acquit Tu'ma of the theft charge in front of the people, especially in front of non-Muslims. However, who should they have been more concerned: Allah or the people? Doubtlessly, they ought to have feared Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* more than they feared people. You may try to

mislead those who judge you in this world, but be certain that you cannot mislead the judgment of Heaven. This principle must govern the life and actions of every believer. If someone who is affiliated to Islam tends to do something that may anger Allah, they should remember that by doing so, they disgrace themselves, their children, their family, or Muslims. A Muslim should not fear people's opinions when a fellow Muslim does something that may smear the image of Muslims. Rather, a Muslim should blame and turn him away from what he is doing. We need to say to those who hide their wrongdoing from the public, 'You may conceal yourself from the people, but you cannot conceal yourself from Allah. This makes you unworthy of trust.'

'They may hide (their crimes) from the people, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah, for He is with them (by His Knowledge)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 108). The word *m`ahum*, the Arabic prepositional phrase that means 'with them' is intended to assure believers that nothing whatsoever can be concealed or hidden from Allah. A person may hide from people, but they cannot hide from Allah. Indeed, Allah is with every human being, whether they are alone or in a crowd, and whether they are doing something secretly or publicly. So, if a person manages to conceal a wrongdoing from people, he can conceal nothing from Allah. 'They may hide (their crimes) from the people, but they cannot hide (them) from Allah, for He is with them (by His Knowledge), when they plot by night in words...' (*an-Nisa'*: 108). The word *yubayyit*, the Arabic verb translated as 'plot by night', means to undertake something at night since people used to retire to their houses at night. The central meaning of *yubayyit* is to devise a scheme or plot at one's house in the dark of night. Any secret and devious planning is called *tabyit*, even if it is done in the middle of the day. It would not be done secretly unless the person concerned wants to divert eyes away from him. Yet, he must know that he may only divert mortal eyes away from himself. He can never divert the Ever-Watching Eyes of Allah. 'They may hide (their crimes) from the people, but they cannot hide (them) from God, for He is with them (by His Knowledge), when they plot by night in words that He does not approve. And God ever encompasses what they do.' (*an-Nisa'*: 108)

When hearing the word *muhit*, we should envision the encompassed thing all surrounded by the One Who encompasses in a perfect way that does not

allow any escape from the One Who encompasses Knowledge or Power. Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* encompasses everything with His Knowledge; nothing is concealed from Him. He also encompasses everything with His Power; nothing is beyond the realm of His Sovereignty. Allah *the Most High* encompasses with His Knowledge all the parts and details of the universe and has power over all things. Accordingly, if the word *muhit* is associated with Allah, we should know that it means that the True Lord *the Most High* completely encompasses everything with His Knowledge. Not a single detail, no matter how great or small, exists beyond Allah's reach or knowledge. Furthermore, it means that Allah *the Most High* encompasses everything with His Power – no one can elude or evade Allah's Just Retribution. Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

هَاتَتْهُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ جَدَلْتُمْ عَنْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَمَنْ يُجَادِلُ
 اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَمْ مَنْ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَكِيلًا

There you [believers] are, arguing on their behalf in this life, but who will argue on their behalf with God on the Day of Resurrection? Who will be their defender? [109] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 109)

Those who argued on behalf of Ibn Ubayriq wanted to vindicate him before the people and convict the Jew. However, would humans arguing for one another and vindicating one another before other humans easily end matters at this point? The answer is a definitive no since the life of this world is not the place of just recompense. Let us assume that Ibn Ubayriq escaped human punishment. Would he escape Allah's Punishment in the Hereafter? No. Those who argued on behalf of Ibn Ubayriq wanted to blind and blur the perspective of earthly judgment, but he will not be able to blind the Judgment of the True Lord. A person you defend will find no one to argue in defence of his crime on the Day of Judgment. Not only this, but the True Lord *the Most High* also closes this verse by saying: '...or who will be their defender?' (*an-Nisa'*: 109). In other words, who, on the Day of Judgment, can defend those who escaped earthly justice by way of falsehood? We know that a defender could be an eloquent speaker chosen by some people to talk persuasively with individuals

in a given situation. Who is capable of undertaking this task before Allah? No one is able to, of course. Afterwards, the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* says:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا أَوْ يَظْلِمْ نَفْسَهُ، ثُمَّ يَسْتَغْفِرِ اللَّهَ يَجِدِ اللَّهَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Yet anyone who does evil or wrongs his own soul and then asks God for forgiveness will find Him most forgiving and merciful [110] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 110)

When Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* created the creation, He made them all subject to change and alteration. For this reason, Allah does not remove a sinner, due to his sin, from the realm of His Sovereign Power and Mercy. Rather, Allah *the Most High* allows repentance in order to protect society from the spread of his evil. If everyone who commits a sin is expelled from Allah's Mercy, society will continue to suffer from the evils of the sinners. All of a sinner's deeds will eventually become a curse of widespread evil afflicting society. Therefore, repentance has been decreed as allowable and acceptable by Allah to protect mankind from the ferocity of the one who commits the first sin. Repentance leads to the wiping out of one's sins, so it gives him hope and makes him eager to do good so as to make up for the evil previously done. Were it not for repentance, a sinner would be driven by despair of ever being forgiven to immerse himself more into evildoing, and thus the world would suffer the consequences of his increasing sinfulness.

Those who attempted to acquit Ibn Ubayriq were divided into two groups: the first group was intent on vindicating Ibn Ubayriq, while the second was more concerned with not exposing a Muslim. Each of the two groups sinned. However, does their sin expel them from Allah's Mercy? No. Rather, Allah promises sinners that they '...shall find Allah Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 110) The two groups became required to do something good after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained the matter to them, and they understood the purpose of Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* which was to keep them within faith. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* convicted Ibn Ubayriq and exonerated the Jew. Following this incident, Ibn Ubayriq renounced Islam, went to Mecca and continued the habit of betraying others. He then pierced and hollowed out a man's wall in order to steal his possessions, but the wall ultimately fell on him, causing his death.

The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* sets the criteria. Anyone who commits a sin, or wrongs himself by doing a bad deed, and then asks Allah for forgiveness will find Allah Most Forgiving and Merciful. We notice that some people do not adequately comprehend the saying of the True Lord *the Most High*: 'Yet, whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allah's Forgiveness shall find Allah Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 110) So, they ask, 'Does the one who commits a bad deed not wrong himself?' The answer is that the precision of word usage in the Quran clarifies this meaning. 'Doing evil' means to do a bad deed that harms others; it is different from the one who sins against himself. Stealing, killing, or assailing any person via verbal or physical abuse are examples of doing evil. The Arabic word *Sau'*, translated in the verse at hand as evil or bad actions, is any deed that people hate. When *Sau'* is used to describe a person, it means that he is evil or has a bad character, and, as such, he does hateful things to people.

A person who drinks alcohol may do so in isolation without causing harm to anyone. However, in doing so, he is indeed wronging himself since every Muslim is required to take responsibility of himself. Allah's Law protects Muslims even from themselves. It also protects every soul from itself. The evidence is that any human who kills another human must be punished (according to the Islamic law); similarly, Allah deprives the one who commits suicide of paradise.

Thus, we see how Allah's Law protects humanity and carefully surrounds it from all directions. The human being is part of Allah's universe. The True Lord obligates every human being to protect himself. If a human does a bad thing that harms another person, this is called *Sau'*, or evil. On the other hand, when a human being does something that harms only himself, such a deed is called wronging oneself. 'And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves, remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins, for who but Allah can forgive sins? And do not knowingly persist in doing whatever (wrong) they may have done.' (*Al-Imran*: 135)

However, is committing a *Fahishah* which means an immoral act or shameful deed, any different from wronging or sinning against oneself? *Fahishah* also constitutes an evil deed whose consequences have harmful effects to the

person doing it, along with others, as well. By contrast, wronging or sinning against oneself is the act that harms the person who does it only. For example, someone may do a bad deed to satisfy their passion and enjoy themselves, while completely forgetting the severe punishment that may follow in the Afterlife. Someone else may commit an offence for the sole interest of another, as in the case of perjury in which a person's right to something may be wasted and assigned to someone else without the person committing perjury having any personal interest or gain. Rather, such a false testimony comprises his faith solely for the worldly benefit of others. To this person, the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* applies, 'Hasten to do good works before the advent of tribulations like fragments of a pitch-black night. A person would wake up a believer in the morning and end the day as a disbeliever, or end his day a believer and wake up as a disbeliever the next morning. He would barter his religion for a worldly gain.'⁽¹⁾

'Yet, whoever does evil or wrongs himself but afterwards seeks Allah's Forgiveness shall find Allah Much-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' (*an-Nisa'*: 110) Allah is eternally and continuously Forgiving and Merciful. A repentant servant of Allah recognises and experiences His Forgiveness and Mercy. Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ إِثْمًا فَإِنَّمَا يَكْسِبُهُ عَلَى نَفْسِهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١١١﴾

He who commits sin does so against his own soul. God is All Knowing, All-Wise[111] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 111)

The True Lord *the Exalted* uses the verb 'earn', which is translated from the Arabic origin *kasaba* and refers to the beneficial earnings obtained by doing good. By contrast, Allah uses the word *iktasaba* to describe bad or sinful earnings. Why does He do so? This is due to the fact that doing good is a natural instinctive act of which a human can never feel ashamed. Evil is always a shameful experience for humans; therefore, they must do it secretly. It is unnatural, so it requires extra effort and artifice.

(1) Narrated by Muslim, At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad

Let us give an example to illustrate this point, and to Allah belongs the supreme and most exalted description. Take the example of the relationship between a husband and wife. A husband can gaze freely at the beauty of his wife; however, if he wants to steal a look at a woman who is unlawful for him, he must deceive the inward faculties of his soul in order to sneak a look at this woman. This man resorts to trickery and manoeuvring to sneak a gaze at that to which he is not entitled to by his rights. This is the reason why *kasab* is used in the Quran to describe lawful earnings, while *iktasab* is used to describe unlawful ones. However, when the Quran uses *kasab* to describe a sin committed, the verb in the verse is translated to mean 'earn.' This usage requires more attention. Someone may commit a sin and regret it as soon as he has done it, if he is a good person. Such a person will also castigate himself for his sin and resolutely decide not to do it again. Another person may commit a sin and enjoy his sin, as if it has brought him some benefit. He boasts of his sin, while being oblivious to the immense danger and the bleak end he will face on the Day of Judgment. Taking pride in committing a sin is a manifestation of the corruption of a human's natural disposition and the deep infiltration of vice into the heart. This type of person is different from the one who falls into a sin only once, and then whenever he remembers it, his body shivers and he asks Allah for forgiveness. 'And whoever earns sin, he earns it only against himself. And Allah is Ever All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 111). Therefore, human beings should beware since wronging someone by word or deed does not mean you have won the world. Indeed, if an oppressor were to know what Allah has prepared for the person whom he is oppressing, he would begrudge him such support and refrain from harming him. I will give the following example to elucidate the matter, and to Allah belongs the supreme and most exalted description. Let us assume that a man has two boys. One of them hit his brother and took away something he possessed from him. Their father saw the incident. To which son would the father's heart be inclined? The father would support his wronged son and try to compensate him. If, for example, the brother who was committing the wrong took from him ten piasters, the father would give the brother who was wronged something worth one hundred piasters, by way of compensation. Surely, the brother who committed the wrong would lament over what he had done. Had he known that his father would compensate his

brother whom he had wronged so generously, he would not have ever wronged him. Without doubt, injustice is the epitome of stupidity.

One of the paradoxical sayings regarding this is the following: 'If it is inevitable that you backbite someone, backbite your own parents.' Anyone who would hear this will certainly ask, 'But why would I backbite my own father and mother?' The one who makes this paradoxical statement would say, 'Your parents are more deserving of your good deeds than others. Instead of giving the reward of your good deeds to people whom you dislike, search for those whom you love and give them such a merit and reward.' The underlying viewpoint is that a backbiter should not act so foolishly; one backbites out of enmity. So how come one would hand over the reward for his good deeds to his adversary?

We know well what our master Al-Hasan Al-Basri *Allah be pleased with him* did on hearing that someone had backbitten him. Al-Hasan Al-Basri *Allah be pleased with him* sent off his courier with a present of a plate full of dates to his backbiter and the following message: 'It came to the knowledge of my master that you had backbitten him yesterday, and by doing so, you have granted him the reward for your good deeds. Definitely, your good deeds are more precious than these dates.' This sufficiently emphasises the reprehensibility of backbiting.

'And whoever earns sin, he earns it only against himself. And Allah is Ever All Knowing, All-Wise.' (*an-Nisa'*: 111). We already know that when an attribute of the True Lord is preceded with *kana* which is the past tense of the Arabic verb 'to be', it should not mistakenly be thought that such a tense describes an event in the past. Rather, its connection to the past is for continuity since it means that the event was and still is. How so? Since Allah is Eternal; He is Forgiving and Merciful prior to the coming into being of any of His creation to which He may dispense His Mercy or Forgiveness. Allah *Glorified is He* is not subject to time and its vicissitudes. His attributes are constant and unchanging. Only constantly changing beings are subject to the vicissitudes of time and circumstance. For instance, a human being may be healthy at a particular time and sick during another.

Therefore, the transitions of time from the future to the past and from the future to the present are only applicable to beings that are subject to change. Since Allah is the One Who changes all things, but He never changes; time

cannot affect Allah or apply to Him. He is Forgiving and Merciful since the beginning of time and until the end of time - now and forever. Similarly, Allah's Knowledge is ever eternal, and His Wisdom is boundless. Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَمَنْ يَكْسِبْ خَطِيئَةً أَوْ إِثْمًا ثُمَّ يَرْمِ بِهِ بَرِيئًا فَقَدْ احْتَمَلَ بُهْتَانًا وَإِثْمًا مُبِينًا ﴿١١٢﴾

and anyone who commits an offence or a sin, and then throws the blame on to some innocent person, has burdened himself with deceit as well as flagrant sin [112] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 112)

Some scholars argue that *khati'ah* which means 'fault' in the aforementioned verse, is an unintentional error. An example of this is when we teach a student a certain grammatical rule, and then ask him to apply it to some text. We then notice that the student has mistakenly placed the subject of the sentence in the accusative instead of the nominative case, or vice versa. We may then point out his mistake to him because he has not done it deliberately. Rather, he has just forgotten the rule. We continue to correct his mistake until he memorises the grammatical rule. Through training, applying the rules of Arabic grammar becomes an acquired ability of the student, and he no longer makes the mistake. Hence *khati'ah* is an unintentional error, while sin is an intentional error. However, what is Allah's Judgment on the one who commits a fault or a sin, and then imputes it to someone else? And whoever earns a fault or a sin and then throws it on to someone innocent, he has indeed burdened himself with astounding falsehood and a manifest sin.' (*an-Nisa'*: 112) Not only did the person involved commit a sin or fault, but he further aggravated his crime by adding another one to it, namely, blaming his sin or fault on an innocent person. In such a case, his sin becomes more complex. Therefore, the True Lord says: '... he has indeed burdened himself with astounding falsehood and a manifest sin.' (*an-Nisa'*: 112)

In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* uses the word *ihutamal*, which is the Arabic word that means 'burdens himself.' Allah does not use *hamala* which means to carry or bear something; by using the above word instead, He stresses the hardship and suffering that must accompany bearing such a burdensome sin. His crime is twofold: committing a sin and then imputing it to an innocent

person. This twofold sin evokes regret for both committing the sin and throwing the blame for it on an innocent person. It thus places a twofold burden on the perpetrator. We know that when one gets pulled into a frenzy of hatred, a sin becomes easy and done without thought. However, once this frenzy dies down, regret ensues. In the chapter of *al-Ma'ida: 27*, the True Lord *the Exalted* relates the story of the two brothers Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain) saying the following: 'And recite (O, Muhammad) to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice (to Allah), and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. "I will surely kill you," said one. "Allah accepts only from the righteous (who fear Him)," said the other.' (*al-Ma'ida: 27*)

Habil (Abel) asked Qabil (Cain), 'Why should I be blamed for this. After all, Allah is the One Who accepts sacrifices, not me. So why do you want to kill me?' The True Lord *the Most High* continues the narrative concerning Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain) by saying: 'If you do stretch your hand against me to kill me, I shall never stretch my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.' (*al-Ma'ida: 28*) The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* then says: 'So his *Nafs* (self) encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him the murder of his brother. He murdered him and became one of the losers.' (*al-Ma'ida: 30*)

The previous noble verse indicates that the murdering process was difficult and involved, for the killer persuaded himself into committing the crime. For this reason, the Arabic verb *taw`at* which means 'to make pliant and flexible' is used, but it is translated in the aforementioned verse as 'encouraged him and made fair-seeming to him.' No one would say, 'I have made the rope pliable or flexible.' However, one may say, 'I have made the iron pliable.' At the time of perpetrating his crime, Qabil (Cain) swept into the madness of anger, became oblivious to all moral scruples. Then, after the crime happened, and the flare of anger that veiled moral and ethical values subsided, these values appeared clearly again before his soul.

Therefore, we sometimes hear of people who commit a crime and then hand themselves in to the police. They may do so because the fury that drove them to commit the crime abated, and the light of moral and ethical values

started to emerge brightly. In light of this, we may understand the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...he has indeed burdened himself with astounding falsehood and a manifest sin.' (*an-Nisa'*: 112)

This indicates that whoever commits a crime, and then accuses an innocent person of it weighs himself down with a heavy sin. His soul will be torn apart between regret for committing his crime and guilt about throwing the blame for it on an innocent person. This is the reason why the True Lord *the Exalted* says: '...he has indeed burdened himself with astounding falsehood and a manifest sin.' (*an-Nisa'*: 112) The word *buhtan* is derived from the root *bahata*. *Buhtan*, translated in the previous verse as astounding falsehood, is the deed, which, due to its enormity, astounds even the one who does it. An example of such a deed is found in the following verse in which the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* relates the encounter between Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and Nimrod: '...Ibrahim said: "Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, so you cause it to rise from the west"...' (*al-Baqara*: 258). So what was the reaction of Nimrod?'...At this, the disbeliever was overwhelmed by astonishment...' (*al-Baqara*: 258). This means that the answer that Nimrod heard from Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was so overwhelming that it rendered him speechless. Our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* faced him with an astounding fact that never crossed his mind and was inescapably compelling. It emphasises that matters which contradict logical truth and moral demands that strike people as odd, constitute *buhtan*. Evidence of this is the fact that these matters are always concealed and furtive.

If we now consider the circumstances associated with the revelation of the Quranic verse at hand, we will find that it relates to a theft incident. A thief stole and wanted to vindicate himself by implicating an innocent person in the theft crime and imputing it to him. Commission of a crime incurs sin, and responsibility for that crime, while shifting the responsibility for one's crime to an innocent person, indicates the existence of another level of evil that makes that person bear what he has done, which is normally unbearable to the human soul. Someone who would hear this would not be astonished unless what he is hearing is odd and unfamiliar. There is clear and luminous evidence in the dialogue that took place between Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and Nimrod.

When Nimrod said, 'I (too) give life and cause death.' (*al-Baqara*: 258) By this statement, Nimrod meant his ability to kill or refrain from killing a human being. Our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* quickly responded with an answer that left him dumbfounded and gave no room for any verbal games or disputes. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...Ibrahim said: "Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, so you cause it to rise from the west." At this the disbeliever was overwhelmed by astonishment...' (*al-Baqara*: 258).

This means that Nimrod heard a wondrous statement and did not possess enough intelligence to answer it back. Similarly, the man who commits a crime and ascribes it to another person needs a capacity to bear such an act. This indicates that sound human instinct abhors such an ugly act. When someone commits such a sin, he burdens himself with the guilt of calumny by going to the extent of imputing his sin unto an innocent person. This denotes that such an act requires an unusual capacity to commit evil.

Accordingly, the saying of the True Lord *the Exalted* '...he has indeed burdened himself with astounding falsehood and a manifest sin' (*an-Nisa*': 112) means that anyone who does this burdens himself with an egregious deed that renders those who hear it dumbfounded and leads them to wonder how can this happen. The perpetrator may even wonder how he dared to commit this.

As we have learned, *ithim* (sin) is a bad deed done deliberately. The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* explains this issue clearly as follows: Allah *the Most High* surrounds you, O, Muhammad, with His Care, Support, and Grace. Some people who have little faith may try to distract you from this truth and convince you into acquitting a guilty person and convicting an innocent one using the argument that the former is a Muslim, whereas the latter is a non-Muslim. However Allah *the Exalted* did not send Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to judge between believers only. The beginning of this noble verse makes it clear for us that Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* sent His Messenger to judge justly: '... so that you may judge between the people in accordance with what Allah has taught you...' (*an-Nisa*': 105). That is, to judge justly and fairly between all people without exception. So when you judge never use the argument that this one is a Muslim, while this one is a non-Muslim. Nor should you say that this one is a Muslim, while this one is a Christian or a Jew. Rather, all people should be provided with equal justice.

This incident provided Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the boost of faith needed later to give the verdict concerning the woman from the tribe of Makhzum who committed theft. Usama ibn Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* the most beloved to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* interceded on her behalf. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who resolved to administer the proper Islamic penalty to her, said as narrated in the following Hadith: 'It was narrated by Mother of the Believers, 'Aishah *Allah be pleased with her* that the Quraysh were much concerned about the case of the woman from Makhzum who committed theft and wondered who could intercede for her with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. They said, "Who would dare speak to him about such a matter other than Usama ibn Zayd, his beloved one?" Usama then spoke to him about that matter. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, "Do you intercede regarding a punishment prescribed by Allah?" He then stood up and addressed the people, saying, "Verily, the people before you were ruined because when a noble person among them committed theft, they would leave him. However, if a weak person among them were to commit theft, they would execute the prescribed punishment on him. By Allah, were Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, to commit the theft, I would have cut off her hand."⁽¹⁾ His statement was derived from the previous case. The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* says:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ وَرَحْمَتُهُ لَهَمَّتْ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْهُمْ أَنْ يُضِلُّوكَ وَمَا يُضِلُّونَ إِلَّا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّونَكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَكَ مَا لَمْ تَكُن تَعْلَمُ وَكَانَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكَ عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٣﴾

If it were not for the grace of God and His mercy to you [Prophet], a party of them would have tried to lead you astray; they only lead themselves astray, and cannot harm you in any way, since God has sent down the Scripture and Wisdom to you, and taught you what you did not know. God's bounty to you is great indeed [113]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 113)

We might wonder if anyone intended to misguide Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We should understand that *hamm* which

(1) Narrated by Muslim

literally means to intend or plan and is translated in the aforementioned verse as 'made a decision', is of two kinds. One of them is in the sense of actually executing something, and the other is in the sense of trying to embellish and justify something in order to have it executed. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refused to execute what they had planned for him to do. Allah warded it off from him since He surrounds His Messenger with His Grace and Mercy. He brought forth events to teach him new rulings. Allah's Grace and Mercy upon His Messenger rendered their endeavour merely an attempt to embellish injustice from which Allah also protected His Messenger. Once learnt, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* started to pass judgments on the cases of everyone according to the new ruling. The sending down of a ruling which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not know before, that specifically dealt with an occurring event, is indeed a favour from Allah. For, through it, Allah expanded the education and edification of His Messenger: '... and taught you that which you knew not...' (*an-Nisa*: 113).

Those who defended Ibn Ubayriq wanted to embellish their arguments in order to convince Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to exempt him from punishment. Their endeavours were limited to this extent, without ever getting to actual execution. The purpose behind such embellishment and justification was to harm and mislead Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* - Allah forbid. They wanted to pull him to a path other than that of truth and righteous guidance. This could have harmed the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Had Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* acquitted the person who knew himself to be guilty, this would have instilled into him the thought that religious rulings were not serious at all. As for the innocent person, whom they wanted Prophet Muhammad to convict, he would have thought that the religion of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was untrue since it punished an innocent person. Thus, their endeavours to beautify their case would have harmed the image and credibility of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in front of both the guilty person, whom they tried to falsely acquit, as well as the innocent person, whom they tried to falsely convict.

Yet Allah, through His Grace and Mercy, protected His Messenger Muhammad also from this harm: '...a party of them would certainly have made a decision to mislead you, but (in fact) they mislead none except their own selves, and no harm can they do to you in the least. Allah has sent down to you the Book (the Quran) and wisdom...' (*an-Nisa'*: 113).

Allah *Glorified is He* sent down Quranic verses to decide this matter. The revelation of a specific ruling following a particular incident highlights, among other things, the secret underlying the gradual revelation of the Quran in portions (over the course of twenty-three years). The Quran deals with actual subject matters, and so it lets the events occur naturally. Then, the Ruling of Allah, directly concerned with the current events, is revealed from the heaven at the time of their occurrence. Otherwise, how would the Quran address different incidents if it had been revealed all at one time before the actual occurrence of such events? Allah, therefore, decreed that the events should take place first, and then the rulings pertaining to them should be revealed. Furthermore, disbelievers are quoted in the Quran as saying: 'Why is the Quran not revealed to him (Muhammad) all at once?' (*al-Furqan*: 32) No, for Allah wanted that the Quran to be revealed gradually, in stages and on separate occasions. Why did He choose so?'... Thus, (it is sent down in parts), that We may strengthen your heart thereby. And We have revealed it to you gradually, in stages.' (*al-Furqan*: 32)

Therefore, Quranic verses were revealed whenever the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be shaken due to bitter quarrels, animosity and stubbornness shown on the part of disbelievers and their resistance to truth, although they recognised him to be the Messenger of Allah just as they recognised their own children. Also, whenever the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be shaken due to the tumult and troubles stirred up by the people around him, the Mercy from Heaven would descend to anchor and support his heart. The noble Quranic verses connected Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with Heaven and relieved him of this suffering. Throughout the mission of preaching Islam, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* experienced hardships

daily, which required him to be in need of continuous support and comfort from Allah *Glorified is He*. The revelation of the Quran following the difficulties he faced at the hands of his opponents along with the soothing beauty of Allah's Words had an alleviating effect on him. This made Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* await the sweetness of the Divine Words to be bestowed upon him whenever a distressful event occurred. This is the meaning of the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...Thus (it is sent down in parts) that We may strengthen your heart thereby...' (*al-Furqan*: 32). This means that Allah revealed the Quran little by little, in portions, to provide you, O, Muhammad, with constant steadfastness. If the Quran had been revealed all at once, the times of communication with Heaven would have been few. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to be in continuous contact with the Lord of the Heavens. The evidence is that when the revelation paused for some time, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* started to gaze yearningly at the sky. Why did he do this? The reason is that at its beginning, receiving Divine Revelation exhausted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, he said, 'He [Angel Jibril (Gabriel)] seized me and pressed me until I could no longer bear it.'⁽¹⁾ The Mother of the believers, Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* saw him during the descent of Divine Revelation and said, 'His forehead was intensely sweating.' Thus, the contact between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a human being, and Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* an angel, had to cause a chemical change in the soul of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In this regard, A'isha, the Mother of the believers *Allah be pleased with her* narrated that Al-Harith ibn Hisham *Allah be pleased with him* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O, Messenger of Allah, how does the revelation come to you?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Sometimes, it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, and that is the hardest for me. When it leaves me, I remember what it has said. Sometimes, the angel appears to me in the likeness of a man and talks to me, and I remember what he says.' A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* added, 'I saw the

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in *Bid' Al-Wahy (The Beginning of Receiving Divine Revelation)*

Messenger of Allah while the revelation was descending upon him on an extremely cold day. When it ceased, his forehead was flooded with sweat.⁽¹⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* experienced hardships. Allah *the Exalted* intended by the pause of revelation to make Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* feel the sweetness of the revelation that was bestowed upon him and long for it. Such longing helped Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* endure the difficulty he experienced while receiving Divine Revelations. Therefore, this sweating experience did not last for long because the True Lord *the Exalted* says: 'And indeed the Hereafter is better for you than the present (life of this world).' (*ad-Duha*: 4) This shows that the True Lord *the Exalted* explained to His Messenger that he would feel sweetness, yearning and enjoyment in receiving Divine Revelations '...Thus (it is sent down in parts) so that We may strengthen your heart thereby...' (*al-Furqan*: 32).

The Quran was sent down in portions over different periods of time. The Companions used to hear a number of Quranic verses, memorise them, and then the scribes of the revelations would write them down. Then another miracle of the Quran would descend in support of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and an entire chapter of the Quran would be revealed to him. After being relieved of the exhausting state experienced while receiving Divine Revelation, he would command the writers of it to record it. Afterwards, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would arrange the Quranic verses in their proper places within each chapter. Then, he would recite the chapter that was revealed to him during prayers, and those praying behind him would hear his recitation of each verse in its proper order. This evidently indicates that the manner in which the Quran was revealed had been accurately planned, and that whatever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stated or narrated must be true. Otherwise, I bid you tell me how an entire chapter of the Quran could be revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who would then dictate it to his scribes, recite it in the prayers exactly in the form and order in which it was revealed to him and have his Companions write it down, unless what was revealed to him was the

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in *Bid' Al-Wahy* (The Beginning of Receiving Divine Revelation)

truth from Allah. Sometimes, a person may talk non-stop for a quarter of an hour; we may then ask him to repeat what he said. However, this person would never be able to repeat the exact words he uttered. By contrast, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was capable of repeating the Quranic verses exactly as they were originally revealed to him. This indicates that he was reciting Allah's Preserved Book which falsehood cannot approach, neither from before it or behind it. It is sent down by the All-Wise, worthy of all praise. For this reason, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'And no example or similitude do they bring (to oppose or to find fault in you or in this Quran), but We reveal to you the truth (against that similitude or example) and the better explanation thereof.' (*al-Furqan*: 33) This means that Allah would always reveal to you, O Muhammad, the truth about any event or incident that deniers might mention to you.

Accordingly, the Quran was gradually revealed to constantly strengthen the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and safeguard it against the tribulations that it would experience. Allah willed that communication between His Messenger Muhammad and Heaven should extend over the twenty-three years of preaching and delivering the Message of Islam.

The Arabic word *tartil* signifies the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* descended in parts, and not all at once. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would then recite what was revealed to him in the prayers without any change or omission. Regarding this, the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* also says: 'We will make you recite (the Quran), so you shall not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6)

Each and every part of the Quran was revealed at the time most relevant to the events taking place, as with the incident of the theft committed by Ibn Ubaryq. A ruling was revealed about it in which the True Lord *the Exalted* says: '... and taught you that which you knew not. And Ever Great is the Grace of Allah unto you.' (*an-Nisa*': 113)

If Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* has imparted knowledge to you, O, Prophet Muhammad, through sending down the Quran to you, does this imply that only you are authorised to enact and implement the rulings and legislations already revealed to you in Allah's Book? No, this is not the case since the

Book is a miracle in itself, and it contains the principles of faith. However, Allah has also authorised His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to legislate and decree rulings. This is a privilege and honour that was not granted to any Messenger before him. The evidence is the saying of the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted*: '...whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad) gives you, take it, and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain (from it)...' (*al-Hashr*: 7). The Messengers before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only delivered to the people and judged between them based on what was revealed to them by Allah. Allah *the Most High* endowed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the special privilege of having the authorisation to pass rulings and legislations. The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* explained that he taught His Messenger both the Book and Wisdom. Wisdom refers to the *Sunnah*. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'And remember that which is recited in your houses of the Verses of Allah and the wisdom...' (*al-Ahzab*: 34).

Allah is the Bestower of grace and bounties on His Messenger Muhammad and all His creation: '... Allah has sent down to you the Book (the Quran), wisdom and taught you that which you knew not. And Ever Great is the Grace of Allah unto you (O, Muhammad).'

(*an-Nisa'*: 113)

We should notice that Allah's Grace and Favour occurred twice in this glorious verse. Allah's first favour in this verse is the protection of His Messenger Muhammad from any sect or group that may misguide and lead him away from the truth. The second favour that Allah conferred upon His Messenger Muhammad was that He revealed to him His Book which contained all the rulings and bestowed upon him wisdom, namely, the authorisation by Allah to legislate. Thus, Allah made the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* an extension to His Revelations. Therefore, some people who cast doubts on the authority and authenticity of the *Sunnah* can be responded to by asking them where in the Quran it mentions the description of the five daily obligatory prayers. For example, we may ask one of them, 'Do you perform your daily prayers or not?' One of them may answer, 'Yes, I do.' We may then respond to him: 'How many times do you pray?' He may then say, 'Five times.' We may then ask him to locate the place in the Quran where the five obligatory prayers are described. At this point, he will get pale and confused while trying

to find the verse that states that one must perform two *rak`as* (units of prayer) in the Morning Prayer, four *rak`as* in the Noon and Afternoon Prayers, three *rak`as* in the Sunset Prayer and four *Rak`as* in the Evening Prayer. Eventually, he will admit that he prays in accordance with the saying of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Pray as you have seen me praying.'⁽¹⁾ This is part of the *Sunnah*.

Regarding the part of the verse saying: '... and taught you that which you knew not. And Ever Great is the Grace of Allah unto you (O, Muhammad) ' (*an-Nisa`*: 113), some of those who tend to argue may say, 'The Quran repeats the same words in different places. Why does it mention Allah's Grace and Favour upon Prophet Muhammad at the beginning and end of the same verse?' We answer this by saying, 'You did not grasp the meaning of Allah's Favour in the first part. In this context, it meant that Allah protected His Messenger from being affected by false representation of facts with the intent of convicting an innocent Jew. The second occurrence of Allah's Grace and Favour upon His Messenger Muhammad refers to Allah's bestowal of Knowledge and Wisdom upon His Messenger which, on its own, is a truly great bounty.

Furthermore, did those people who went to talk to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding Tu`ma ibn Ubayriq, not sit together and deliberate the way in which they could let Tu`ma ibn Ubayriq escape punishment for his crime? They deliberated the case of Tu`ma amongst themselves and agreed to go to Prophet Muhammad. This deliberation was a secret and confidential conversation. For this reason, Islamic manners and code of conduct are keen to respect the dignity of any third party sitting with two persons. It is thus considered inappropriate for any two people to talk confidentially or secretly with each other in the presence of a third person since this causes feelings of annoyance and alienation.

However, a private conversation between two people is permissible when four people are sitting together. In this case, two may have a confidential conversation, while the other two may talk to each other. Thus, *najwa* means a private, secret conversation or discourse. Such discourse is often about a matter which the interlocutors do not wish to share or divulge. These people

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Al-Bayhaqi in *As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*

had done so before they went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to talk about the situation of Tu'ma ibn Ubayriq. The True Lord *the Most High* exposed their secret conversation. The following saying of the True Lord was revealed in association with this incident:

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِّن نَّجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ وَمَن يَعْمَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءً مَّرَضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

**There is no good in most of their secret talk, only in
commanding charity, or good, or reconciliation between people.
To anyone who does these things, seeking to please God, We
shall give a rich reward [114] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 114)**

Allah *the Most High* exposes the secret plan behind their private conversation that harboured the ill intention of misleading the judgement of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, what would be the ruling if secret conversations were intended to help achieve a truthful cause? Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* excluded this kind of secret conversations from blame; therefore, Allah did not pronounce an absolute judgement against all kinds of private conversations. Furthermore, not only does Allah exclude private conversations intended to encourage charity, doing good works or conciliating between people, but He also greatly rewards those who engage in them for such purposes. Therefore, Allah says: 'And whoever does this, seeking the good Pleasure of Allah, We shall in time grant him a great reward.' (*an-Nisa'*: 114) In this context, the True Lord *the Most High* uses the Arabic future tense *sawfa* which is in the previous verse and means 'shall in time', even though He could have said, 'We shall immediately grant him a great reward.' However, due to the perfect precision of the Quran, the word *sawfa* was used to indicate the furthest possible future.

When the time span, separating the action in the subordinate clause and its result in the main clause is relatively short, the verb in the main clause is affixed by the letter 's' (a prefix that denotes the future), and if this time span is longer, the verb is preceded by *sawfa* (which means 'will'). However, if there is a time lag between the former and the latter, the word *sawfa* is used in place of the particle (*sin*). In this verse, the True Lord *the Exalted* uses the word

sawfa since the place of reward is the Afterlife. Therefore, no believing servant of Allah should say, 'Why has Allah not rewarded me for my good deed in the worldly life?' The reason is that the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* did not say, 'We shall immediately grant him a great reward', instead He said: '... We shall in time grant him a great reward.' (*an-Nisa*: 114) This indicates that all favours and bounties are from Allah. However, if they were bestowed immediately, this would not be the true reward for such good deeds since the reward which the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* shall give to his believing servants will be quite great. The only word that can indicate that such reward will follow in the Afterlife is *sawfa*. In this connection, we also know that whenever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* promised his followers something, he would always refer to the Afterlife. Let us consider, for example, Al-'Aqaba Pledge, which was when the *Ansar* came from Medina to pledge their allegiance and loyalty to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* surrounded by a group of his Companions on the night of the 'Aqabah Pledge, said, 'Give me your pledge of allegiance that you will not associate anything with Allah, that you will not steal, that you will not commit *zina* (sexual intercourse outside marriage), that you will not kill your children, that you will not bring forth a slander you fabricate by lying about who has fathered your children and that you will not disobey what is right. Whoever among you fulfills this (pledge), his reward is due from Allah. Whoever commits anything of this and is punished in this world, it shall be considered expiation for him. And whoever commits anything of this, and Allah shields him (i.e. covers his sin), his matter will rest with Allah. If He so wills, He will pardon him; and if He so wills, He will punish him.'⁽¹⁾

The people replied, 'O, Messenger of Allah, you have asked for yourself, and we want to ask for ourselves. What shall we have if we fulfil this pledge?' Let us hear the great, divinely inspired reply that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave, 'You shall have Paradise.'

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in the Book of Iman (Faith)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could have told them that they would triumph and prevail over the earth, from the east to the west, and that they would enjoy the bounties of all the countries that would convert to Islam. However, due to his wisdom, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never promised them such things since some of them might be killed while fighting in support of the Religion of Allah. In such case, some might wonder what reward did he get in the worldly life? He would not get his share of honour in the worldly life, but he would be rewarded in the Afterlife. This is the reason why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* mentioned the reward that applies to all, namely, entering paradise, in order to make Muslims realise that this world is too immaterial for Allah to limit the reward He promised to those who obey Him to only it, rather, he encourages believers to seek Allah's Reward in the Afterlife. We all know the following story. A man once said to his friend, 'Do you love me?' His friend replied, 'Yes, I love you.' He asked, 'How much?' His friend replied, 'I love you as much as I love this worldly life.' The man said, 'How insignificant I must be to you!'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And whoever does this, seeking the good Pleasure of Allah, We shall in time grant him a great reward.' (*an-Nisa'*: 114). However, to whom does the pronoun 'We' in this verse refer? Who will grant such a great reward? It is the True Lord *the Most High* who described His Reward as great. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is telling us, 'O, believers, adhere to the path of Prophet Muhammad and cling to it until your life becomes unified to it. Beware of having any opinion different from his law. He is the one who speaks on behalf of Allah. Thus, whoever believes in him must adhere to his path. When our master Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was told about the story of *Isra'* (Night Journey) and *Mi'raj* (Ascension to Heaven), he just asked those who told him, 'Did the Messenger of Allah say what you are telling me now?' They answered, 'Yes.' So, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* answered, 'If he said so, it must be true.' Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* did not need evidence to verify the truth of what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said. The True Lord *the Exalted* then puts forward the opposite case:

وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بُنِنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعْ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ تُوَلِّهِ مَا تَوَلَّىٰ وَنُصْلِهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا ﴿١١٥﴾

**if anyone opposes the Messenger, after guidance has been made
 clear to him, and follows a path other than that of the believers,
 We shall leave him on his chosen path – We shall burn him in
 Hell, an evil destination [115] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 115)**

The word *yushaqq* which is the Arabic word in the previous verse that translates as 'contradicts and opposes', indicates that a cleavage or chasm has been engendered in something that used to be cohesively held together as one unit. This is analogous to the case when we cut a piece of wood into two. Similarly, if believers adhere to and have faith in the path set by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and recognise him as the Messenger conveying the true Message of Allah, they do not ever break such unity with and adherence to the path of Allah's Messenger. Thus, if a ruling was decreed and a believer tried to violate it, in doing so this person would, Allah forbid, be inciting disobedience against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Alternatively, the verse at hand might be referring to those who pursue a path other than that of Prophet Muhammad, and thus, end up following a path other than that set by Allah's Law: 'And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad) after the right path has been shown clearly to him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 115). Guidance has indeed become clear to every Muslim once they believe in Allah as their Creator and Lord and believe in Prophet Muhammad as the conveyor of Allah's Message. By doing so, they are submitting themselves to Allah. As we have previously stated, the function of reason is to contemplate the signs and evidence of the existence of the Supreme Creator. After one believes in the existence of the One Supreme Lord, another step must follow: belief in the Messenger of God as the conveyer of God's Message and Words. The reason is that the ultimate piece of evidence that one's logic seeks as a ground to believe in the existence of God is the one proving the existence of an Able, All-Wise and All Knowing Power that underlies the existence of humanity along with this entire universe.

However, human reason cannot, on its own, identify the name of such a power. Furthermore, human reason cannot know the demands of such a power

from its created beings. Therefore, human reason must be informed of the nature of this power. Once compelling evidence of the existence of a Higher Being is revealed to humans, with a message sent from Him through a messenger, the humans must adhere to the path preached by this Messenger. The humans must then fulfil the obligations that this Supreme Power has placed on them since they are God's Commands that the Messenger of God delivered them, performed them himself or ordered that they be performed. However, to those who want to engage in contentious arguments we say, 'First, reconsider your faith in Allah, and second, reconsider your belief in the Messenger of Allah. This is the reason why the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* says: 'And whoever contradicts and opposes the Messenger (Muhammad) after the right path has been shown clearly to him, and follows other than the believers' way. We shall keep him in the path he has chosen, and burn him in Hell - what an evil destination' (*an-Nisa'*: 115).

Guidance, as we know, is the path leading to a specific aim and purpose. Every action of a human being must have a purpose. Society considers anyone who does a purposeless act as inept and lacking direction. By contrast, if one has an aim for his actions, then he knows well the importance and significance of his aim and will search for the shortest way to accomplish it. This way is what we call guidance. Thus, whoever learns the way of guidance and then pursues a path other than that of the believers has opposed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has dissociated himself from the path of faith and has proceeded contrary to it. Furthermore, whoever opposes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has, in fact, renounced his faith.

Thus, we know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has set a particular way and path and that believers follow him closely, adhering to this path. Furthermore, we also recognise that whoever deviates from the path set by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dissociates himself from him as well as from the believers. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to follow His Path and not to follow other ways: 'And say, "This is my straight path. So follow it; and follow no other ways, lest they lead you away from His way. That is what He enjoins upon you, that you may be able to guard against evils. '*(al-An'am*: 153)

Allah *Glorified is He* has set only one Path. However, what happens to the one who deviates from it? Allah *Glorified is He* answers that question by stating that He will leave such a person on his chosen path and burn him in Hell, an evil destination. Sometimes the Arabic word *mn*, meaning 'whoever', could be used as a conditional particle or as a relative pronoun. For instance, when we say that whoever studies succeeds, the last syllable of the two verbs following *mn*, or 'however', are pronounced with a u-sound accent, and in that case it is a relative pronoun. The sentence would mean that the one who studies is the one who succeeds. However, if the last syllable of the two verbs has a silent accent, *nm*, or 'however', would be a conditional particle. If the word *mn*, or 'whoever', is a relative pronoun, we find that the sentence proceeds normally with two verbs pronounced with u sound accent. However, if it is a conditional particle, the last syllable of the two verbs is pronounced with a silent accent, and the second verb would be the outcome of the condition. The Arabic word *mn* (whoever) can be either a relative pronoun or a conditional particle; this is normally known from what follows it. We have an illustrative example in this verse when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Yattabi' (to follow).' Thus, we notice that the verb *yattabi*' (to follow) has a silent accent. This means that *mn* (whoever) is conditional in this context. The recitation would be different if we deem *mn* (whoever) a relative pronoun because in such a case the verb *yushaqiq* (to oppose), as well as the verb *yattabi*' (to follow), will be both considered normal present tense verbs with u-sounding accents on the last syllable of each. In such a case, the rest of the verse would be recited as *nuwallihi ma tawalla wanuslihi*. By contrast, if *mn* (whoever) is considered a conditional particle, as it actually is in this verse, this implies that the last syllable of the verb *yushaqiq* (to oppose) must have a silent accent; in such a case this verse is to be recited normally. Subsequently, the last syllable of the verb connected with the verb *yushaqiq* (to oppose) via the conjunction, viz. *yattabi*' (to follow) must also have a silent accent. The same also applies to *nuwallihi* (to leave) and *nuslihi* (to burn) since both of them are connected with *yattabi*' (to follow) via a conjunction. However, in the case of the two latter verbs, adding a silent accent to their last syllable assumes the form of omitting the vowel *Al-Yaa'* (i) at the end of each. Another semantic point to consider is the meaning of *tawalla* which is to come close to someone.

Thus, when we say that so and so *tawalla* (to come closer to) so and so, this means that this person has become close to that other person. Allah *Glorified is He* does not want whoever does not follow the path of the believers, and thus He abandons him to the disbelievers. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'I am the One, One Who does not stand in need of a partner. If anyone does anything in which he associates anyone else with Me, I shall abandon him with one whom he associates with Allah.'⁽¹⁾

The one who needs a partner is the one who suffers a point of weakness that makes him in need of another partner for support. To Allah *Glorified is He* belong the supreme and most Glorified parables. An example illustrating the above point is that no one would ever have a business partner unless he does not have enough money to manage his business or lacks the ability to manage it. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us, 'I am the One, One Who does not stand in need of a partner. If anyone does anything in which he associates anyone else with Me, I shall abandon him with one whom he associates with Allah.'⁽²⁾

This means that Allah *Glorified is He* has the absolute, effective Power that is not in need of any support or partnership, as partnership primarily indicates that one of the partners is weak and, therefore, needs the support of another partner. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* punishes whoever opposes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding any religious matter by making him closer to disbelievers, and also closer to his aim. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that no benefit will accrue to anyone who opposes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Rather, the punishment of the one who opposes him and follows other than the way of the believers is that Allah *Glorified is He* brings him closer to the disbelievers and the sinners by making him join their side and resurrecting him among their group. This does not mean that Allah *Glorified is He* deprives this servant of his provision, instead, He grants provisions to both believers and disbelievers. He has also commanded all worldly causes to serve His servants if they pursue them. Indeed, it is due to the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* that He does not deprive such a disobedient servant of His Bounties; His sun provides him with light and warmth, the air

(1) [Narrated by Muslim]

(2) [Narrated by Muslim]

continues to blow for him and the earth continues to supply him with his sustenance. Allah *Glorified is He* says that He increases the harvest of whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter and gives whoever desires the harvest of this worldly life a share of it, but he will have no share in the Hereafter: 'Who so desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his harvest; and whoso desires the harvest of this world, We give him his portion thereof, but in the Hereafter, he will have no share.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

In this respect, He also states that to each category He gives from His Bounty which never has been restricted: 'To all We render aid - to those as well as to these - a gift from your Lord. And the gift of your Lord is not restricted.' (*al-Isra'*: 20) Thus, Divine Grace and Bounty are not exclusively restricted to believers; rather, they are equally bestowed upon both believers and disbelievers. Indeed, if this had been the only sign of Allah's Compassion and Mercy, it would have sufficed to make us all love Him and follow His Path. Allah *Glorified is He* states that whoever follows a path other than that of the believers, He will leave such a person on his chosen path and burn him in hell, an evil destination. The path leading to hell must indeed be extremely evil. Subsequently, the discourse of Allah's addresses the capital form of treason one could ever commit against faith; it is Allah's saying:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ
يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١١٦﴾

**God does not forgive the worship of others beside
Him – though He does forgive whoever He will for
lesser sins – for who- ever does this has gone far,
far astray [116] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 116)**

In this context, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the person who did not repent from his act of associating others in divinity with Allah *Glorified is He* so he can not be a believer. Believing in Islam wipes out what precedes it, which means that it wipes out all acts of disbelief and the sins that preceded it, provided that such acts and sins were not related to the rights of others as is the case of one of Allah's servants wronging another. A sign of the greatness of believing in Islam is that if someone who devoutly embraced faith in Allah

Glorified is He with a pure intention and then dies, He rewards this person with satisfaction and pleasure more than the one who lives for a long time as a believer and yet commits a number of sins for which he deserves to be punished.

The story of Mukhayriq *Allah be pleased with him* illustrates this point. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* departed from Medina on his way to the battle of 'Uhud, Mukhayriq *Allah be pleased with him* asked the Jews, 'Why do you not advocate Muhammad's cause and support him even though you know that it is incumbent on you to do so?' The Jews then answered, 'Today is a Saturday.' Mukhayriq *Allah be pleased with him* then said, 'No Saturday will keep me from fulfilling my obligation.' He then picked up his sword and set out to join Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*. He then fought until he was injured and his injury was too severe for him to continue fighting. When he was about to die, he said, 'I give my wealth to Muhammad to do with it as he wishes.' Thus, even though Mukhayriq *Allah be pleased with him* did not pray even a single unit of prayer to Allah *Glorified is He* during his life, he attained the status of a martyr. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said, 'Mukhayriq is the good leader of the Jews, Salman is the good leader of the Persians and Bilal is the good leader of the Abyssinians.'

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us here that he does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. To Allah *Glorified is He* belong the supreme and most Glorified parables – and an example of the above point in everyday life is that we may come across a society wherein a revolution or a coup erupts. We may then notice that the leaders of this revolution or coup let someone do as he wills until the point when he starts to criticise the revolution or try to incite another coup. Upon doing so, they may take him to court and try him for high treason. So what should be the punishment of the one who completely gets out of the fold of faith and associates anyone with Allah? Allah *Glorified is He* never forgives such a major sin; however, He forgives all acts and deeds other than it. It is indeed due to Allah's Mercy towards His creation that He has reserved the will to forgive exclusively to Himself so that people would not consider it easy to commit a given sin. However, any servant of Allah *Glorified is He* who commits a sin should first repent in order for Allah *Glorified is He* to forgive

him. In this respect, we know that Allah *Glorified is He* never excludes any of His servants from the realm of His Mercy simply because he has committed a sin. We know that there is a difference between a servant of Allah *Glorified is He* who commits a sin while recognising that it is a sin, acknowledging his sinfulness and realising that His Ruling is correct, but he was too weak to resist the temptation; while another servant may simply reject His Ruling. In this respect, we sometimes come across a servant who seeks to find an aspect of permissibility to commit a sin as is the case when one says that usury is not unlawful. This is a form of rejecting Allah's Ruling. By contrast, the servant who says, 'I know that usury is unlawful, but I am undergoing difficult conditions, and I have pressing needs to meet. Therefore, I slipped into eating usury' is only a disobedient one since he does not reject Allah's Ruling. Whoever rejects Allah's Ruling is, Allah forbid, a disbeliever.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whomever He wills. We should also bear in mind that some orientalists who want to spread corruption on earth, ultimately spread the virtues of Islam. Their case is similar to what a poet described in the following verses:

Whenever Allah wills to spread a virtue that has disappeared,
He appoints for this mission the tongue of an envious person.

When the orientalists talk about certain matters, they drive those who have faith to seek answers using the miraculous aspects of the Quran and its eloquence. The orientalists say, 'Muhammad told his people that Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whomever He wills. However, it seems that he was quite unaware of this when he said in another verse that Allah forgives all the sins of His servants who transgressed against themselves by their very sinning.' Allah says: 'Say, 'O, my servants who have sinned against their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah. Surely, Allah forgives all sins. Verily, He is Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.' (*az-Zumar*: 53) They try to attribute the discourse of the Quran to Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* instead of Allah *Glorified is He* and to find a contradiction between the two noble verses. We say to orientalists that they are all ignorant, along with lacking the mastery of the Arabic language.

Had they mastered the Arabic language and grasped it naturally, they would have understood the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* that He forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He Who is 'Most Forgiving, Ever Merciful.' (*az-Zumar*: 53)

These orientalist should have understood that associating anyone with Allah *Glorified is He* is much more severe than sinning. Sinning occurs when someone recognises a religious ruling but then violates it. However, the one who associates anyone with Allah *Glorified is He* does not fall under the category of people whom Allah *Glorified is He* may forgive all kinds of their sins, as he is a disbeliever in the first place. For this reason, there is no contradiction or discrepancy between the two noble verses. Thus, it is evident that orientalist do not understand the real meanings of the Quran.

Allah *Glorified is He* states that He does not forgive the worship of others beside Him, but forgives what is lesser than that, as the one who worships others beside Him has gone far astray. No matter how satisfying a life a polytheist may enjoy, he will ultimately live for a limited time. Therefore, even if all such pleasure and satisfaction remain, he will leave them when he dies. Alternatively, pleasure and satisfaction may abandon and leave him during his life. Therefore, he will either abandon all pleasures upon dying, or all pleasures and satisfaction will abandon him inasmuch as everything in this worldly life is susceptible to change. Thus, as far as pleasure and satisfaction in life are concerned, one has either of two conditions: he may either abandon them upon dying, or the pleasures and satisfaction will themselves abandon him during his life. Furthermore, a polytheist will ultimately return to Allah *Glorified is He* to be judged in the Afterlife, and since it is eternal, his suffering due to his crime(s) will be infinitely long. Committing such an act is thereby an extreme form of drifting far astray. By contrast, the one who drifts astray a little bit may restore his senses and return to the righteous path. Accordingly, polytheists may be classified into two group: one group who deny the Divinity of Allah and these are disbelievers, and a group who believe in Allah, but associate partners with Him in Divinity.

For this reason, we find the polytheists at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* said that they only worship idols, believing that they may bring them nearer to Allah: 'And those who take as

protectors others beside Him say, "We serve them only that they may bring us near to Allah in station.' (*az-Zumar*: 3)

For instance, had they said that they only sacrifice to them to bring them nearer to Allah, it would have been possible for them to fall among the sphere of those who worship Him *Glorified is He*. However, they admitted that they worship the idols; for this reason, they definitely fall within the realm of polytheism. In this respect, our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* says that the idols are enemies to him, but not (to) the Lord of the worlds: 'They are all enemies to me...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 77).

He specifies the exception in his declaration so that he may decisively and clearly tell his people that all the idols that they worship are his enemies, but Allah is not his enemy. It is as if the people of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* used to believe in Allah *Glorified is He*, but associated partners with Him. For this reason, he said that it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who created him and guided him, and it is He Who gave him food and drink: '(It is Allah) Who has created me, and it is He Who guides me and Who gives me food and gives me drink.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 78,79)

Accordingly, polytheism may assume the form of denying the existence of Allah, or it may take the form of associating others in Divinity with Him. Let us then see who the polytheists worship and pray to when calamities befall them:

﴿۱۱۷﴾ إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا

In His place the idolaters invoke only females, and Satan, the rebel [117] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 117)

The Arabic word '*in* (not)' in this context means 'not.' In some instances, the word '*in*' is used as a conditional particle, and in others instances, it is used as a negative article as is the case of His saying in another verse that their mothers are none but those who gave birth to them: 'Those among you who put away their wives by calling them mothers - they do not thereby become their mothers; their mothers are only those who gave birth to them.' (*al-Mujadala*: 2)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* means that their mothers are only those who gave birth to them. The same applies to the word '*in* (not)' when Allah

Glorified is He says that they call only upon female deities instead of Him. The Arabs before Islam used to attribute everything that is base and weak to women. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says that they are brought up wearing adornments and during arguments are unable to speak plainly: 'Do they assign to Allah one who is brought up in adornments and who is not able to give clear expression to an argument in disputation?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 18) Women in the Arabic tradition are incapable of achieving victory or defending themselves. For this reason, an Arab poet said:

I do not know and I do not imagine I would know

If the tribe of Hisnis truly a people or merely women

The word 'people' in the above line refers to men since they are the ones who always handle confronting problems. So why do you claim that there are female partners with Allah *Glorified is He*? Is it because females are weak? Or is it because you claim that the angels are the daughters of Allah and so you used to worship them? If this is the case, why do you attribute the females to Allah *Glorified is He* even though He has created both males and females? For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'That, indeed is an unfair division.' (*an-Najm*: 22). This means that it is an unfair division and distribution, wherein justice was not observed.

In this respect, when we consider the idols, we notice that they all have female names like al-Lat, al-Uzza, and Manat (*an-Najm*: 19-20). Similarly, there is an idol called 'Isaf, and another called Na'ila. Accordingly, are these idols really females? If so, how come that you worship females even though you consider them incapable of supporting and benefiting anyone? Furthermore, the idols that you worship besides Allah and that have female names, are they women or angels?

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* that they worship instead of Him only female false deities is a style used to imply exclusion. This means that they do not worship apart from Allah except females, or another way to say it is that they worship only females and not Allah. This style of saying it this way is similar to the statement that only Zayd was treated generously. This is a negation of anybody being generous to anyone besides Zayd, and it is an affirmation of its occurrence to Zayd. Therefore, once Allah *Glorified is He* says that they

call upon instead of Him none but female false deities, we should understand that they do not worship or invoke anyone except females. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* conjoins it with: '...They do not call on anything but a rebellious Satan.'

At the beginning of the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* has used a style for exclusion. This style indicates that the action is limited to the one who carried it out and is not extended to anyone else. Their worshipping of females only is the first exclusion in the verse. The other one is the saying of Allah that they do not call on anything but a rebellious Satan. The servants of the idols used to allege that there it is something inside every idol that speaks to them. For this reason, they also alleged that there was a Satan in every idol that spoke to them. This was a kind of deception since devils could either be humans or Jinn.

Therefore, there were servants who used to take care of these false deities and wanted to attribute power to them so that people would make sacrifices and bring gifts to these deities, and these servants would relish that chance. For this reason, they used to hire someone who had a rough voice to stand behind the idols and tell people, 'Sacrifice such and such for me or bring me such and such thing.' Such practice is identical to what the modern magicians do in order to convince people of their power. Therefore, the entity that used to talk from inside these idols is either a Satan from among humans or a Satan from among genies. Etymologically, the Arabic word *shaytan* (Satan) is derived from *shatan* which means distance and remoteness.

In order to understand why Satan is described as *marid* (rebellious), we toned to understand the meaning of the words *mared* and *marid*. To do so, we have to bear in mind that abstract things are explained in terms of tangible things. The linguistic root of both words is constituted of three Arabic letters: *al-mim*, *ar-ra'* and *ad-dal*. From this root, several words are derived like the following: '*amrad*, *mumarad*, *marda*' and *marid*. All the words derived from this root refer to a kind of smooth texture, as '*amrad*' means smooth. Thus, when it is used to describe a specific kind of hair, it means that the roots of this hair are smooth. Furthermore, if a palace is described as being *mumarad* (smooth) as in the case of the palace of Sulaiman (Solomon), this means that such palace has been polished in a way that made it so smooth that Bilqis, the

queen of Sheba, mistakenly mistook it for water. For this reason, the queen raised her dress fearing it could become wet. Similarly, if a tree is described as being *marda'*, this implies that it is too smooth for one to climb, like the palm tree since it does not have any branches on it, which explains why people hammer big nails in the stem of this tree to help them climb it.

Similarly, Satan is described as being *marid* (rebellious) to indicate that he is constantly rebelling and revolting to such an extent that one cannot catch him or control him. Thus, '*amrad, mumarad, marda'* and *marid* all refer to the smoothness of texture. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says that they actually call upon none but a rebellious Satan.

When a sinful person tries to blame Satan in the Afterlife, the latter will tell them that he had no authority over them except that he called them, and they responded to his call: 'I had no power over you, except that I called you and you obeyed me. So blame me not, but blame your own selves.' (*Ibrahim: 22*)

Thus, he evades and betrays those who followed him because he did not solely possess the power to either persuade or coerce them. He only called upon, abetted and distracted some of Allah's created beings. Thus, they followed him due to their stupidity. Allah *Glorified is He* then says that Satan has been banished from His Mercy. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَقَالَ لَا اتَّخِذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا ﴿١١٨﴾

God rejected, who said, I will certainly take my due share of Your servants [118] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 118)

But why was he cursed? Satan sinned and disobeyed Allah *Glorified is He*. Similarly, Adam *peace be upon him* sinned and disobeyed Allah *Glorified is He*. So, why has Allah *Glorified is He* cursed Satan but forgiven Adam? We find the answer in the Quran when it says that Adam received from Allah *Glorified is He* some words of prayer and He accepted his repentance: 'Then Adam learnt from his Lord certain words of prayer. So He turned towards him with Mercy. Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion and is Merciful.' (*al-Baqara: 37*) Based on this statement, we know that there is a difference between created beings of Allah *Glorified is He* that rejects one of His Rulings, and another who

obliviously commits a sin. When Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Satan to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him*, Satan answered that he was better than Adam since Allah *Glorified is He* had created him from fire, whereas He created Adam from clay: '...He said, "I am better than he. You have created me from fire while him you have created from clay."' (al-A'raf: 12)

This is a rejection of Allah's Ruling. This is different from the case of Adam and Hawwa (Eve) who admitted wronging themselves by committing a sin: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the losers." (al-A'raf: 23)

Thus, Adam *peace be upon him* recognised Allah's Ruling and admitted that he was too weak to resist the temptation. For this reason, every one of us should beware of approaching anything that Allah *Glorified is He* has made unlawful and furthering saying that it is not unlawful. Rather, if one is incapable of controlling himself, he should acknowledge his incapacity and say, 'Whatever Allah has made unlawful is proscribed, but I am not able to control himself.' By doing so, he avoids slipping into disbelief and is merely considered a disobedient believer. In such a case, repentance and asking Allah *Glorified is He* for forgiveness may remove the sins he incurred due to his deeds. However, the one who claims that what Allah *Glorified is He* has proscribed is lawful is the one who insists on disbelief. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* has veiled and blurred his insight due to what he did.

Allah *Glorified is He* describes Satan as accursed which means He has banished him from the realm of His Mercy, which is one reason why man should beware of giving in to the enticements of Satan.

If our master Adam *peace be upon him* had exerted his mind, he would have discerned the intention of Satan and his plot, for the plot of Satan is weak. However, Adam *peace be upon him* did not imagine that anyone one could falsely swear by Allah's Name, which is what Satan did when he swore that he was a sincere advisor to Adam and Hawwa (Eve): '... Surely I am a sincere counsellor unto you.' (al-A'raf: 21)

The carelessness of Adam *peace be upon him* was intended for a purpose that Allah *Glorified is He* has willed. The purpose was to make Adam His vicegerent in the world. This is why it was easy for Satan to entice Adam

peace be upon him and his wife in order to expose their nakedness. He said to them that Allah had forbidden them that tree to prevent them from becoming angels or immortal:... "Your Lord has only forbidden you this tree, lest you become angels or lest you become of the immortals." (*al-A'raf*: 20) Satan tempted Adam and Hawwa (Eve) when he told them that Allah *Glorified is He* kept them from eating from the tree so that they would not become angels or immortal. Had Adam *peace be upon him* carefully deliberated the matter, he could have told Satan that he should eat from the tree in order to become an eternal angel since he is the one who fearfully asked Allah *Glorified is He* to relieve him until the Day of Resurrection: 'He said, "My Lord, then grant me respite till the day when they shall be raised."' (*al-Hijr*: 36)

Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to learn from the carelessness of Adam *peace be upon him*; for this reason, a believer should always be attentive and vigilant. Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has cursed the Satan, for he had said that he would take from among Allah's servants an appointed portion.

When the noble Quran addresses a certain issue, this means that such an issue merits our deliberation and careful consideration. We notice that Satan talked about the matter at the time when there were only two human beings: Adam and Hawwa (Eve). However, how did he know that he will have more human followers in the future? Furthermore, on what basis did he say that he would surely take from among Allah's servants an appointed portion?

He knew that since he was capable of tempting Adam and Hawwa (Eve), he would be capable of tempting some of their posterity and winning them to his side. Thus, he made such an assertion based on the fact that he was able to tempt Adam and Hawwa (Eve). Those who follow Satan from amongst humans have, therefore, vindicated his claim to take from amongst Allah's servants an appointed portion.

Satan thereby made this hypothetical claim because he was able to tempt Adam and Hawwa (Eve), even though they received their assignments directly from Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, he thought that it would be easier to tempt their posterity who did not receive their assignments directly from Allah *Glorified is He* but through messengers. Thus, the line of thinking of Satan was based on a piece of evidence. A supposition is, as we know, a

probability and an uncertain claim. Its antithesis is an illusion, which is based on a less likely possibility. Allah *Glorified is He* says that Satan had already confirmed through them his assumption: 'And Iblis (Satan), indeed, found true his judgment concerning them, so they followed him, all except a party of true believers.' (*Saba*: 20) For this reason, Satan also said that if Allah *Glorified is He* delayed his death until the Day of Resurrection, he would surely destroy Adam's descendants, except for a few: 'If You will grant me respite till the Day of Resurrection, I will most surely bring his descendants under my sway except a few.' (*al-Isra*: 62) He also swore by Allah's Might to mislead them all: 'So by Your Might, I will surely lead them all astray' (*Sad*: 82). The pledge of Satan to take from amongst Allah's servants an appointed portion is a confession on his part that he will not be able to tempt all the children of Adam and Hawwa (Eve). The Arabic word *Al-fard* (an appointed portion), as we know, is a certain matter. Thus, it is what is certain and indisputable. However, what are the means whereby Satan would take an appointed portion of the posterity of Adam? Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us the means of Satan through his own words:

وَلَا ضَلَّتْهُمْ وَلَا مَنِيْنَهُمْ وَلَا مَرْتَهُمْ فَلْيَبْتَكَنَّ ءَاذَانَ الْاَنْعَامِ
وَلَا مَرْتَهُمْ فَلْيَغْيِرْ خَلْقَ اللّٰهِ وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطٰنَ وَلِيًّا مِّنْ
دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرًا مُّبِيْنًا ﴿١١٩﴾

I will mislead them and incite vain desires in them; I will command them to slit the ears of cattle; I will command them to tamper with God's creation.'

Whoever chooses Satan as a patron instead of God is utterly ruined [119] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 119)

In this verse, there is a detailed account of the means whereby Satan would tempt and take an appointed portion of the posterity of Adam *peace be upon him*. Satan, as the Quran recounts, said: 'I will assuredly lie in wait for them on Your straight path.' (*al-A'raf*: 16) We learnt before that Satan only intends and tries to tempt those who pursue the path of righteousness. The reason is that the one who chose an evil path does not need Satan to tempt him since he is already a Satan. For this reason, Satan would not go, for instance,

to a bar in order to tempt people. Rather, he waits in front of mosques to identify the people who do good things and tries to tempt them by whispering to them. This answers those who complain that they suffer from whispering while praying. Praying, as we know, is the noblest activity that any servant of Allah *Glorified is He* does; while praying, he stands before Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, Satan tries to distract him in order to preclude him from reaping the reward for his prayers. These temptations are thereby a healthy phenomenon since they are an indication of faith; however, those with faith should perform cautiously. When Satan prompts a person to do something, he should recall the saying of Allah that if the Satan prompts the person, he should seek refuge with Allah. He is All-Hearing and All Knowing: 'And if an evil suggestion of Satan assails thee, then seek refuge in Allah; surely, He is All-Hearing, All Knowing.' (*al-A'raf*: 200)

When we seek refuge with Allah *Glorified is He* Satan realises that we are aware of his existence. Therefore, if Satan tries to tempt you, you must immediately seek refuge with Allah *Glorified is He* even if you are reciting the Quran while praying. Subsequently, you may resume reciting the Quran during your prayer. When Satan realises that you are aware of his temptations once, twice and thrice, he will keep away from you and will never seek to approach you unless he feels that you are in a state of carelessness.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us the means whereby Satan takes a specific portion from amongst His servants. He says that Satan will mislead them, which means that he takes the man to a path that does not lead to a good end. If someone chooses the shortest path leading to the targeted end, this means that he is guided. However, if one drifts away from the path leading to the end that he has set, this means that one is misguided. By setting the path of righteous guidance, Allah *Glorified is He* directs us to the shortest way to our proper end and purpose in life. Therefore, if we deviate from it, here or there, such deviation will expand until we eventually fail to reach the proper end.

Previously, we have given an example to illustrate this point. We said that at the middle of each circle, there is a point that we call the centre. If someone aiming at this point deviates from the straight line that connects him with it by one thousandth of a millimetre, the distance between him and the point would

increase proportionally as he proceeds, even though this person assumes that every step he takes brings him closer to his destination.

We have also put forth another illustrative example. Consider the control booth located before every train station. The worker in the booth regulates the directions of all trains running on the different railways and allows each train to stop at a specific platform so that it would not collide with other trains. In order for him to undertake his job successfully, the control-booth worker moves a stick shift whose thickness does not often sometimes exceed a few millimetres. Moving this stick enables the worker to align two railways over each other and so allows the wheels of the train to move from one of them to the other.

Going astray thereby means that one pursues a path that does not lead one to the end and purpose he has set. Every step one takes on this path distances him from his destination and end instead of bringing him closer to it. Such drifting away is the most extreme form of going and straying farther away. Satan is the one who leads man astray inasmuch as he beautifies committing evil and ugly deeds to divert one off the path leading to goodness and virtue.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says that Satan pledged to rouse in man sinful desires. Objects of desire are the goals that one sets and enjoys in his imagination but never takes an actual step to approach the stage of achieving them. For instance, a person may be sitting down and wishing that he would have such and such things even though he does not take any actual step towards acquiring what he wishes to have. In this respect a poet says the following couplet to amuse himself:

The best wishes are those that come true
Otherwise, they make us enjoy our lives

The poet means that one takes pleasure in his wishes by daydreaming regardless if these dreams were about possessing a palace, a car or something else. Every wish that does not motivate one to actually do something to fulfil it is a false wish. For this reason, it is said that wishes are the commodities of the fools. Satan tempts man with the wish that there is no resurrection or recompensing for one's deeds.

Subsequently, Satan says, that he will command people to slit the ears of the cattle. *Al-batk* (to cut) means to slit, and *Al-an'am* (the cattle) are the

camels, cows and sheep. In this context, *Al-batk* means slitting the ears of these animals. The Quran says that *Al-An'am* (the cattle) are eight *azwaj* (mates): two of the sheep, two of goats, two of camels and two of cows: 'And of the cattle He has created eight mates - of the sheep two, and of the goats two. Say, "Is it the two males He has forbidden or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful." And of the camels two, and of the oxen two. Say, "Is it the two males that He has forbidden or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Were you present when Allah enjoined this on you? "' (*al-An'am*: 143, 144) Had the Arabic word *zawj* (mate) referred to two, this would have meant that the aforementioned verses refer to four only. But the expression of the Quran demonstrates that we ought to use our discretion to understand that the word *zawj* (mate) does not refer to two things. Rather, it refers to one member of certain species that is always associated with a like member of its species. For instance, we refer to one part of the pair of shoes as *zawj* (mate) because it must have another one to complement it. Another example is the Arabic word *taw'am* (twin) which we commonly think that it refers to each set of twins, while it really refers to only one of them. Therefore, if we want to refer to both of them, we ought to use the dual form *taw'aman* (twins).

There is a story underlying why Allah *Glorified is He* has mentioned that one among the plans of Satan is to order of people to slit the ears of the cattle. We know that those who take advantage of the ways in which people go astray attribute false temporal powers to themselves in order to keep others dependent on them only. In this respect, those who took care of idols used to serve them; however, no one noticed that it is quite asinine to accept the idea that humans take care of gods. The 'God' by definition sustains his creatures, looks after them and provides them with the means required to support their existence. Thus, the people who laid such a claim took advantage of the carelessness of other humans; they only served these idols to take advantage of this position. Normally, devils from amongst humans and Jinn also took advantage of the carelessness of people; they, therefore, used to sit inside idols and speak so that these servants may use such an incident as proof to promote idol-worshipping. Accordingly, the fools would then bring camels,

cows and sheep to sacrifice them not knowing that these servants ultimately eat their sacrifices. This is why those servants were mostly fat and had big bellies. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Allah hates the fat rabbi.'⁽¹⁾ Such a rabbi finds it easy to usurp and take advantage of the wealth of other people. Thus, he takes advantage of the misled people, and furthermore, he wants this state of carelessness in the people to continue and perpetuates it into continuing. He is similar to the drug dealer who wants as many people as possible to take drugs and gets upset whenever the police wage campaigns against the drug dealing trade.

The same applies to any trader in the black market; he would be upset if the supply of commodities suffices the need of the people. There are always people who benefit from a given form of corruption. This is why those who take advantage of corruption panic and get upset when they see any kind of a reformation initiative and do their best to make corruption persist. For this reason, the servants of idols used to stand behind the idols and produce sounds so that they can make the fools who believe them acquiesce to their demands. Similarly, magicians sometimes say to the family of a patient that the patient is possessed by a genie and this genie wants them to sacrifice a she camel, or any other animal, and spill its blood.

The servants of the *ka'ba* used to do the same thing. They used every mean of deception and trickery to take camels, cows and sheep from the oblivious and naïve people. At that time when an owner of a camel, cow or sheep cut the ear of any of his animals, this meant that he had dedicated such a sacrifice to the idols even though only the servants of the idols, and not the idols themselves, ate the meat he sacrificed.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says that in time He bestows upon us sustenance we randomly divide it into two kinds lawful and unlawful: 'Say, "Have you ever considered that Allah has sent down provision for you, then you make some of it unlawful and some lawful?" Say, "Has Allah permitted you that, or do you invent lies against Allah?"' (*Yunus*: 59) Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* also says the following: 'And of the cattle He has created

(1) Narrated by Al-Wahidi -weak Hadith

eight mates - of the sheep two, and of the goats two. Say, "Is it the two males He has forbidden or the two females or that which the wombs of the two females contain? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful." (*al-An'am*: 143)

So what is proscribed: will it be either pair of males, or pair of females or what the wombs of a pair of females contain?

None of the foregoing is proscribed; they are all created by the Almighty Allah and provided by Him as an admissible form of livelihood. Furthermore, every bounty of Allah *the Almighty* knows its function and benefits that come from it. For instance, in the Egyptian countryside, we observe that when a cow, a buffalo or a sheep is strangled with a rope or gets sick, the animal sleeps and extends its neck. When the animal does so, people say, 'It asks to serve the admissible purpose for which the Almighty Allah created it.' It is as if the animal is telling its owner, 'Go ahead and slaughter me so that you may benefit yourself from my meat.' For instance, we may wonder why a donkey would not do the same thing. Is it not because its meat is not permissible to eat. By contrast, a cow knows the uses it represents for human beings; it thus extends forwards its neck as demanding to be slaughtered. We also know that it serves man during its lifetime by carrying heavy weights or producing milk, fibre, wool and hair. Therefore, once it senses an impending danger, it extends its neck forwards as if it is asking to be slaughtered so that man can benefit himself from its meat. It is subservient to man; the animal knows this fact by nature and through inspiration.

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* has made all these beings subservient to us, why then should we proscribe what Allah *the Almighty* did not proscribe and consider inadmissible what He proscribed? However, the servants of the *Ka'ba* used to do everything they could to control people. In this regard, if a she-camel had given birth to four generations and then its fifth infant were male, the servants would say that was enough and they would then cut its ear. If someone subsequently found such a she-camel, he would, according to custom, know that such an animal should not be used for any purpose whether suckling, carrying weight or producing milk. However, such an animal is not kept from drinking water or eating grass. This animal is called *Al-bahira* and could then be taken by the servants of the *Ka'ba* at any time for the latter did

not want to store meat. Rather, they wanted to keep the animal alive so that they can slaughter at any time they wish. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has not appointed such innovations *bahira*, *sa'ibah*, *wasilah* or *ham*. (*al-Ma'ida*: 103)

Al-bahira then is the she-camel whose ear has been slit. This means that it has given birth to four generations and then a male at the fifth. Her owner then presents her as a gift to the idols. *Al-bahira* is a kind of *sa'iba*, yet there could also be a *sa'iba*, or a she-camel that did not give birth neither to four generations nor a male on the fifth time, but her owner chose to give her as a vow or a gift to the one of the idols. Such an animal is also called *sa'iba* since no one is allowed to take care of it. Nonetheless, it is allowed to graze in any land it likes and to drink from any source of water it desires. Furthermore, no one is allowed to take the milk it produces or even to ride it. Only the servants of the *Ka'ba* are allowed to take it and slaughter it whenever they need fresh meat. In addition, in case of the animal being a sheep, if it gives birth to a female, they take it to themselves, and if it gives birth to a male, they give it as a gift to their gods. However, if the sheep gives birth to both a male and a female, they do not slaughter the male; in such a case they say that such a female sheep has been good to its brother. Thus, they call her *Al-wasilah* since people used to keep the female animals for reproduction. It was therefore easier to give the male rather than the female as a gift to the servants of the *Ka'ba*. In this respect, a poet once said:

The mothers of people are self-renewing containing vessel

Whereas the fathers only provide the family lineage

We notice that the female cattle in ranches only need one male. Similarly, there may only be one or two male animals that impregnate all the females of the same species in a certain village. Children in the countryside often rejoice when cattle give birth to a male because they know that he will be fed for a little while, and then slaughtered and eaten. By contrast, children are disappointed upon learning that the offspring is a female because they know that it will be nurtured and bred, and they will not get to eat its meat.

In the past, when a cow or buffalo gave birth to both a male and a female at the same time, they used not to slaughter the male and would say that the

newly born female has redeemed its brother. Thus, the male guarantees his life and is afterwards used to impregnate the rest of the females. The female that redeems its brother is called *Al-wasilah*.

We thus learn that *Al-bahira* is the she-camel that gives birth five times with the last being a male offspring, while *As-sa'iba* is the animal that has been given as a vow to the idols from its owner's own accord from the very beginning. *Al-wasilah* is the female animal that was born at the same time with a male brother; it is said to have redeemed its brother since it provided it with protection. *Al-ham* is the male animal that begot ten generations; no one is allowed to ride it or use it for carrying weight. Furthermore, it cannot be kept from any source of water or eating from any grazing field. Thus, people say that this animal's back has become protected.

In our age some presumptuously claim that they are vegetarians and do not eat meat even though they may be willing to slaughter a human being and purport to be anguished when a chicken is slaughtered. To these people we say the following: 'Beware. Allah *the Almighty* has created these animals to be subservient to man. These animals, by their very nature, like people to utilise them.'

Among the several means of temptation that Satan uses is what Allah *Glorified is He* states that Satan shall say: "And assuredly I will lead them astray and assuredly I will arouse in them vain desires, and assuredly I will incite them and they will cut the ears of cattle; and assuredly I will incite them and they will alter Allah's creation." And whoever takes Satan for a friend instead of Allah, he certainly suffers a manifest loss.' (*an-Nisa'*: 119) We have learnt that the old Arabs used to do so to please the servants of the idols. These servants had a vested interest in retaining these idols and continuing to make people sacrifice to them. For this reason, I always say, 'The worst thing that could happen to a religious man is for him to get attached to worldly interests. In such a case, there is fear that he would forge religion to serve his interests.'

Among the other means of temptation that Satan employs is what the Almighty Allah *Glorified is He* states that Satan shall say: 'I will incite them and they will alter Allah's creation.' (*an-Nisa'*: 119) Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed to us the way in which Satan acquired power over these people

despite the fact that all power is exclusively Allah's. However, we still wonder how they changed Allah's creation even though He created everything.

Creation, as we know, is bringing something into existence out of nothing. The Almighty Allah created everything and assigned a specific function to every being since He undertook such a creation for a wise purpose. This purpose eternally exists in the knowledge of Allah *the Almighty*, and to Him belongs the highest attribute. We may come across new industrial innovations in the market like washing machines. We know that the one who designed them did so for the purpose of comforting people. In all likelihood, he thought about this goal before he designed and manufactured the machine that could fulfil the task of sparing people the effort of manually washing their laundry. The same holds for the one who invented the loudspeaker. He aimed at a specific target at the beginning, viz. to make the sound reach those standing at a distance from the source that emitted it. Afterwards he embarked on his research and experiments in order to attain his purpose and goal. Allah *Glorified is He* created every creature of His for a specific purpose. If we thus use every creature to fulfil the purpose for which it has been created, we will not slip into the hazard of changing Allah's creation. By contrast, if we use a creature for a purpose other than that for which Allah created it, we will be changing His creation. To further understand what Allah means by creation in this verse; let us seek the analogous uses of the same word in the Quran. We may indeed realise that the Quran is self-explanatory. Allah *Glorified is He* here says that Satan shall say: 'Assuredly I will incite them and they will alter Allah's creation.' (*an-Nisa'*: 119) However, He says the following in a different place: '... verily, His is all creation and all command...' (*al-A'raf*: 54).

We see the process of creation in all beings around us, but there are other forms of creation that we do not see. The command in the previously mentioned verse refers to the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '...“Be” – and it is.’” (*Ya Sin*: 82)

Another verse further elucidates this point Allah *the Almighty* says that it is a *fitrah* (natural inclination) upon which He has created all people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah: 'So set your face to the service of religion with single-minded devotion. And follow the nature made by Allah, the nature

according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah. That is the right religion - but most men know not.' (*ar-Rum*: 30)

This means that Allah *Glorified is He* has endowed all creation with *fitrah*, or a natural inclination. If someone tries to change this inclination, he would be changing Allah's creation. So what is natural inclination? It is the primordial purity of the human nature and soul. For instance, if someone grows up in an environment that does not lie, this person will never know what lying is. Similarly, if someone is raised in an environment wherein no one steals, this person will not know what stealing is. Man learns misdemeanours from social deficiency and corruption. The evidence of this is that the phenomenon of stealing vanished in the countries that implemented the Islamic law since cutting the hands of those who stole was carried out. This made a new generation that did not know stealing emerged in these countries. Thus, if you are in any of these countries and you leave something, you will come back and find it where you left it. This is a sign of sound natural inclination. The proof that natural inclination is originally good is that we find that those who do something and are at odds with it, they always try to hide it and secretly sneak to do it since they know that this is not right.

I have set the example of a man who gazes at his wife. This man may allow all his desires to rejoice at the view of his wife. However, Allah forbid, if this same man wants to sneak a glance at a woman that Allah forbade him to look at, he shies away from other people. Thus, man always tends to be pretentious whenever he commits a deed that he is at odds with and one that is contrary to his natural inclination. Pretension is to do something outside the realm of natural inclination; altering anything related to natural inclination is in its own right an alteration of Allah's creation.

This is often the cause of corruption. How is this so? We see that Allah *Glorified is He* created male and female pairs. Some men behave like women, which means that one tries to be like a woman. He thus acts like a woman and puts on women's makeup. Such a person wants to change Allah's creation. Similarly, a woman may want to become a man. This woman also wants to change Allah's creation. For this reason, a great scientist who is both a poet and colleague of mine, Dr. Hassan Gad *may Allah the Almighty endow him good*

health noted the phenomenon of those who try to change Allah's creation and composed a famous poem in which he said:

The effeminate men have caused me so much confusion

That I can no longer distinguish between a girl and a boy

In this verse, the poet declares his confusion because he cannot identify the difference between a boy and a girl. Both of them pass for either a woman or an effeminate man; the cause of such confusion is that boys act like girls, and vice versa, even though each of them possesses the characteristics typical of his gender and sets him apart from the other kind. Some women have operations to change the way they look, like pulling out some of the eyebrow hair and re-drawing it using a coloured pen. However, this attempt is often ruined when new hair grows. As much as she does this, such a woman turns herself into an ugly creature, completely forgetting that beauty consists in the harmony of the facial features. For instance, the secret of a woman's beauty may reside in the thickness of her eyebrow. Alternatively, the secret of her beauty may consist in the width of her mouth or the length of her nose.

We have indeed heard that if the nose of Cleopatra had been short, history would have changed. Allah *Glorified is He* has endowed his servants with diverse tastes in proportion to the difference in creation. In daily life, we may come across a young man who proposes to a girl, and then either he does not find her appealing or he does not appeal to her. Subsequently, another young man may propose to the same girl, and both of them may like each other. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who creates the flux of emotional harmony and makes it a cause for attraction among people. Thus in trying to change the way Allah created her, a girl may disturb the emotional harmony that He created. A woman may want the colour of her cheeks to be like that of roses; thus, she puts on a number of makeup powders to achieve this purpose. However, does not this woman realise that her husband and relatives are fully aware that she acquired such a colour through the use of external materials? What would be her stance when her husband finds out in the morning that the colours she used have ruined the colour of her complexion? Furthermore, why did not she consider the way she would look as she grows older and how these powders continue to block the pores on her skin, keeping them from

breathing? Such a woman gradually starts to look like a monkey due to her bad actions, Allah forbid! This is her punishment because she changed Allah's creation through her bad actions.

The same holds for the women who coat their nails with layers of coloured plastic they add on them. However, does any of these women really think that any man would possibly think that this is the natural colour of her fingernails? Since Allah created them, fingernails have had a certain colour that He decreed due to His wisdom. Therefore, these fingernails follow a specific order. So, why would a woman deprive her own fingernails from natural life and from breathing since nails also breathe. Someone may claim that it is permissible for women to perform ablution after polishing their nails. To such a person I say to fear Allah for these are not dyes. If they were dyes, they would have permeated the skin or the fingernail. Furthermore, such colour would not be removed unless the skin or the fingernail is itself removed, as in the case of *henna*. In such cases, water can reach the skin. By contrast, polish forms a plastic layer on the fingernail that cannot be removed except with a chemical substance. Therefore, polish is a kind of painting and not merely a dye. Using it keeps water from reaching the skin while washing or performing ablution.

The woman who does so deceives herself and the one who may admire or is attracted to her. We have to know that Allah *Glorified is He* wants to adjust people's temperament in the world by giving man both shelter and pleasure in an emotionally and rationally balanced way. If Allah *the Almighty* wanted the cheeks of females to be aflame with redness to rouse the desires of men, He would have created them this way. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted cheeks to look natural so that it would rouse the desire of men in proportion to the strength they possess. Furthermore, when a woman grows old, her beauty starts to fade away in proportion to the diminishing of the power of man. Allah gives each person what is commensurate with his capacity so that the matter would not degenerate into a mere process of rousing desires.

There is a difference between creating an outlet for desires and exciting and kindling these desires. Makeup and all other accessories are aimed at changing Allah's creation. This also holds true for the woman or the man who makes a tattoo; he or she changes the creation of Allah. If Allah *Glorified is He*

knew that such things would increase beauty, he would have done them. So, they will change the creation of Allah just like what Satan says in (*an-Nisa'*: 119). Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says that he who takes Satan as supporter instead of Allah, has certainly sustained a clear loss: 'And whoever takes Satan for a friend instead of Allah, he certainly suffers a manifest loss.' (*an-Nisa'*: 119) The one who takes Satan as his master is the one who follows him and tries to get closer to him. However, whoever does so chooses the weaker over and above the better one, even though the former leads him to perdition and makes him inevitably incur a clear and comprehensive loss from all levels. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَعِدُّهُمْ وَيُمْنِّيهِمْ وَمَا يَعِدُّهُمْ الشَّيْطَانُ إِلَّا غُرُورًا ﴿١٢٠﴾

**he makes them promises and raises false hopes, but
Satan's promises are nothing but delusion [120]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 120)**

This means that Satan pledges false promises to his allies by telling those things that make them happy. A promise, by definition, is telling someone something that he would be pleased to find.

We can find an example illustrative of this in day-to-day life. Each one of us cherishes the wealth he accumulates through his labour and exertion. On the apparent level, giving alms to the poor detracts from this wealth. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says that Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty: 'Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins upon you what is foul, whereas Allah promises you forgiveness from Himself and bounty...' (*al-Baqara*: 268). Why is this so? The reason is that Satan whispers to the owner of the wealth by saying, 'If you give part of your wealth as alms to the poor, your wealth will be diminished.' However, whoever succumbs to the whispers of Satan is doomed because the latter leads him to perdition. In addition Satan whispers to man with false wishes and fills them with vain desires: 'Satan promises them and rouses desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 120) A good example is what a proud man once sarcastically said to his brother, Allah forbid, 'I do not think that the Hour will occur. And even if

I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return.' (*al-Kahf*: 36)

The boastful man says, 'If Allah has chosen to give me in this worldly life, and if Allah's mission is to give constantly, then, He, my Lord, will certainly multiply what He has given me in this world many times over in the Afterlife.' The underlying rationale is that the one who is happy in the worldly life will surely be happy in the Afterlife. So how did Allah recompense this man?

The boastful man witnessed the collapse of his garden and realised the dismal fate that arrogance can ultimately lead to. This is due to the fact that he acceded to the false promises of Satan. The promises of Satan are all delusive: 'But Satan does not promise them except delusion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 120) However, what is *Al-ghurur* (deluding the mind) in this context? There are two morphologically similar words: *ghurur* and *gharur*. The former is the thing that is presented to you as if it were real even though it is, in fact, an illusion, while the latter refers to the one who actually presents an illusion as if it were real. For this reason *Al-ghurur* is Satan himself because he beautifies an illusion for man and misguides him as much as a mirage does. When man sees the phenomenon of light bending, he illusively thinks that he sees water on the horizon. In this respect, the True Lord says: 'like a mirage in a low land which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39)


The same holds for *Al-ghurur* when the devil beautifies something for man and deludes him into believing that he will take pleasure in it. However, when man pursues it, he realises that it is not true. He might actually discover that it is opposite of what he had expected. For this reason, the True Lord decisively explains to us the deeds of disbelievers when he says: 'But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39) The disbeliever is thus astounded by the real existence of Allah *Glorified is He* in whom he had no faith. In turn, he faces two calamities: the calamity of his disappointment after heading towards water

that does not exist and the calamity of finding out that the One God, Allah, is real and will judge him for his denial and infidelity. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered floating dust.' (*al-Furqan*: 23)

Someone might claim to be a humanist and feel that he speaks logically, and he would say accordingly, 'Is it possible that all those who contributed to humanity with such useful inventions are doomed to torment?' To such a person we give the following reply, 'They are going to be recompensed for their infidelity since each of them had lived and acted without bearing Allah in his mind. Each of them accomplished all these great feats using his mind, genius and creativity to serve humanity; he is thus honoured by humanity. He should thus seek his reward from the one for whom he worked, and no one else.' The following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* applies to them: It has been related by Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* that he heard the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* say, 'The first one to be tried on the Day of Judgment is a man who ostensibly died as a martyr. He will be brought forth and shown the bounties Allah conferred upon him, which he in turn recognises them. Allah will then ask him, "What did you do with Allah's bounties?" He will answer, "I fought in Your cause until I died as a martyr." The True Lord will then tell him, "You lie. You fought so that people would say that you are bold, and so they did say this about you." The True Lord will then order him to be dragged on his face until he is thrown in the Fire. Afterwards, a man who acquired knowledge taught it and read the Quran will then be brought forth. He will be shown the bounties Allah bestowed upon him. Upon recognising these bounties, Allah will ask him, "What did you do with these bounties?" He will then answer, "I acquired knowledge, dispensed it and read the Quran for Allah's cause." The True Lord will say, "You lie. You sought knowledge so that people would say that you are a scholar and that you read the Quran, and so they did say this about you." Allah will order him to be dragged on his face until he is thrown in the fire. Afterward, a man upon whom Allah generously dispensed his bounties and wealth will then be brought forth. He will then be shown all the bounties that Allah had bestowed upon him, which he in turn will recognise. He will be asked by Allah, "What did you do with these bounties?" He will answer, "I

spent them in every possible way You like for Your cause." The True Lord will then say, "You lie. You spent this money so that people would say that you are generous, and so they did say this about you." The True Lord will then order him to be dragged on his face until he is thrown in the Fire."⁽¹⁾

Thus Allah *the Exalted* did not deny them the reward for what they did in the worldly life. They were honoured in this worldly life. Allah *Glorified is He* then distributed the fruits of their talents amongst those who are concerned with Allah. For this reason, one may find an illiterate Muslim taking a plane to perform pilgrimage to the House of Allah *the Almighty*. He also records speeches and talks on matters related to faith on tapes so that those who did not attend this event could listen to these speeches. Thus, disbelievers are subservient to believers since through their inventions, they allow believers to benefit from their scientific discoveries. Yet, believers are also required to pursue all worldly causes and means to deserve Allah's generosity regarding specifically the bounty of gaining knowledge. Indeed, this is their duty, and they would be sinful if they do not undertake it so that they would not be dependent on others and as a result, be abjectly subordinate to them. 'But Satan does not promise them except delusion.' (*an-Nisa'*: 120) So what is the fate of those who are deluded by Satan in the Afterlife? Allah *the Exalted* says:


 أُولَٰئِكَ مَأْوَاهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ وَلَا يَجِدُونَ عَنْهَا مَحِيصًا

**Such people will have Hell for their home and will find
no escape from it [121] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 121)**

The word *ma'wa* (abode) means the place to which one is compelled, or drawn to resort in. Will this compulsion be by way of pulling or pushing? Allah *Glorified is He* says that the Fire will say: 'Are there any more?' (*Qaf*: 30). It is as if the fire will pull in its inhabitants, and they will find no way to escape from it. This means that there is no way to escape, avoid or bypass the fire. It is as though any of them, like in our world of change (everything in our worldly life is in a state of change), can escape from another created being.

(1) The Hadith is related by Imaam Muslim in his book on Jihad and is also related by *An-Nasa'i*, *At-Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah*.

However, when the matter is all up to Allah's decree, this means that there is no escape: 'To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16)

The True Lord also describes the opposite of this case:

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَنُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا ﴿١٢٢﴾

**but We shall admit those who believe and do good deeds into
Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever –
a true promise from God. Who speaks more truly than God? [122]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa*': 122)**

When Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about disbelievers and their punishment, our minds prepare to learn about the opposite case. If the punishment of disbelievers repels man from becoming one, the soul of the listener is then attracted to the opposite case, viz. the reward of believers who do good things. Allah *Glorified is He* says in a previous verse: 'We will give him a mighty reward.' (*an-Nisa*': 114)

In this context, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow.' (*an-Nisa*': 122) The one who has faith and confidence in Allah knows that no distance can preclude him from His bounty. A good example of this is when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once asked one of the Companions named Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari *Allah be pleased with him* the following question, 'In what state do you find yourself when you woke up today?' So Al-Harith *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'I have found myself to be a true believer.' The companion thus made a strong claim, namely having true faith. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Think well over what you say then. Everything has a truth. So what is the truth of faith?' The Companion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then answered, 'My soul has become disinterested in the world. I thus stay awake to pray all night and keep thirsty all day (by fasting). It is as if I see the Throne of the Lord in front of me and that I actually see the dwellers of heaven visiting each other and

those of fire clamouring in it.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, 'O, Harith, you have attained true knowledge so stick to it.' He repeated the statement three times.⁽¹⁾

In some places, the True Lord uses *sa* (shall), and sometimes says *sawfa* (shall) before the verb. So, we have to recognise that each particle and proposition that qualifies a verb has a certain meaning and implication and that everything that Allah *the Exalted* gives is beautiful. In this verse, He uses *sa* in the word *sanudkhiluhum* (We will admit them to): 'But the ones who believe and do righteous deeds. We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow' (*an-Nisa'*: 122).

When the word *janna* is used in a generic sense, this means, as we said before, that it refers to the heaven in the Afterlife, the true heaven. By contrast, the plants and trees of the worldly *janna*, or garden, may fade away and grow dry; furthermore, worldly gardens may be affected by droughts. However, the plants in paradise (the garden of the Afterlife) eternally bear fruits. Yet, if the word *janna* is not used in an absolute generic sense but was qualified and limited by some factor, then it means something else as is the case for the following saying of the True Lord: 'Indeed, We have tried them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore to cut its fruit in the [early] morning.' (*al-Qalam*: 17) The same holds for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: '... is as the parable of a garden on an elevated ground, upon which heavy rain falls...' (*al-Baqara*: 265). The garden on an elevated ground is a garden located on higher land. It has certain qualities that go beyond the knowledge attained by modern science. The reason is that if the land on which the garden is located is high, underground water cannot ruin the roots of the plants grown in it. The plants in this garden thus continue to be green. Allah *Glorified is He* says the following about such a garden: '... and thereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold...' (*al-Baqara*: 265).

Furthermore, the True Lord adds that it is located on high land and that it is watered by rainstorms from above or from soft rain. Therefore, it takes the

(1) Related by At-Tabarani in (*Al-kabir*) and Abu Na'im in (*al-hilya*)... But the Hadith has been considered weak by Ad-Darqatni and Ibn Habban

water it needs from the rain directly to the roots and uses water from soft rain to wash the leaves. All of this is said about such a garden.

However, in this verse, the True Lord says: 'gardens beneath which rivers flow' (*an-Nisa'*: 122). Allah *the Almighty* assures us that such a garden will keep its greenness and freshness, for the main factor that affects the greenness of a garden is the shortage of water that ultimately causes green plants to fade.

We find that in some instances the Quran says, 'gardens with flowing streams for them' (*at-Tawba*: 100) which indicates that the source of water is distant. In other instances, the Quran says, 'gardens beneath which rivers flow' (*an-Nisa'*: 122) which indicates that no one is capable of blocking the source of water since rivers run and emanate underneath them. The True Lord promises eternity in heaven to believers who do good deeds; eternity exists for a long time. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'wherein they will abide forever' (*an-Nisa'*: 122), this means that abiding in heaven is not only long but completely permanent.

Who pledges this promise?'[It is] the promise of Allah, [which is] truth, and who is more truthful than Allah in statement.' (*an-Nisa'*: 122) When the True Lord promises you, bear in mind that you are pledged a promise by the One Who no one can prevent Him from keeping His promise. However, if a fellow human promises you something, this promise may not actually happen because the said person may change his mind when it is time for him to deliver his promise. Alternatively, the one who gives you a promise may not have the capacity, ability or affluence to keep the promise he pledged to you, or his feelings may change towards you. However, Allah *Glorified is He* is not subject to change, and nothing falls beyond the realm of His ability. Furthermore, there is no other god beside Him that may keep Him from doing what He wills. Thus, His promise is not subject to retraction or nullification; it is certain that it will be fulfilled. In this context when Allah *Glorified is He* says, '[It is] the promise of Allah, [which is] truth, and who is more truthful than Allah in statement' (*an-Nisa'*: 122), He tells every one of us, 'I do not intend to ask you about anything.' The interrogative form was used in order to encourage the answer from Allah's creation by way of asserting the truth of what Allah *the Exalted* says; for ultimately whose word could be truer than that of His?

The answer elicited from Allah's creation will be, 'It is impossible. Allah is exalted over this.' No one's statement could be truer than Allah's since whoever lies does so in order to get something that he would not be able to receive were he to speak the truth. Alternatively, one may lie because he fears the one to whom he lies. However, Allah *Glorified is He* transcends all this. Thus, if He says anything, it must be true. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا
يُجْزِ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾

It will not be according to your hopes or those of the People of the Book: anyone who does wrong will be requited for it and will find no one to protect or help him against God [123] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 123)

A wish, as we learnt, means that one aspires to something that is pleasurable and joyful without actually working for attaining it. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* appointed man as His vicegerent on earth, He commanded him to preserve every good aspect of being; accordingly, man must not corrupt what is actually already good. If someone aspires to something that brings him happiness, he must thereby make what is good even better.

Let us put forth an example to illustrate this point. Assume that there is a well of water whereof people drink. This well has sides, ends and edges. If someone approaches the well and throws the dust accumulated around the edges of it into it for the purpose of filling it up, it will be ruined. On the contrast, the one who wants the well to continue to be useful leaves it as it is. Thus, he lets what is useful continue to be so. However, if someone aspires to do something useful for both himself and others, he must make what is already useful even more so. For instance, he may erect walls of brick on the sides of the well to keep dust from falling into the water or at least cover the well. If someone aspires to do more good and is really concerned about the comfort of the people, he may try to save them the trip to the well for the purpose of filling their buckets with water. He may think of installing a pump to raise the water to a high tank. He may then extend pipes from this tank to

deliver water to the houses. Every member of the community may then take his share of water in the comfort of his own home. The person who does any of these makes what is good even better.

However, if one aspires to accomplish something pleasurable without exerting any effort, then his wishes are delusive. Furthermore, if someone continues to dream about his wishes without actually devising a plan to achieve them, then the fruit of these wishes will only be disappointment and retrogression. So, a wish means to aspire to a pleasurable goal without actually working towards achieving such a goal. We know that the True Lord provided us with the means for achieving every goal we may pursue in our worldly life; we should also bear in mind that the True Lord says: 'So, he followed a course.' (*al-Kahf*: 85)

This means that man is required to make things that enable him to improve the conditions of his life on earth. Allah *the Almighty* guaranteed for man, His vicegerent on earth, all the necessities of life. Therefore, when man seeks luxury and pleasure, he should work for them. For instance, the True Lord lets rain fall from the sky, the water from the rain then flows in certain channels, which the rain has dug for itself. However, these channels may contain dust or mud; for this reason, man distils the water and then pumps it into tanks so that it reaches him in his home. Thus, instead of drinking water directly from a river, man prepares for himself a beautiful glass of water. First, man made this cup out of pottery and then out of other materials like copper and then glass. We thereby see that any form of luxury needs work that leads to it; wishing is never enough.

The same holds for the case of being affiliated with the religion. Being affiliated with the religion does not simply mean being so in a merely formal way. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to judge amongst all mankind. No one may merely affiliate himself just outwardly in Islam simply to enjoy its privileges and distinguish himself from the rest of Allah's creation who follow other religions. This is not the case, for man is controlled by the religion which he embraces, and a Muslim is the first to be controlled by his religion.

This is why Allah *the Exalted* says: '(This) shall not be in accordance with your vain desires...' (*an-Nisa'*: 123). To whom is this statement addressing?

If this statement is addressing believers, the True Lord thus explains to them, 'Believers, do not think that every matter of your concern will be in accordance with your vain desires. Rather, you should work to realise your desires. Your affiliation with Islam does not exempt you from having to work.' Indeed, there are many people who go through life without doing a single good deed. When they are then asked, why they live without doing any work, they give the following reply, 'We think well of Allah.' To those who think like this, Al-Hasan Al-Basri *Allah be pleased with him* says, 'Faith does not consist of wishing and vain desires. Rather, faith is based on what is truly embraced by one's heart and vindicated through his actions. There are people who are indeed so deluded by the wish that Allah will forgive them to the extent that they left life without having a single good deed recorded for them. They just say, We think well of Allah, but they have lied about this claim, for if they had thought well of Allah, they would have worked well for His cause.'

Allah *Glorified is He* says about these people: '(This) shall not be in accordance with your vain desires...' (*an-Nisa'*: 123). On the contrast, if this statement were addressing non-believers, then it would indicate that the True Lord did not deny the bounties of this world to those who exploit the causes and means to achieve their goals even if they do not have faith. Recompensing in the Afterlife is the promise by Allah *the Almighty* pledged to believers who do good deeds; it is a true promise to admit them into heaven. Qualifying for this promise cannot be achieved by mere wishing; rather, attaining will only be achieved through work and exertion.

Therefore, the audience addressed by the statement '(This) shall not be in accordance with your vain desires...' (*an-Nisa'*: 123) could also encompass the disbelievers, the hypocrites and the people of the Book. The disbelievers used to have wishes as well. For example, those who denied resurrection used to say: 'And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this.' (*al-Kahf*: 36) These are the wishes of disbelievers. Furthermore, this promise of being admitted to heaven does not include the people of the Book. The True Lord informed us about their wishes: 'And they say: "None shall enter paradise except he who is a Jew or a Christian."' (*al-Baqara*: 111)

They also said: 'And they say: Fire shall not touch us but for a few days.' (*al-Baqara*: 80) All of these are vain desires since the path set by Allah *the Exalted* is one and applies to all people. Whoever is affiliated with Islam, the seal of all religions, must work. The principle according to which Allah *the Almighty* rules all His creation is clearly explained in His saying: 'whoever does evil, he shall be requited with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor a helper.' (*an-Nisa*': 123)

Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* says, 'When this verse was revealed, the Muslims found it rather burdensome. So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them, "Follow the right path strictly and do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, for every affliction that befalls a Muslim is an expiation for him, even the pricking of a thorn or stumbling on the path."⁽¹⁾

Some scholars said that 'evil' in this aforementioned verse refers to ascribing divinity to others beside Allah because He has pledged to forgive some sins. They attributed their argument to the saying of the True Lord: 'Thus do we recompense every ungrateful one.' (*Fatir*: 36). It is as if painful punishment applies only for disbelievers, whereas believers are elevated by their faith to a high status so that Allah *the Almighty* accepts their repentance and forgives them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* made the time span between every two consecutive prayers an atonement for any sin committed during this time. Furthermore Allah *the Exalted* has also decreed that the time span between every two consecutive Friday Prayers would be a chance to atone for whatever sins committed during this period of time. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* made pilgrimage the atonement for all the sins committed prior to it. All of these are privileges that Allah *the Exalted* grants to believers. By contrast, the punishment of disbelievers is conveyed through the following: 'whoever does evil, he shall be requited with it, and besides Allah he will find for himself neither a guardian nor a helper.' (*an-Nisa*': 123) It is not said about someone who could not find something, unless he actually searched for it and then could not find it. No human is by himself self-sufficient. Therefore, let whoever does evil search for someone to succour or help him; he will find none.

(1) *Related by Muslim, Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi and An-Nasa'i based on what was related by Sufyan ibn Ayina*

Al-waly, or guardian, is the one who is both close to a person and protects him; similarly, *an-nasir*, or helper, is the supporter or advocate of another person. No one gets close to person unless he loves him. When a strong person loves another who is weak, then he is capable of defending and supporting the latter.

However, why did the True Lord mention both *Al-waly* and *an-nasir*? *Al-waly*, as we learnt, is the one who is both close to another person and protects him. However, the word *nasir* indicates that there are fights and antagonism between those who believe and those who do not. Furthermore, it indicates that there is a grand power that man may think is not concerned for him as long as he lives in peace and prosperity; however, when such power knows that a believer has enemies, it comes forth to support him. On the other hand, a disbeliever will never find a supporter or an advocate, and he will not find anyone willing to come close to him or to support him even if events turn against him. When events turn against a person, people tend to sympathise with this person and hasten to support him. However, no one is capable of supporting another person against Allah *the Exalted*. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا

**anyone, male or female, who does good deeds and is a believer,
will enter Paradise and will not be wronged by as much as the
dip in a date stone [124] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 124)**

The two words 'man' and 'woman' were used here so that no one would assume that since the verb assumed a male declension, then women would be exempt from it. In many cases, rulings that apply to women are subsumed under rulings decreed for men. This indicates that matters related to women are basically concealed.

Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* explicitly refers to women whenever there is a need for it: 'and whoever does [whatever he can] of righteous deeds, whether male or female...' (*an-Nisa'*: 124). Allah *the Almighty* used the preposition

min, or 'of', to indicate that it is a portion of the whole set of righteous deeds. Thus, He says, 'And whoever does [whatever he can] of righteous deeds...' (*an-Nisa'*: 124) and did not say, 'who does righteous deeds' since He knows His creation well. No human being is capable of doing every righteous deed; each one does as many good deeds as he can. Every believer is thus required to do as many righteous deeds as his capabilities and talents would enable him to do.

The first of good deeds is to let the good things continue to be good. Letting a good continue to be good means that a believer must not corrupt anything good; this is the first rank of righteous deeds. Subsequently, one may elevate to higher levels of good deeds that go in accordance with his mission as Allah's vicegerent on earth. Every deed that positively assists man to undertake his mission as Allah's vicegerent on earth is a righteous deed. For instance, the one who paves a road to relieve people of exhaustion does a righteous, or good, deed. Preparing means of transportation that carry people to their destinations is also a good deed. Furthermore, those who work so that people's thought would not be constantly preoccupied with securing the necessities of life also do a good deed.

Everything that facilitates life is similarly a good deed. Man may thus do good deeds even if he does not have faith in Allah *Glorified is He* like many scientists of advanced countries who do not believe in one God, Allah. Similarly, atheistic scientists may do things that are beneficial for man like paving roads and manufacturing machines that benefit people. These scientists may have been driven to accomplish these feats out of their aspiration for scientific discovery; each of them of wants to prove that he has served humanity by making such and such discoveries and such and such inventions. Thus, they do good deeds even though they are not believers. For this reason, these scientists will be rewarded by the humanity they served, but they will not be rewarded by Allah.

In contrast, any believer who does a good deed is explicitly promised a reward which is stated by the following: 'And whoever does [whatever he can] of righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.' (*an-Nisa'*: 124)

Some may say that 'not wronging', concerning the part of Allah, applies to those who do good deeds and those who do evil deeds. Therefore, there are some who argue that those who do evil deeds are the ones who deserve to be punished and punishment, in this case, does not evolve any wronging or injustice. The True Lord says: 'the punishment of an evil is the like of it.' (*Yunus*: 27)

Whoever does a good deed receives a tenfold reward for it. The reward may even be seven hundred folds; this is Allah's Grace which is unconstrained and infinite. So, how come does Allah *Glorified is He* say in this context, 'and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed' (*an-Nisa'*: 124) when the good reward they were granted was multiplied and redoubled? In this respect, we say the following, 'Gracious giving is not incumbent on any of Allah's created beings.' For example, someone may hire a worker and agree to give him a hundred pounds as a monthly salary. He may then give him fifty or hundred pounds as a bonus in addition to his salary in a certain month and then only give him his salary in another month. Giving such a bonus is a gracious endowment on the part of the employer. People may retract their endowments, but the case is diametrically different when it comes to Allah's Grace, for it is unalterable. This is the meaning of 'and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.' (*an-Nisa'*: 124) Allah *Glorified is He* does not merely extend the reward in strict proportionality to the good deed performed; rather, He may multiply the reward tenfold or may even raise it to seven hundred fold. In addition Allah *the Exalted* never retracts His Grace; such a retraction, on His part, would be a form of wronging His servants. Therefore, Allah's Grace and bounties cannot be compared to human's grace and bounties. Humans may retract or change their mind about what they were planning to generously give, but Allah *the Exalted* would not ever retract His Grace. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: In the grace of Allah and in His mercy- in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather.' (*Yunus*: 58)

Those who do righteous deeds while they believe, are admitted into heaven in accordance with the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged, [even as much as] the speck on a date seed.' (*an-Nisa'*: 124). *An-Naqir* is the speck in the back of a date-stone; it is something very small. There is another thing called *Al-fatil* which is a

substance that looks like a thread and is located inside the groove in a date-stone. There is a third thing which looks like a paper that covers the date stone and is called *Al-qitmir*.

Allah *the Almighty* has put forth all these parables so that we would recognise the Grace that has been bestowed on believers by the Almighty. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ
وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

Who could be better in religion than those who direct themselves wholly to God, do good, and follow the religion of Abraham, who was true in faith? God took Abraham as a friend [125] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 125)

When we encounter an interrogative form as in the saying of the True Lord, 'And who is better in religion than one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah while being a doer of good...' (*an-Nisa'*: 125), proper inferring leads us to understand that whoever submits his face (or whole being) to Allah *the Almighty* is the one who has better faith. In our everyday conversations, we may sometimes say, 'Who could be more generous than Zayd (A male Arabic name)?' This interrogative form indicates that the interlocutor does not want to explicitly state that Zayd is the most generous person ever; he rather chooses to let the listener derive this conclusion. Such an interrogative form is only used when the object of interrogation is well specified and determined. The interlocutor is thus assured that the one who hears his question will not be able to advance any other answer than the specific matter inquired about which is well specified and determined. It is as if people will only derive the answer specified by the interlocutor when they seek to answer his question. 'And who is better in religion than one who submits his entire self to Allah' (*an-Nisa'*: 125). The answer to this query ought to be, 'No one has better faith than the one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah.' Thus, we see that Allah *Glorified is He* puts forth an assertive statement in the form of a question even though it would have been equally as true to use the affirmative form: '... and who is

truer of word than Allah?' (*an-Nisa'*: 122) Allah *the Exalted* poses the question to let us answer freely. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I am posing the question to you, human, and leave you to answer based on your consciousness and judgment.' So tell me who has better faith than the one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah *the Exalted*? You may try to seek an answer, but you will not find one any better than the one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah *the Almighty*. We should thus respond: No one is better than he who submits his entire self to Allah *Glorified is He*. The answer of the one addressed by the question therefore assumes the form of both an acknowledgment and confession, and confession, as we know, is the master of all evidence.

'And who is better in religion than one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah' (*an-Nisa'*: 125). We know that if a word is used in separate contexts then it does not convey a single meaning. Rather, the context of the discourse determines the meaning of the word in each instance. Therefore, if Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'On the Day [some] faces will turn white and [some] faces will turn black.' (*Al-Imran*: 106)

He used face because it is the first organ encountered when a human is seen, and it contains the features that gives each person his unique appearance. Indeed, we do not recognise anyone from his shoulder or his leg; rather, we recognise a person by his facial features. When we hear the saying of the True Lord, 'Everything is bound to perish, save His face' (*al-Qasas*: 88), we immediately wonder what *Al-wajh* (face) refers to in this context? If we think that it means a face like our faces, then we have slipped into a forbidden realm. Anything related to Allah *Exalted and Glorified is He* should be understood in light of the principle 'there is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11). We say this so that no one would use the following argument, 'If everything will perish on Judgment Day except His face, does this imply that His hand or anything similar of His would perish?' No, this is not implied, so therefore, not a correct assumption. When the True Lord says, '...Everything is bound to perish, save His face' (*al-Qasas*: 88), He means His Self; Allah *the Exalted* transcends all forms of semblance. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'and wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah.' (*al-Baqara*: 115)

In this verse, *wajh* (face) of Allah is the direction with which He is pleased. Man orients his face towards the *Ka'ba* when offering his prayer. However, do not ever think that in orienting your face towards the *Ka'ba*, you are orienting your face towards Allah's face or countenance. Allah *the Exalted* is omnipresent in all being. Thus, however man orients himself, he will find Allah *the Almighty*. The evidence is that when we pray around the *Ka'ba*, the face of each of us points in a different direction from the other: one points east, another west, a third north and a fourth south. People orient themselves towards all possible directions while going around the *Ka'ba* and during prayers. The *Ka'ba* has been put in this position so that we may circumambulate it and so that it becomes the destination we use to orient ourselves towards Allah *Glorified is He* from all directions. 'And wherever you turn, there is the face of Allah.' (*al-Baqara*: 115) Face refers to the orientation with which Allah *the Almighty* is pleased.

In this verse, we encounter Allah's saying: 'And who is better in religion than one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah' (*an-Nisa*': 125). Submitting one's face (entire self) to Allah *the Almighty* means orienting oneself; when someone pursues an aim, goal or purpose, he orients himself towards it since man does not walk backwards. Thus, *Al-wajh* in this context refers to this orientation. Why did the True Lord only use *Al-wajh* even though a believer orients all his faculties and extremities along with his face towards Allah *the Exalted*? The reason is that the face is the noblest of all organs. For this reason, Allah made prostration the noblest position any of his servants can assume. The reason is that in this position man makes both his upright back and face (that he is always keen to keep clean) prostrate to Allah *the Exalted*. Therefore, submitting one's face to Allah *Glorified is He* means orienting oneself towards Him while making Him his destination.

The verb *islam* is derived from '*Al-islam*'; *islam* thus means relinquishing one's control of his matters over to another. When someone relinquishes control to another who is an equal to him, this is a testimony on part of the former that the latter knows better than he. One often does not relinquish control of his matters over to an equal of his unless he feels certain that the latter is a man who possesses more wisdom, knowledge and awareness than

he. If one does not sense this, he will not relinquish control of his matters over to another. However, if this is the case, should not one surrender his whole being unto his Creator? Would this not be the best thing to do?

A human being may relinquish control of his own matters over to another human being whom he thinks is wise. However, is the former guaranteed that the latter will continue to be wise? Since the latter is human, he is subject to change and alteration; his heart may change or he may fail to solve an issue in which he was thought to have expertise. Relinquishing control of my own matters over to the One Who created me is the ultimate form of wisdom. For this reason, we say that Islam consists of surrendering control of your matters over to, as well as your whole being unto the One in Whom you believe to be the Strong, the fully Capable, the Wise and All Knowing Allah and Who is capable of giving sustenance at every time and place. When man submits his face to Allah *Glorified is He*, he will not do anything that is not oriented towards and devoted to Him: 'And who is better in religion than one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah while being a doer of good...' (*an-Nisa'*: 125).

However, why is the word *muhsin* (doer of good) used in this context? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* talked about *ihsan* (doing good). We know that we believe in Allah *the Almighty*, while He is unseen to us; but the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* teaches us that when our faith elevates to the state of *ihsan*, then we have attained the level at which we worship Allah *Glorified is He* as if we see Him; however we do not see Him, yet we know that He sees us. The conversation between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and one of his Companions, Al-Harith illustrates the meaning of this point. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Al-Harith, 'In what state did you find yourself when you woke up?' Al-Harith answered, 'I woke up as a true believer.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, 'Think well about what you say. Everything has a truth so what is the truth of your belief?' Al-Harith answered, 'My soul has lost interest in the world. Thus, I stay awake praying at night and spend the day thirsty because of fasting for Allah. Furthermore, I constantly feel as if I look up to the Throne of our Lord and as if I watch the inhabitants of heaven visiting each other and the people

of the fire clamouring in it.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then said, 'You know the truth, Harith, so adhere to it.' He repeated this statement three times.⁽¹⁾

Any good person knows that he is perpetually in the presence of Allah. For this reason, he sets a programme for himself; the summary of this programme is that he knows that Allah *the Almighty* never ceases to see what he does: 'He is with you wherever you are.' (*al-Hadid*: 4) Accordingly, he constantly remembers that he is never absent from Allah's sight, not for even a blink of an eye, so he must, therefore, be shy and feel ashamed of disobeying Him. The subject is demonstrated in a Hadith that our master 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* related when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Tell me about *ihsan*?' So, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'It means to worship Allah as if you see Him and know that if you cannot see Him, but He sees you.'⁽²⁾ If you truly believe that Allah *Glorified is He* sees you, how could you disobey Him? You would not dare do so with another servant of Allah's who is equal to you. Then, how could you do it with Allah *the Almighty*?

Greatness is manifested when the True Lord says: 'And who is better in religion than one who submits his face (entire self) to Allah while being a doer of good and follows the creed of Ibrahim (Abraham), inclining towards truth? And Allah took Ibrahim (Abraham) as an intimate friend.' (*an-Nisa*': 125) Why does He mention the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) specifically? The reason is that Allah says the following about Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'Indeed, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a nation in himself, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining towards truth,' (*an-Nahl*: 120). The meaning of Ibrahim (Abraham) being an *ummah*, or 'a nation in himself' is that he was combined within himself all the good virtues that are rarely found altogether in one person; rather, such good qualities are often distributed amongst an entire nation. There is someone who is courageous, another who is temperate, a third who is knowledgeable and a fourth who is strong. All these qualities are

(1) Related by At-Tabaraani in (*Al-Kabir*) and Abu Na'im in (*Al-Hilya*)... It has been considered weak by Ad-Darqatni.

(2) An excerpt from a long Hadith related by Imam Muslim.

rarely found in a single person; they often reflect the totality of virtues of a given nation. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to be a consolidation of much goodness. Therefore, He describes him with His saying: 'Indeed, in fact Ibrahim (Abraham) was a nation in himself, devoutly obedient to Allah, inclining towards truth' (*an-Nahl*: 120).

In this verse Allah *the Exalted* says the following about the creed of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'and follows the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham), inclining towards truth?' (*an-Nisa'*: 125) Creed, in this context, means religion and *hanif* means that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was drawn away from all that is false and inclined towards the truth. The linguistic meaning of *hanif* is 'to be inclined.' Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was inclined, or drawn, away from all that is false. Messengers are always sent to nations when corruption spreads and prevails amongst them. When people's societies are capable of reforming their internal corruption, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives its members time and a chance to do good, but when corruption reaches its apex for a given society, the True Lord sends a messenger. When a Messenger is sent to a nation that is suffering from widespread corruption, the Messenger inclines, or draws, away from all that is false and inclines towards the truth. In such a case, being inclined itself becomes a way of being upright. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and follows the creed of Ibrahim (Abraham), inclining toward truth' (*an-Nisa'*: 125). Subsequently, the True Lord puts forth the clear purpose of following Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'And Allah took Ibrahim (Abraham) as an intimate friend.' (*an-Nisa'*: 125) What factors made Ibrahim (Abraham) deserve Allah's intimate friendship, then? It is due to the fact that he followed the best religion, submitted his face (surrendered his whole being) to Allah, was a doer of good, followed the religion and inclined, or was drawn, away from all that is false. These are the factors deserving of Allah's intimate friendship, and all of them were qualities of our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*.

We are told that Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when his people threw him in the fire. Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said, 'Ibrahim (Abraham), do you need anything?' Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'If it is from you, then

no, I do not need anything.' Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said, 'Then, ask your Lord.' So, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'His knowledge of my state makes it unnecessary for me to ask Him for anything.' So, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'O fire, be a means of coolness and safety for Ibrahim (Abraham).'⁽¹⁾ (*al-Anbiya*: 69) This indicates that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* refused to ask Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* anything for himself; this is the highest form of surrendering one's whole self-unto Allah *Glorified is He*.

We know that people love their children immensely. We also know that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was given Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* towards the end of his life. The True Lord made it clear to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that He would test and try him. The test was, nonetheless, very difficult. His son neither died nor did any one kill him. Rather, his father, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was ordered by Allah *the Almighty* to slay him. So how many stages of *ibtilla* (testing) did Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* go through? Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* hastened and did not hesitate to execute the command of his Lord. For this reason, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'O, my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think.' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

Allah *Glorified is He* communicated this command to Ibrahim (Abraham) through a vision seen during his sleep, and not through direct revelation. Let us then consider what Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* said. He did not say, 'O, father, do whatever you wish.' Rather, he said: 'O, my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast.' (*as-Saffat*: 102) This means that Ismail (Ishmael) and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them*, both yielded to the command of Allah *the Almighty*. So what did Allah *the Exalted* then do? We called to him, "O, Ibrahim (Abraham), You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice, And We left for him [favourable mention] among later generations: Peace upon Ibrahim (Abraham). Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, he was of Our believing

(1) Taken from (*Al-Jami' Li-Ahkam Al-Quran*) by *Al-Qurtubi*... Similar narrations in the commentary of *Ibn Kathir* and in (*Al-Kashshaf*) by *Az-Zamakhshari*

servants. And We gave him good tidings of Ishaq (Isaac), a prophet from among the righteous.' (*as-Saffat*: 104-112)

The True Lord not only gave Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* and then ransomed him, but He also conferred upon Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* another son, Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him*. 'And Allah took Ibrahim (Abraham) as an intimate friend.' (*an-Nisa'*: 125)

Scholars dwelt upon investigating the meaning of the word *khalil* (intimate friend), mainly the qualities it implies and the expressions in which it is used. The root of the word is composed of the letters: *Al-kha*, *Al-lam* and another *lam*. The word *Al-khal* with a higher accent on *Al-kha* letter means a road dug in the sand; we commonly call such a road *maddaq* which is also usually narrow. Therefore, when two people walk on it, they do so shoulder to shoulder if they like each other very much. However, if they are not intimate, they walk in a line with one of them behind the other. For this reason, they call a couple who walk shoulder to shoulder *khalil* because they are in the sense infused or bound together. *Khalil* is also the one who completes the deficiency in his companion. Furthermore, the word *khalil* may also mean the one who unties and aligns himself with his friend's characteristics, qualities and ethics. In addition, the word *khalil* is used to refer to the one who reveals his secrets to his friend, and conversely, his friend reveals his secrets to him. One may thus receive one of his friends in any room in his house whether in his study, salon or bedroom; such an intimate friend is called *khalil*. However, there may be another less intimate friend whom he would only receive in the salon or his study.

'And Allah took Ibrahim (Abraham) as an intimate friend.' (*an-Nisa'*: 125) This means that the True Lord eclectically selected him. Love could be shared; Allah *Glorified is He* loves someone, and then loves another, a third and a fourth and all the believers. He is the one who said: 'Indeed, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance...' (*al-Baqara*: 222). Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, Allah loves those who are conscious of Him.' (*Al-'Imran*: 76). He also teaches us: 'And Allah loves those who are patient in adversity.' (*Al-'Imran*: 146) Furthermore, He tells us: 'And Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al-'Imran*: 148) Allah *the Exalted* also says: 'Indeed, Allah loves those who act equitably.' (*al-Mumtahana*: 8)

Yet Allah *the Exalted* has distinguished Ibrahim (Abraham) with His friendship; this means that no one shares with Ibrahim (Abraham) this exalted rank. Love could be shared, but *Al-Khilla* (intimate friendship) cannot be shared. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once went out to his people and said, 'Henceforth, know, O, people, that if I were to take a *khalil* (intimate friend) from among the inhabitants of the earth, I would take Abu Bakr ibn Abu Quhafa as one. Also know that your companion is the *khalil* of Allah.' Companion, in this text, refers to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself.⁽¹⁾

Ismail Sabri, the Egyptian poet, who preceded the poet Ahmed Shawqi and was the head of judges in Egypt, derived this meaning from the Quran and from the words with which it was associated by saying:

When we met, longing did its best to bring into intimacy
Two friends who were increasingly craving for and blaming each other
It is as if there is a friend who permeated his friend,
Diffused and vanished in him as they hugged each other
Another poet says:
Longing made us hold each other so closely
In a way that makes us become one

Yet, Ismail Sabri said something that surpasses this meaning: we have permeated each other as if each one of us disappeared in the other.

Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا ﴿١٢٦﴾

**It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth
belongs: God is fully aware of all things [126]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 126)**

Allah *the Exalted* explained in a previous verse that disbelievers and hypocrites have no intercessors or supporters. He asserts this meaning in this context:

(1) Related by Muslim and Ahmad based on a narration by Ibn Mass'ud... Al-Bukhari related the same Hadith with a different wording: {If I were to take a friend (khalil) other than my Lord I would take Abu Bakr with whom I share affinity and brotherhood in Islam}.

‘Do not think that there is a way out, a refuge, a retreat or an escapade. Allah *the Almighty* possesses everything in the heavens and the earth. Thus, no heaven will offer refuge to someone who tries to escape from Allah *the Exalted*. Furthermore, there is no one in the heavens who will help someone who tries to escape from Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* encompasses everything with His knowledge and is Capable of doing everything.

Afterward the True Lord says:

وَيَسْتَفْتُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ
فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتِمَّى النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا تُوْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَرَرَعُونَ
أَن تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضَعِّفِينَ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ وَأَن تَقُومُوا لِلْيَتَامَىٰ
بِالْقِسْطِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا ﴿١٢٧﴾

They ask you [Prophet] for a ruling about women. Say, ‘God Himself gives you a ruling about them. You already have what has been recited to you in the Scripture about orphan girls [in your charge] from whom you withhold the prescribed shares [of their inheritance] and whom you wish to marry, and also about helpless children – God instructs you to treat orphans fairly: He is well aware of whatever good you do’ [127] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 127)

Yastaftunak means that they seek your legal opinion. We know that people’s reception of Islam went through a number of stages. One of these stages was marked and described by the saying of the True Lord, *yas’alunak* which is an expression indicating believers’ inquiries in several instances. There is a second stage marked by the word *yastaftunak*. What is the difference between the two?

They asked about intoxicants, new moons, women’s monthly courses and spending money. The question is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even though he said, ‘Do not ask me about the matters I have chosen not to address. Those who preceded you were led to perdition due to their excessive questioning and disagreement with their prophets. If I command you to do something, you must do it as much as you are able, and if I forbid you to do something, abandon it.’⁽¹⁾ Prophet Muhammad *peace and*

(1) Related by Imam Muslim and others

blessings be upon him asked them not to ask about or investigate matters that may bring upon them more assignments. Nonetheless, they asked him out of their desire to know any ruling that may determine man's actions in life. Had they not wanted to determine their actions in life, why then would they ask him? Questioning was evidence that inquirers loved the path of Allah *the Exalted* and wanted to let it surpass all their deeds. Allah likes that His servants enquire about anything He mentions briefly or in general. In addition, Islam came upon a time that Arabs had their established habits and traditions, along with setting their own rules. Islam did not change any of these rules and traditions. The Arabs who accepted faith and became believers did not want to go on following the same traditions and rules just for the sake of following the example of their ancestors. Instead, they wanted that every action they did to undoubtedly conform to the core of the Islamic religion.

By contrast, *istifta'* is often a matter about which there is an ambiguous ruling. For this reason, one may say, 'Let us seek the opinion of a scholar on this matter.' Searching for an opinion reflects the inability of the seeker, whether an individual or a group of people, to deduce or derive a relevant ruling. For this reason, the inquirer refers the matter to the people of knowledge. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'whereas, if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 83)

Al-istifta' is an inquiry about a ruling that already exists; yet the inquirer is unable to deduce it. For this reason, as Muslim societies, we often establish institutions for providing legal opinions since not every believer is required to encompass all the particulars of the religion. A believer may indeed live his entire life without ever coming across or having to deal with Islamic rulings that organise the use and distribution of the profits accruing from the property that has been donated by the rich for the Cause of Allah *Glorified is He*, the rulings pertaining to investments in the stock market or the rulings concerning inheritance. A believer typically resorts to scholars for advice when something new happens to him. A question is often about something monotonous and recurrent, whereas seeking opinions is often about something the knowledge of which is not required to be general. For this reason, the inquirer in the latter case often seeks the opinion of the people of knowledge.

The True Lord says: 'And they request from you, [O Muhammad], a [legal] ruling concerning women.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127). It is as if they said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'We want to know Allah's ruling concerning women, i.e. what is admissible in connection with them, what is proscribed and how to deal with all of this. So what was the answer? The answer was the following: 'Say, "Allah gives you a ruling about them" (*an-Nisa'*: 127). Allah *Glorified is He* did not delay enlightening them since He had already done so before. Notwithstanding this, He had enlightened them before on this matter; thus, Allah *Glorified is He* enlightened them anew. It may be that the ruling that was initially revealed did not occur to them, or they failed to recall it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And they request from you, [O Muhammad], a [legal] ruling concerning women. Say, " Allah gives you a ruling about them and [about] what has been recited to you in the Book concerning the orphan girls..."' (*an-Nisa'*: 127). This means that the True Lord will enlighten them on the laws concerning women even though He has previously revealed in the Quran a verse in the same chapter of *an-Nisa'* wherein He says: 'And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four.' (*an-Nisa'*: 3)

Verses on the laws concerning women followed afterwards. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, " Allah gives you a ruling about them and [about] what has been recited to you in the Book..."' (*an-Nisa'*: 127). In this verse, Allah teaches man that he must not hasten to inquire about any matter unless he first reviews the knowledge he possesses, for he may find the answer that eliminates his need to ask.

However, though the inquiry was about women in general, whether young or elderly, orphans or not, the answer given focused on orphan women. The reason is that elderly women have the capacity to investigate their own matters and are not weak. On the other hand, orphan women are the weakest of the weak. We have learnt the meaning of being an orphan; one is considered an orphan until he reaches puberty and becomes independent. Thus no adult, whether man or woman, ought to be called an orphan. For this reason, the answer was specifically concerned with orphan women since they are the

ones who are always under the custody of guardians. Nowadays, these types of guardians are called custodians.

There used to be two kinds of custodians. If a girl was beautiful and wealthy, her custodian would marry her to enjoy her beauty and usurp her wealth. If a girl was ugly, her custodian would not want to marry her. However, he would try to preclude her from getting married due to the fact that if she did, her husband would take over her money. The matter needed clear analysis. Our master 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was consistently insightful (he was known for his keen insights). One day someone asked him about a matter concerning a girl under his custody. Our master 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* then said, 'If she were beautiful, let her take a better man than you as a husband, and were she ugly, take her as a wife and let her wealth make up for her ugliness.'

The True Lord says: '...and [about] what has been recited to you in the Book concerning the orphan girls to whom you do not give what is decreed for them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 127). The phrase '...what is decreed for them' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) refers to either their dowries or their inherited fortune. The saying of the All-Wise came forth to safeguard orphan women against the arbitrariness of their custodians. The command was brought down in this supreme style which indicates that it is the statement of an All-Generous Lord. The root *raghab* means 'to desire.' Thus, if the situation is favourable, it should be described to be desired, or *rughaba fih*, and if it is unfavourable, then it should be described to be as 'not desired', or *rughaba anhu*. This is why the True Lord says: 'And who would be averse to the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) except one who makes a fool of himself.' (*al-Baqara*: 130)

Since *an* thus occurred in this verse '*wa man yarghabu an millati Ibrahima*', 'And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham...' (*al-Baqara*: 130), then what follows is the thing that is undesired and consequently abandoned. If the statement contained *rughaba fih* (desired), then it is about something favourable. The preposition that indicates whether the word *targhabun* is favourable or not has been omitted since it refers to those involved. If the object of desire is women, it becomes *rughaba fih*, and if the woman is ugly and not desired, then it becomes *rughaba anhu*. No one other than Allah *the Exalted* can bring

forth an expression that combines two contrary situations. The True Lord thus decrees laws for both situations.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of another type of vulnerable category, which is the young orphans: 'and concerning the oppressed among children and that you maintain for orphans [their rights] with equity. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah has indeed full knowledge of it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about guardianship and custodianship over these vulnerable categories of people, His address comes in two different styles. If one is not qualified enough to understand the language and eloquence of the Quran, he may say that both styles are contradictory. However, if one is qualified enough to understand such language and eloquence, then he will be certain that such great style cannot be stated unless it is by the All-Generous Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not entrust your property to the feeble-minded...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). As stated, He *the Almighty* orders people not to give their property to the feeble-minded people even though they are the actual owners of the property. Yet, it shall not be given to them until they have sound judgment. Islam makes the brotherhood based on faith amongst Muslims the basis of cooperation and solidarity. Therefore, when Muslims discover that there is someone amongst them who has weak judgment; his guardian should take charge of his property in order to preserve it for him. Preservation of property is one of the purposes of *Shari'a*, and therefore, Allah entrusts a guardian with this responsibility.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* orders people to test young orphans since the feeble-minded or prodigal person should not be given the right to dispose of his property while in that state. Instead, this right is transferred to his guardian, and it is said that during this time it is the guardian's property. This does not mean that ownership is transferred to the guardian; rather, he becomes the one who has the right to dispose it. However, once a young person reaches puberty and is proven to be able to duly dispose, or take care, of his property, the guardian must hand over the property to him.

This Quranic verse under discussion sets out the rules which govern the treatment of the orphan women and helpless young children. It states that they should be treated with *Al-Qist*: 'and concerning the oppressed among children

and that you maintain for orphans [their rights] with equity.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) However, what does treating orphans with *Al-Qist* mean? *Al-Qist* is an Arabic word that indicates the meaning of 'justice' or 'equity.' It differs from *Al-Qast* which means 'injustice.'

However, some who lack knowledge may criticise the usage of words in the Quran, saying that the Quran mentions *Al-Qist* meaning justice in several verses and afterwards states that *Al-Qasitun* are the fuel for the fire of Hell. (*al-Jinn*: 15) We say to these people that *Al-Qasitun* is the plural of *Al-Qasit* which is the verbal noun of the verb *Qasta*. In Arabic, this particular verb *Qasta* is used to refer to both 'justice' and 'injustice.' When it signifies justice, its verbal noun becomes *Muqsit* as Allah tells us that He *the Exalted* loves - *Al-Muqsiteen* meaning just people: 'Surely, Allah loves those who are just.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) On the contrary, when it refers to injustice, its verbal noun is *Al-Qasit* as Allah tells us in the Quran that *Al-Qasitun* (the wrongdoing people) will be the fuel of Hellfire: 'And those who deviate from the right course, they are the fuel of Hell.' (*al-Jinn*: 15) In Arabic, there is another verb in the same context which is '*aqasta*'; it means that there had been an injustice, but it has since been eliminated. Accordingly, we find that *Al-Qist* is to be just from the very beginning, while *Al-Muqsit* is the one who encounters injustice and eliminates it. It is among the merits of the Arabic language that a single word may be used to convey different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, one shall learn how to understand the language and eloquence of speech and to properly understand the sense of every word in light of the context in which it is used.

In the past, the style of writing was a talent, and not a craft, as is the case in our particular time. The early Arabs used not to use diacritical marks. If someone added such diacritical marks in a letter he sent to another person, the recipient would be enraged and send the letter back to the sender, telling him, 'Do you doubt my capacity to read your letter correctly without these diacritical marks?!' Placing such diacritical marks, during those eras, was thus perceived as a sign of having misgivings about the recipient of the letter. By contrast, in our age a recipient often asks the sender to place these marks to the letters so that he can pronounce it correctly.

Allah *Glorified is He* talks about orphans' dowries and property. He *the Almighty* makes the proper disposition of the property of the orphans an act of worship and faith. An orphan woman may neither have wealth nor beauty. In this case, no one will have a desire to marry her. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the guardian to look after her and observe Allah's Rulings in dealing with her.

In this verse, Allah commands believers to treat orphans justly. An orphan girl may be living with her guardian and his family, and she may be beautiful. The guardian may provide her with more care and tenderness than what he shows to his children. However, Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the fact that looking after an orphan girl should be based on justice, and without extravagance. He tells us that one does not get rewarded or punished for merely undertaking an action, rather, it is the intention behind an action which determines the way one is recompensed for it. Thus, beware, O, believer, not to merely say, 'I did such and such', but should say instead, 'I did such and such with the following intention.' Allah, the All Knowing, knows all your deeds and intentions: 'And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah has indeed full knowledge of it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127)

The one who wipes an orphan's head is bound to have a huge reward. Similarly, the one who supports and provides for an orphan will join Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in paradise. The One Who decided to give such a reward is Allah Whose knowledge encompasses the deepest secrets of the intention of a person undertaking this particular good deed. For instance, someone may approach an orphan, support him and provide him with care and tenderness for the sole purpose of getting close to his mother. For this reason, reward and punishment are ultimately determined by the intention underlying and motivating the action. It is not enough for someone to just say, 'My intention is good' and then abstain from doing good deeds. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Actions are to be judged solely by intentions, and a man will have only what he intended. When one emigrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is to Allah and His Messenger. However, when one emigrates for the sake of gaining a worldly benefit or marrying a woman, then his emigration is to that for which he

emigrated.⁽¹⁾ This indicates that intention must always be associated with and vindicated by actions. This is due to the fact that Allah encourages us to do good deeds in order to benefit others, as well. One's intention to do the good is not sufficient enough unless it is followed through with the action itself. However, when one carries out an action without having an intention, then he is benefitting others without gaining any personal benefit; he will only incur the exhaustion of undertaking it. Thus, if one wants to be rewarded, he should have a good intention when performing any good deed.

Allah *the Exalted* asserts that He knows all what we do even before the creation of the universe, as He is the Most Powerful and the Most Omnipotent: 'And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah has indeed full knowledge of it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) Accordingly, He *the Almighty* does not need to wait until man carries out a deed in order to have knowledge of it. Rather, He has eternal knowledge of everything. Therefore, He says: 'And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah has indeed full knowledge of it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) This is due to the fact that all that is happening in this world is known to Allah even before the creation of all that existed, exists and will exist.

Let us illustrate this by reference to an example from daily life. An owner of a piece of land may ask an engineer to build a house for him and tell him: Design a house for me on such and such area and have it be composed of the following number of rooms and bathrooms. The engineer then comes up with a design based on the instructions of the landowner. The landowner may be a person who leans towards accuracy and precision and so he, therefore, says the engineer, 'I want you to build a small scale replica of the house before we start building it so that I can see a small but realistic representation of the house. The replica should accurately show the rooms, their designs and colours.'

Similarly, the world with all its minute details and dimensions was known to its Creator, Allah, before it ever came to being. The replicas made by people may be deficient due to lack of raw materials. For instance, a carpenter may run out of rosewood, thus finding himself confined to resorting to a different kind of wood in order to finish constructing a bedroom. This defect

(1) [Narrates by Al-Bukhahri]

is due to the incomprehensive knowledge and limited capacity of the carpenter. However, Allah's Creation is highly perfect since He *Glorified is He* is the Best Creator. We should reflect over all these meanings when we read Allah's saying: 'And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah has indeed full knowledge of it.' (*an-Nisa'*: 127) Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* discusses some issues relating to women. He says:

وَإِنْ أَمْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ
يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ
تَحْسَبُونَهُ تَوَقُّفًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

If a wife fears high-handedness or alienation from her husband, neither of them will be blamed if they come to a peaceful settlement, for peace is best. Although human souls are prone to selfishness, if you do good and are mindful of God, He is well aware of all that you do [128] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 128)

When the Arabic article '*inna*', translated in this verse as 'if', is followed by a noun in the nominative case, we must note that it is followed with a hidden verb; this means that the original word order in this case should have been as such that the verb comes immediately after '*inna*'. This applies to this verse along with many other verses such as the following: 'And if anyone of the idolaters seeks protection of thee, grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allah.' (*at-Tawba*: 6) However, what is the meaning of fear in the verse under discussion? Fear is the feeling you get when you are afraid or worried that something bad or sad might happen. This means that one fears when he expects that a difficult or troublesome matter might, or is going to happen. In this Quranic verse, high-handedness has not yet shown, but the woman fears or expects that it may happen. Allah *Glorified is He* bases the ruling on the mere fear of high-handedness or ill-treatment, and not on its actual occurrence. This is a note for every one of us not to wait until the things he fears actually happen. Instead, one must prevent the causes which may lead to their occurrence since, in the event that they may happen, handling them might be extremely difficult. In the same manner, if a woman

senses signs of ill-treatment on the part of her husband, she must try to remedy the problem from the very beginning.

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* talks here about *an-Noshouz*, or 'ill-treatment' on the part of the husband as He previously talked about ill-treatment on the part of the wife: 'And as for those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and keep away from them in their beds and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is high and great.' (*an-Nisa'*: 34)

So, what is the meaning of *an-Nushouz*? When listening to music, someone may make the following comment: 'This tune is *Nashaz*.' This means that it does not resonate with the sequence of the melody and its rhythm. This word is originally derived from *an-nashz* which refers to the elevated place of a ground.

The ideal case of the matrimonial relationship is that a man-the husband-takes the woman-hiswife- to be his source of relief, affection and mercy and reveals to her all his secrets inasmuch as she does with him. Therefore, Muslim Jurists state that *Al-Kafaa'ah*, or 'equality' or the proximity between spouses, is a condition for marriage. Allah *Glorified is He* explains that corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women, and likewise, good women are for good men and good men are for good women: 'Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them; they will have forgiveness and a generous provision.' (*an-Nur*: 26)

Equality should thus be observed even regarding such things as good character and bad character. A corrupt woman should not be married to a good man; otherwise she would make him suffer. Similarly, a corrupt man should not be married to a good woman, lest he should make her suffer. This is due to the fact that when a good man marries a good woman, they will comfort and appreciate each other. Likewise, when a corrupt man marries a corrupt woman, their behaviours and manners resonate with each other. This actually establishes a balance in their relationship. Both a corrupt man and a woman do not feel ashamed when they commit immoral acts. On the other hand, a good man and a good woman take care of each other's feelings and preserve

each other's dignity. In the context of matrimonial life, if a woman fears that her husband might display ill-treatment towards her, abstain from spending over her, despise her or no longer love her, she should correct her behaviour and with the way she treats him. Similarly, when affection and compassion upon which the relationship between spouses ought to be based collapse, despite each of them pledging a solemn promise to the other, this is considered another form of *Nushuz*. Furthermore, when a woman fears that her husband looks down on or despises her because he financially supports her, then this is considered another form of *Nushuz*. An intelligent wife needs to pay attention to herself and remedy the causes that may lead to an escalation of the situation, i.e. she should work on her relationship with her husband. If the husband is the cause of the problem, she should try to regain his affection.

Turning away means that the husband has not yet started to display ill treatment towards her. However, he does not show affection towards his wife, talk to her or even approach her, even though he may give her all of her rights. An intelligent woman should also fix this problem. The problem is ultimately between a husband and wife about the relationship between them. Allah states that they, the married couple are very close to each other: 'And how can you take it when one of you may have consorted with the other, and they (women) have taken from you a strong covenant?' (*an-Nisa'*: 21) Another example is the following verse: 'They are a sort of garment for you and you are a sort of garment for them.' (*al-Baqara*: 187) This means that every husband is both a shield and a cover for his wife, while every wife is both a shield and a cover for her husband. Indeed, we know that if a woman is sitting in her room and her brother or father walk in, she will quickly cover any exposed part of her body. On the other hand, if her husband walks in, she will not conceal or cover her body.

Every husband and wife knows that there is a very private and sensitive affair between both of them; Allah permits both a husband and wife to be exposed to the other in a way that they are not permitted to be exposed to any other one in the world. Therefore, a husband must not curse or disrespect his wife in any way. Similarly, every wife is required to take care of her husband. They both should remember that they have been exposed to each other in a very unique and special way.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to put an end to any dispute that may flare up between a husband and a wife. For this purpose, He encourages every wife to investigate the cause of her husband's ill-treatment and turning away from her; she may, for instance, have grown old or become ill while her husband is still at the prime of his life. Another woman may have enticed him or he may, for some reason, want to marry another woman. In this case, the wife must rationally treat the problem and concede some of her share in him. For example, if she is not very beautiful and her husband wants to marry another, she may allow him to do so. She may also give up some of her dowry to him. What matters is that they should reconcile. This is a duty of the husband as much as it is a duty of the wife.

In this verse, Allah asserts that reconciliation is the duty of both the husband and wife: 'If a wife fears high-handedness or alienation from her husband, neither of them will be blamed if they come to a peaceful settlement, for peace is best.' (*an-Nisa'*: 128) This is due to the fact that any problem, in which no one else interferes, except the husband and wife, can easily be solved. The resolution of such problems is made difficult by the people who interfere in the relationship between the two spouses. A man may have a dispute with his wife and leave the house, but afterwards he may calm down and return home. His wife may then say to him a word that ends the entire dispute. However, if a relative interferes in the problem, matters may be further complicated since the one who interferes may have neither the reason nor the motive to solve the problem.

This is why we should adhere to Allah's Order to seek reconciliation: 'neither of them will be blamed if they come to a peaceful settlement, for peace is best.' (*an-Nisa'*: 128) The first stage of reconciliation between a husband and wife is that they both should fulfil their obligations and always remember that although they may hate something in the other partner, Allah decrees that this same thing is very good for them: 'it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you. Allah knows and you know not.' (*al-Baqara*: 216) Another verse that illustrates these points is the following: 'if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing wherein Allah has placed much good.' (*an-Nisa'*: 19)

No man should ever believe that there is a single woman who has extraordinary beauty and all good qualities. The good and various qualities required for leading a good marital life may not be available in a beautiful woman. However, such qualities may exist in a woman who is not very beautiful. This is for this is that an extraordinary attractive woman may mainly depend on her beauty and not develop other qualities. On the other hand, a woman who is not very beautiful tries to be honest, obedient, clean (keep house well) and well-behaved with her husband's family since she wants to create bridges with them in order to encourage her husband to keep her. For this reason, we find that the women who are not beautiful constitute the majority who seriously shoulder the responsibilities of supporting their families. Consequently, a man should not only consider the aspect of physical beauty. Rather, one should consider all aspects and aspects of beauty. Men's minds may be overwhelmed by physical beauty. However, every man should bear in mind that such form of beauty is short lived. There are many of other aspects of beauty that last to the end of one's life.

We were told of a good and righteous man who was married to a troublesome and authoritative woman. One day he told her, 'O, I wish you could see me while I am giving religious lectures with people leaning forwards to listen to me.' He thought that if she would see him giving a lecture, she would be change and start to treat him more kindly. His wife then went to attend his lectures. He thought that this scene would inspire deep reverence for him in her heart. When he returned to her at the end of the day, he said to her, 'You saw me today!' She replied, 'Yes, I saw you, and it was frustrating. I saw all the people sitting calmly except for you. You were the only one screaming.' It is said that Allah used to extend His Grace and Support to this man for tolerating the misbehaviour of his wife. His students used to see divine illumination in his actions. When his wife died, his students went to see him, but they could not sense any of the illumination they were used to experiencing with him before. They then asked him what had happened to cause this change. He said, 'The one for whom was responsible for Allah treating me gracefully has died.' Thus, as much as women are required to endure the misbehaviour of their husbands, men are also required to endure the misbehaviour of their wives. Allah rewards the one who endures ill-treatment

from his wife. An interesting story has been related in this respect. 'Imran ibn Hittann was one of the *Khawarij* [a group which claimed that both sides in the battle of Siffin (which occurred between 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb and Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan) were disbelievers] and was married to a beautiful woman even though he was ugly. His wife looked at him one day and said, 'Praise is be to Allah!' He asked her, 'Why are you praising Allah?' She replied, 'Because both of us will be admitted into paradise.' He then asked, 'Why do you think so?' She responded, 'Because you were blessed with me (a beautiful wife) and were grateful, and I was tested with you (an unattractive husband) and was patient, and the patient and thankful are both admitted to paradise.'

No one should think that he will find a woman that combines all aspects of beauty and goodness. He should know that if she ranks low in one aspect, she might be quite superior in another. Therefore, do not miss one clear advantage due to a deficiency she may have in another aspect of her character; in life, there are several aspects of character. We said before that Allah has no children. Rather, we are all His servants. Allah has equally given us the means to be graceful. Therefore, if someone was privileged in one aspect, another will have an advantage over him in a different one. The coexistence of excellence in one aspect and deficiency in another was intended by Allah to make the total result of the merits and qualities of every human being equal to their opposites, thus establishing a balance in the world.

Therefore, when one finds something that he does not like in his wife, and conversely, when a woman finds something that she does not like in her husband, the man should consider all the good aspects in his wife in order to have a more clear, integrated vision of her. Similarly, a woman should consider all the good aspects in her husband in order to have a clearer, integrated view of him. If a man considers all the aspects of his wife's character, he will live contently with her because, from his perspective, the good aspects will always outnumber the bad. The one who is content is the one who looks at the positive aspects, while the discontent person is the one who only looks at the negative aspects. The one who is fair in both his anger and contentment is the one who considers the totality of all the positive aspects and negative aspects. Allah *Glorified is He* wants the family to be based on safe foundations.

He *Glorified is He* thus tells us that neither the husband nor the wife should wait until disputes erupt. Rather, each of them should try to resolve potential problems once they detect their signs. No one, apart from both husband and wife, is more capable of solving a given problem that may arise between them since the bonds and relationship common between a husband and wife do not exist between any other people. For this reason, Allah encourages both of them to seek reconciliation: 'neither of them will be blamed if they come to a peaceful settlement, for peace is best.' (*an-Nisa'*: 128)

Sometimes, we find that people are more concerned with the formal aspect of reconciliation, without paying close attention to and trying to find a solution for the underlying causes of alienation and psychological animosities between the two spouses. Such focus on formalities without tackling the real causes of disputes which may lead to other problems, does not help to achieve true reconciliation. Therefore, reconciliation shall tackle the essential problems and their underlying causes so that spouses can become content, and thus, goodness can be achieved between both of them and in the whole community.

Afterward, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Although human souls are prone to selfishness, if you do the good and are mindful of Allah, He is well aware of all that you do.' (*an-Nisa'*: 128) In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that He is Our Creator so He knows our nature and dispositions; He also knows that it is very difficult for a wife to give up a portion of money that is rightfully hers, like her dowry, to give up an engagement present or to give up her right to a night with her husband to allow him to spend it with another wife, if he is married to more than one. Similarly, it is very difficult for a man to give up some of the standards he has set for his life. Therefore, Allah warns us against letting selfishness take control of our attitudes towards each other. In order to encourage both spouses to be lenient to each other, Allah reminds them of their special relationship: 'And how can you take it when one of you may have consorted with the other, and they (the women) have taken from you a strong covenant?' (*an-Nisa'*: 21)

The verse being explored differentiates between the rights which any of the two spouses may stand up for and insist on and what either of them may relinquish out of benevolence towards the other. We are told of a fair judge

who once said to two litigants, 'Should I judge amongst you based on justice or do you know something that is better than justice?' One of them asked, 'Is there anything better than justice?' The judge answered, 'Yes, it is benevolence. Justice only signifies giving one his due rights, while benevolence means that one benevolently relinquishes one's due rights to the interest of the other.' In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to solve a psychological problem that many families may face, in which neither the husband nor the wife have strong faith or creed. Had these families had stronger faith and followed the Rulings of Allah, such a problem would not have occurred. This problem is that of polygamy.

A superficial investigation suggests that a polygamist is a fortunate person as he is allowed, in Islam, to marry up to four wives simultaneously. In the same respect, a woman is thought to be wronged because she is restricted to only one husband. However, careful investigation shows that not all wives are wronged; the second wife feels happy. Furthermore, a husband may tell his wife that he is going to have a second wife. She may, after investigating all alternatives, accept to preserve her matrimonial life with this husband and decide it being the best alternative for her.

It is related that a husband wanted to divorce his wife because he was no longer attracted to her. Since they had a son, she said to him, 'Do not divorce me and let me look after my son. All what I want is that you just give me my due share.' Her husband then said, 'If this would work with you, it is more amenable to me.' Accordingly, we find that polygamy is not a source for frustration and distress to all women; as much as it causes the first wife frustration and distress, it pleases the second wife. However, women are justified in being frustrated since men took advantage of Allah's Ruling that permits polygamy but failed to obey Allah's Decree to treat their multiple wives justly. A man wrongs a woman when he follows only the ruling that is in his interest, namely, the allowance of polygamy, yet does not follow the Decree of Allah, the One Who allows him polygamy, in the sense that he should treat his wives fairly.

People used to deny polygamy because they noticed that when a man has a new wife, he only cares for her and completely neglects his first one along

with his children from her. For this reason, women have their excuse for being angry at the legitimacy of polygamy. If men followed Allah's Decree that a husband should treat his multiple wives justly as much as they took advantage of Allah's Allowance of practicing polygamy, social balance would then be established. When the first wife knows that her rights, whether concerning herself, her house or looking after her children, would not be neglected by her husband, she would say, 'It is better for him to be publicly married instead of encroaching upon other people's honour, meaning having illegal relationships with other women.'

Therefore, the cause of the problems associated with polygamy is that man partially follows some of the Divine Orders and ignores the rest of them. Those who take advantage of Allah's license to practise polygamy must observe the principles that He has set out in order for such lifestyle to be undertaken within the framework of justice.

For example, when a man has two wives, each one is entitled to have her husband spend a night at her house; so each wife is entitled to spend the same number of nights with her husband as does the other wife. Mu'adh Ibn Jabal *Allah be pleased with him* had two wives, and he was accustomed not to perform his ablution in a house of one of his wives if it was the other's night even though ablution is an act of worship. What is more interesting is that when the two wives died of plague, he ordered them both to be buried in one grave.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created the creation and also commanded people to be just as much as they are able. Therefore, a husband has to be fair in everything: the time he spends with each wife, his expenditure, his smiles and his company. A man can observe justice in all these aspects. Yet, he cannot be fair as far as the inclination of his heart is concerned as it is related to one's own feelings. Therefore, Allah tells us that we can not observe justice regarding love, even if we do our best. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* orders husband not to show his greater inclination to a certain wife.

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَحِيلُوا عَلَى الْمَيْلِ
فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿١٢٩﴾

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 God, He is most forgiving and merciful [129] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 129)

This proves that justice in love is impossible. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to make the following supplication to Allah, 'O, Allah, this is my division concerning what I control, so do not blame me concerning what You control, and I do not' (Meaning the heart). ⁽¹⁾ Thus, there is a difference between a heart's inclination which signifies psychological affection and tendencies, and rational inclination. No one has control over his heart's inclinations. Therefore, there is not a legislation or law which orders someone to love so and so girl unless it refers to rational love, not the emotional one. Someone may, for instance, like a bitter medicine; he does so intellectually, not emotionally. Therefore, this person may rejoice when someone brings him the medicine because he knows that the medicine will cure him— Allah willing.

The Quranic verse speaks of *Al-Mayl*, or inclination. So, what does *Al-Mayl* mean? Allah *Glorified is He* clearly explains this when He orders us not to leave a wife in a state as if she is married and unmarried at the same time. This refers to a woman who is neither *'aym* which means she has no husband and seeks marriage, and nor married, but cannot take pleasure in having a husband. Instead, she is a woman kept by a man who does not fulfil his responsibilities towards her. Allah *Glorified is He* demonstrates that He does not want a husband of multiple wives to forcefully, or uncontrollably, incline his heart in one direction or another since he has no control over this matter. However, He wants him to observe justice in all his dealings with his wives. One should observe equality amongst one's wives regarding the time he spends in each wife's house, the money he spends on each, the amount of care

(1) [Narrated by Ahmad]

he gives to his children and even the company he gives to one's wives. As for a heart's inclination, Allah does not enact any rulings concerning it.

Allah *Glorified is He* decrees laws for His creation since He knows them best. Allah created passions for each of us that make us have inclinations. Furthermore, He created desires within us and gave us a variety of choices concerning our reactions. If Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to restrict our inclination, He would not have created it. However, He unleashes human inclinations so that they may achieve the combined interests of all mankind. Therefore Allah *the Exalted* allows a heart to love since He knows that inhabitancy of the universe is established on love. For example, if a scientist did not love discovering Allah's secrets in concerning the universe, he would not endure the effort involved in research, reading and experimentation along with all the toil involved in these tasks.

If people do not like perfecting their works, there will not be a single well-done piece of work. Similarly, if a man does not love his children, he will not take pains in bringing them up. Therefore, love has a mission. Allah *Glorified is He* does not want us to preclude love; instead, He wants us to exalt love by channelling it morally, rather than unscrupulously unleashing it in a way that may encroach upon the honour of others.

When you direct your love towards a good purpose, it will never make you or other people incur an evil result. Consider, for instance, the motive and desire for knowing; we will find that Allah created it for man to enable him to develop useful inventions in life. If the desire to know did not exist, no scientist would be able to innovate, invent or discover anything conducive to the comfort and enhancement of human life man, for example, would not have thought of using steam power to ease the toil of travelling and carrying heavy weight and thereby, would not have invented steam boats and trains.

However, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to exalt the desire for knowing and inventing by channelling it towards legitimate endeavours and keeping it from being a tool used to spy on other's people's secrets, for example. Similarly, He has implanted the desire for amassing wealth in man since it motivates him to work and benefit others by this work, whether his intention is to benefit others or not. The same also holds true for the desire for sex; Allah

implanted it in man with its vigour to preserve the human species. He does not want us to unleash it to infringe on people's honour. Therefore, He created desires for special functions. Thus, religious laws have been decreed to maintain human desires to their respective functions and prevent them from declining away from the path of Allah.

Therefore, inclination is a human instinct. An interpretation of the words of The True Lord *Glorified is He* on this issue may be: 'I have created this inclination to serve the purpose of life on earth. However, I want you to exalt and elevate your inclinations. This principle should be observed when you acquire multiple wives. I do not want you to completely ignore your inclination since this is not something that is practical. However, I would like you to discipline this inclination and keep it within only your hearts' limits. It is not appropriate to let your inclination go beyond your hearts and affect your actions.

Therefore, you, believers, are free to love whomever you wish. However, do not let this love negatively affect your entire behaviour and thus unfairly give the one you love the good to which another person is entitled. Similarly, you are free to dislike whomever you want. No legislator can command your heart to love or dislike, but do not let your dislike extend beyond your heart, and influence your behaviour and cause you to wrong the one you dislike.

'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* set an ideal example concerning this issue. When the murderer of his brother passed by him, a man sitting with him said: 'This is the murderer of your brother.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Now that Allah has guided him to Islam, what could I do to him?' The killer's embracing of Islam ended the matter for 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*. When the killer came to 'Umar's session, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said to him, 'When you attend my session, turn your face away from me for my heart is not comfortable in your presence.' The man then asked, 'Does the fact that you do not love me deny me any of my rights?' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'No.' The man then said, 'Only women lament love.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was then the Caliphate and that man was one of his subjects. However, 'Umar the Caliphate feared committing an injustice. Thus, this man, though he was under the reign and command of the Caliphate 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* possessed the ability to reject

'Umar's feelings of love and hatred as long as they did not preclude him from his rights as a citizen.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has created the heart's inclinations and set the following rule for them: Beware, believer, not to let your heart's inclinations influence your actions. Let your heart's inclination be as you wish. In this respect, if you marry one woman, and then marry another, the path of God does not require you to achieve absolute justice in treating your two wives, especially concerning your heart's inclination. For, if this were the case, this would imply that the path of God requires you to control something that is not under your control, viz. the inclination of your heart. Rather, the path of Allah sets for you the rules that your limb's actions should follow. You have to be fair in distributing your time for each of your wives, the clothes you buy for them, your smiles and the gentleness of your speech. Therefore, you should not to let your heart's inclination influence your actions; beyond this, you are free to have whatever feelings you desire in your heart.

We have noticed that some of those who pretend understanding the Quran and being *Mujadidin* (those who renew the Islamic faith) support the new campaign against polygamy. In this respect, we say that before joining this campaign against polygamy under the pretext of understanding the texts of the Quran, you should first investigate the causes of this resentment of polygamy; it is not a resentment of polygamy in itself. Rather, it is a resentment of a Muslim who takes advantage of Allah's allowance of polygamy and neglects his command to observe justice. If a Muslim observed equal justice while practising polygamy, such a crisis would not have existed. For this reason, they say, The True Lord *Glorified is He* has decreed that the man should restrict himself to one wife if he fears he cannot be just if he were married to have multiple wives. He thus says: '...but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then [only] one...' (*an-Nisa'*: 3). He also says in a different verse: 'And it will not be within your power to treat your wives with equal fairness, however much you may desire it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129). To these people, we say that if you really wanted to understand the Quran, you should know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not stop at His saying, '...however much you may desire it...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129); rather, He supplemented a command

to his statement on the incapacity of fair treatment. He thus says: '... and so, do not allow yourselves to incline towards one...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129).

Allah *the Exalted* supplemented His statement mentioning the inability of fair treatment with the command not for a man to be inclined towards one of the wives. This manifests the Wisdom of the First Legislator Who knows His creation and knows how He created them. If the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not supplement 'And it will not be within your power...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129), it may have given those who are against polygamy a right to say what they have said. For this reason, we tell them to pay attention to the fact the True Lord *the Almighty* explained that men's inability to observe justice between their wives is a matter that He knows. Therefore, He asks them not to be entirely inclined, and this is within their power. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has left the ruling as it is and did not negate it. 'And so, do not allow yourselves to incline towards one to the exclusion of the other leaving her in a state, as it were, of having and not having a husband...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129). This statement involves a command for every man not to leave his wife in '... a state, as it were, of having and not having a husband...' (*an-Nisa'*: 129). The destiny and path of life of such a woman would be undetermined. She is neither without a husband, making her eligible for marriage, and nor is she married; thus, she may take her due share from her husband in terms of living with her in their house, supporting her by expenditures, clothing her, along with giving her kind reception, smiles, intimacy and sympathy.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...But if you put things to right and are conscious of Him – behold, God is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of mercy.' (*an-Nisa'*: 129) His saying '...if you put things to right...' indicates that a form of corruption exists and that every Muslim man is required to investigate the causes that led him to corrupt his marital relation with the intention to fix them. Furthermore, every Muslim man should be conscious of Allah in dealing with his wife in the light of Allah's Laws. When a Muslim husband stops the corruption of leaving his wife in a state as if she were not yet having a husband by giving her due rights in terms of the time he spends in her house, expenditure support, taking care of her family and showing interest in her and her children in a good manner, Allah will forgive him

and dispense His Grace upon him. Furthermore, a Muslim cannot correct what he corrupted unless he genuinely intends to do all actions being conscious of Allah. If he does so, he will find Allah immensely forgiving and a dispenser of mercy.

If a man is incapable of being just and a woman did not agree to give up a portion of her rights to satisfy him, then separation will be a must in such a situation. It is inconceivable to try to govern the marital and family life by force. We cannot force spouses to stay with each other if their hearts repel. Similarly, we cannot be certain that any woman could live safely under these conditions.

To the one who contends that it is not appropriate for us to separate spouses, we ask, 'do you want to keep marital life going by force?' The marriage bond is based on tranquillity, affection and compassion. If these basics are absent, how could a marriage possibly continue? How could you force a husband to live with a wife whom he does not like or accept? Similarly, how could you compel a wife to live with a husband whom she does not like? Separation, in such cases, is a means that Allah *Glorified is He* intended so that a husband may search to find another, more suitable wife, and the same applies for a wife.

We have frequently encountered examples of this in real life. A divorced husband may live happily with his new wife; similarly, a divorced wife may live happily with her new husband. As for those who took the idea of separating a married couple in the case where married life is impossible as a pretext to attack Islam, they basically repeat the western view that holds that no married couple should ever separate.

Nowadays, we see that the entire world, including Christians, Jews and others who belong to different religions and sects, resort to divorce since events and conditions force them to legitimize it. It is as if they are having recourse to Islam not in itself but as the only solution to their problem. Therefore, if it has been proved that those who attack a specific part of religion are ultimately compelled, under the pressure of events or conditions, to resort to it, we have to remind them not to rush to judge matters pertaining to Islam as invalid. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has compelled the non-Muslims to follow a Muslim principle. He is the One Who said:

وَإِنْ يَنْفَرَا يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلًّا مِّن سَعَتِهِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٣٠﴾

but if husband and wife do separate, God will provide for each out of His plenty: He is infinite in plenty, and all wise [130] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 130)

Allah *Glorified is He* has infinite grace. He is truly capable of conferring upon a divorced husband a good wife who satisfies his needs. Similarly, He is capable of conferring upon a divorced wife a husband who satisfies her needs and accepts her ugliness if she were ugly by making him see other aspects of beauty and goodness in her. A man may have been infatuated by the beauty of his wife even though she drove him crazy, made him confused and disturbed his thoughts. Subsequently, Allah may bestow upon him a woman who is fond of him. He may bless him with an honest woman whom he can trust; when he leaves her to go to work, he would have no misgivings about her in his heart since he has confidence in her even if she was not very beautiful. 'And if husband and wife do separate, Allah shall provide for each of them out of His abundance, for Allah is indeed Bountiful, Wise' (*an-Nisa'*: 130). Do not begin to think that Allah does not possess what will comfort every person. Allah *Glorified is He* has what can comfort each person. The pharmacy of His path abounds with remedies. Some people just do not know how to use these remedies to treat their diseases.

It is due to His Wisdom that Allah *the Exalted* does not force a couple to continue living with each other since they dislike each other, especially if it were a case where affection and compassion no longer existed between them. Afterward, the True Lord puts forth the following verse:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۗ وَلَقَدْ وَصَّيْنَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰتٰوْا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَآِيَاكُمْ اَنْ اَتَّقُوْا اللّٰهَ ۚ وَاِنْ تَكْفُرُوْا فَاِنَّ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيًّا حَمِيْدًا ﴿١٣١﴾

Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to God. We have commanded those who were given the Scripture before you, and We command you, to be mindful of God. Even if you do ignore Him, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and He is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise [131] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 131)

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One who satisfies the man when he divorces his wife and similarly satisfies the woman if she separates from her husband. It is

not difficult for Allah *Glorified is He* Who created the entire world to satisfy the needs of a man and a woman after they divorce. He possesses the heavens and the earth and is capable of bestowing upon a man a better woman than one he divorced and bestowing upon a woman a better man than that one she divorced or got a divorce from. Thus, nothing falls outside the reign of Allah Who gives abundantly and infinitely.

We frequently hear of a man who married a woman who does not have children and about whom rumours of being barren become widespread. The couple, thus, goes to medical labs to get tested. Sometimes, it is said that the woman is the cause of not having children, while other times, it is said that the man is the cause of not having children. Accordingly, they get divorced, and each of them acquires a new spouse. The woman may then have a child from her new husband; similarly, the man may have a child from his new wife. The reason behind this is Allah's Will. Things in life do not happen solely because all their causes took place as if they were autonomous and not ultimately caused by Allah; rather, He is always the cause leading to all causes. He is the One Who said: 'Allah's alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth. He creates whatever He wills. He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills; or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills], and causes to be barren whomever He wills, for, verily, He is All Knowing, infinite in His Power.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

How many possible alternatives do we have? Allah may bestow upon whomever He wills female offspring. He may bestow upon whomever He wills male offspring. He may also bestow upon whomever He wills both male and female offspring. Finally, He may cause to be barren whomever He wills. There are four possible destinies for any married man and woman as far as the question of having children is concerned. When Allah bestows upon a family offspring consisting of only males, the wife will long to have a daughter. Conversely, if the True Lord *Glorified is He* bestows upon a family only female offspring, both the man and the woman would long to have a son. If Allah gives a family both male and female offspring, such a family often experiences feelings of contentment; but such a state of contentment came last.

Allah *Glorified is He* puts the blessings whom man would want the least firstly. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* first says: '...He creates whatever He wills...' (*ash-Shura*: 49). Subsequently, He *the Exalted* says: '... He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills...' (*ash-Shura*: 49). Afterwards, Allah mentions the bestowal of male offspring and then puts forth the state at which His bounty reaches its apex: 'or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills]...' (*ash-Shura*: 50). Finally Allah *the Exalted* mentions the fourth possible destiny which He may enjoin on some of His creatures: '...and causes to be barren whomever He wills...' (*ash-Shura*: 50).

However, why is one happy with Allah's fate when He bestows upon him either male or female offspring? And why does happiness increase when He bestows upon him both male and female offspring? Furthermore, why is man discontent with His fate when He causes him to be barren? Does man think that he will be destined to the fate he likes and avoid the fate he does not like? The four possibilities are all fates from Allah. If man considers each of the four possibilities, he would be content with them.

Allah *Glorified is He* creates whomever He wills and causes whomever He wills to be barren. If man says this statement while contently accepting Allah's fate, He may please him as much as He pleased others with a male offspring, a female offspring or both a male and a female offspring. I swear to you, if someone, or a married couple accepted Allah's fate of being barren contently as much as they do in other situations, He will not bestow upon them an offspring of boys and girls who will make them suffer in pregnancy and in raising them; rather, He will bestow upon them people who will serve them, but who have been raised by others.

The main reason why the spouses who do not have children live unhappily is that they do not accept the fate Allah decreed, Allah forbid. Therefore, He makes them live in grief. Allah *the Exalted* is the One Who said in a Qudsi Hadith that has been related by Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* saying that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah says, "I always meet my servant's expectation about me. I am with him if he remembers me. If he remembers me in his self, I remember him in Myself. If he remembers me in public, I also remember him in public.; if he gets closer

to me by an inch more, I get closer to him by an arm's length; if he gets closer to me by an arm's length, I get closer to him by the span of an outstretched arm, and if he approaches me walking, I approach him running."⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'and unto Allah belong all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth....' (*an-Nisa'*: 131) So do not say that the universe of Allah will be too narrow to encompass the livelihood of a divorced man and a divorced woman. Just as much as Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed divorce as a solution to their inability to live peacefully together. He bestows upon every married couple infinite grace. As a Muslim, you have to follow the path of the True Lord as much as all that is in the heavens and that is on earth do. You should then ask yourself this question, 'Who takes care of all your interests?'

It is the True Lord *Glorified is He* Who made things beyond your power subservient to you. Have you forced the sun to rise and provide you with light and warmth? Have you forced water to evaporate and then fall again in the form of rain? Furthermore, have you forced the wind to blow? Also, have you forced the soil by commanding it to supply the seed you implanted therein with the necessary nutritive elements the plant needs to grow? All of this is not within the realm of your will; rather, it has been made subservient to you by Allah. If you want to be righteous, you should be subservient to Him in the matters that He has left up to you. Also, you should say, 'I love the path you have set my Lord. I will thus obey You as much as possible.' You should embrace the commands and proscription of the path of Allah with all your heart and every action. If you do so, the entire universe will be obedient and amenable to you as much as the subservient part of the universe is.

'And unto Allah belong all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth....' (*an-Nisa'*: 131) This is a reminder for us that everything is owned by Allah and obeys Him. So, as Allah's vicegerent in the universe, you should not be an exception; everything in it serves you. You should also ask yourself, 'Do I live in the light of the path of Allah or not?' The universe is harmonious inasmuch as it is subservient to Allah; in this manner there is no defect in

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in (*At-Tawhid*) and Muslim in his (*Sahih*) based on three relations

universal laws. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And the skies has He raised high, and has devised [for all things] a measure so that you [too, O men,] might never transgress the measure [of what is right]. Weigh, therefore, [your deeds] with equity, and cut not the measure short!' (*ar-Rahman*: 7-9)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* explains that if you want the matters that can be controlled by your choice to be straightened then contemplate well the reality of the universe surrounding you. You will realise that the things that are subservient to man by nature are never the cause of any defect or problems; rather, man's voluntary choice is what is at odds with the path of Allah and is often the cause of all defects and problems.

'...And, indeed, We have enjoined upon those who were granted revelation before your time, as well as upon yourselves, to remain conscious of Allah...' (*an-Nisa*': 131). Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He has enjoined upon those to whom He has revealed His path before us, the Muslims, as much as He has enjoined upon us, the sealing nation, to adhere to the commands and proscriptions of His path. Thus, we have to make our choices submissive to the Will of Allah in order to be in harmony with the universe in which we live. He says that if we do so, everything in our life will be well ordered. The True Lord *the Exalted* did not say that this statement is exclusively applied to Muslims; it is rather, a universal matter that every messenger called for: '...And, indeed, We have enjoined upon those who were granted revelation before your time, as well as upon yourselves, to remain conscious of God...' (*an-Nisa*': 131).

Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'We have legislated' to those who were granted revelation before your time, and nor did He say: 'We have enacted.' Rather, He said *wasyyna*, which is the Arabic word in the aforementioned verse translated as 'enjoined.' The word *wasyyna* makes the listener feel the love the one who enjoins bears for him. '... And, indeed, we have enjoined upon those who were granted revelation before your time, as well as upon yourselves, to remain conscious of Allah...' (*an-Nisa*': 131). Being conscious of Allah means to follow His commands and avoid His prohibitions; we must govern our choices according to the path of Allah. If we govern our choices according to His path, we will get along and everything in our lives will be organized.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '... And if you deny Him – behold, unto Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and Allah is indeed Self-Sufficient, ever to be praised.' (*an-Nisa'*: 131) The opposite of denying Allah is to have faith in Him. He is Self-Sufficient and is in no need of anyone who abjures His faith. So, do not ever think that Allah is in need of your faith because He has granted His path to you. Rather, He only wants you to be a healthy, happy society. Even if you deny Allah, all that is will still be His and even you, who rebelliously denied Him, will continue to be subject to the Will of your Lord.

You, who deny Allah, will never control the birth, death or destiny of anyone. The universe is constant and intact as it is. The Quran drew our attention to the order of the universe in the saying of the True Lord: 'Do they not look at the sky above them – how We have built it and made it beautiful and free of all faults? And the earth – We have spread it wide, and set upon it mountains firm, and caused it to bring forth plants of all beautiful kinds, thus offering an insight and a reminder unto every human being who willingly turns unto Allah. And We send down from the skies water rich in blessings, and cause thereby gardens to grow, and fields of grain, and tall palm-trees with their thickly-clustered dates, as sustenance apportioned to men; and by [all] this We bring dead land to life: [and] even so will be [man's] coming-forth from death.' (*Qaf*: 6-11)

At any moment, Allah may command one of the universes He has created to be unbalanced. The earth we see stable and firm may suddenly shake, and about that Allah says in the Quran: 'He has made mountains stand firm on the earth, to prevent it shaking under you...' (*an-Nahl*: 15). Allah is the Creator of the earth and the One Who holds control over it. By His Will and Might, the system of the earth may be troubled at any moment, occasioning an earthquake in part of it, and causing everything in it to lose balance or even collapse.

By such catastrophes, Allah means to let us understand that the world is not mechanically governed; rather, its system is maintained based on particular means and causes that Allah has made and that He can suspend at any time. He may order tiny particles of dust to accumulate, creating a huge storm sufficient to block vision, as if it swallowed the world in its whirl! Allah thus directs our attention to this truth: He has created the universe and set laws to

govern it according to His Will, but He can suspend these laws since they are never beyond the reach of His Might.

A land may be wholly dependent on rain. With rain falling throughout the year, fertility, greenness and abundance can be seen everywhere. Is this system run mechanically? No, it is Allah, Who has created rain and orders it to fall by His Will and Might, and Who may stop it, turning greenery into aridity, making people, cattle and plants die of thirst. The world is not merely mechanical, but it functions according to the Will of the Creator.

On another part of the earth, we may find a quiet land on which a beautiful mountain stands still. Suddenly, the summit of the mountain turns into a volcano that throws lava and fire. The land that was once splendid scenery becomes a scary place from which any living thing wants to escape. The glory of the human mind is not in trying to defy the Creator, but in aligning his choices with the Will of Allah. The mind, as miraculous as it is, is limited.

‘Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah. We have commanded those who were given the Scripture before you, and We command you, to be mindful of Allah. Even if you do ignore Him, everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, and He is Self-Sufficient, worthy of all praise’ (*an-Nisa’*: 131). As we see, Allah starts and concludes the verse with the same statement: ‘... Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah,’ and each of the two occurrences has a different meaning to convey. The first implies a command that we must obey Allah in order to be in harmony with the universe that belongs to Him. The statement is then repeated another time at the end of the verse to emphasise that Allah is Self-Sufficient—He holds control over the heavens and earth; everyone is dependent on Him; and He is in need to no one. Now, does the repetition look like a redundancy? This is the Book of Allah *the Exalted* above all imperfections. He declares at the beginning of the verse that ‘...Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah,’ which means we have to obey Him, and at the end, ‘...Everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah...’ which means that He is the Self-Sufficient Who is in no need of His servants— their belief does not benefit Him; their disbelief does not harm Him. Let whoever wishes embrace faith, and let whoever wishes reject it, and each will receive their fair

recompense: ‘Say, “Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so.” We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers...’ (*al-Kahf*: 29).

After making that declaration twice in the aforesaid verse, the same statement is repeated for a third time in the following verse:

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٣٢﴾

**Yes, indeed, every- thing in the heavens and the earth
belongs to God, and He is enough for those who trust
in Him [132] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 132)**

This time, it is a reassurance that Allah guarantees and protects the fundamentals of life for His servants. The sun, for instance, would never rebel and decide not to rise one day. The air would never decide not to blow. The earth would never cease to provide nutrients to living things. All of them function regularly by the Will of Allah Who has created humankind and nature and decreed that it has to contain our livelihood. By this, Allah means to explain to us that He is our Guardian Who takes care of our affairs and spares us the difficulty of disposing them. When any of us delegates a guardian to take care of some affairs, this spares him a lot of trouble, even though that guardian may commit a mistake, falter, accept bribes, commit an act of betrayal, etc. Allah *the Exalted* has infinite Power, so He assures His servants that the fundamentals of their existence are totally secured. Allah controls the sun and makes it in the service of His servants, so it will never deviate off the course of subservience. He controls water, wind and all the elements on earth. He is the Ultimate Sovereign and the Guardian over all creatures; He is the Best Guardian to Whom all praise is due and Who never cuts the means of life from His servants. Let us ponder this Hadith (saying of Prophet Muhammad): It has been reported that a Bedouin arrived at Medina, rested his camel and tied it, then stood up to observe the *salat* (the prayer) behind Prophet Muhammad. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* finished praying, the Bedouin untied his camel, embarked on it and then said: ‘O Allah, have mercy on me and Muhammad and do not let anyone else have a share of Your mercy!’ Hearing that, Prophet Muhammad commented: ‘Who do you think is more ignorant of the truth, the

man or his camel? Did you not hear what he said?' People answered: 'Yes.' The Messenger of Allah explained to the man: 'You have restricted something that is absolutely infinite! Allah's Mercy is of a hundred parts. He has sent down to us one of them, and it is by this part that all creatures, including men, jinn and animals, have mercy on each other, and He kept with him ninety nine parts. Who do you think is more ignorant of the truth, the man or his camel?'⁽¹⁾

Allah is indeed the Best Guardian. He is the Self-Sufficient, All-Sustaining Lord of all creation Who provides for them. You do your best and exhaust all possible means to earn your living, and when you are tired you just go to rest and sleep, and who disposes your affairs then? Who sends to you the outcomes of your struggle? It is Allah Who is never overtaken by sleep or slumber. So is there a better guardian than Allah?'... and He is enough for those who trust in Him' (*an-Nisa'*: 132).

Allah does not only assure us that He is Self-Sufficient and in no need of His creatures. He does not just tell us that He has created all that is in the heavens and the earth, and that those who choose to disbelieve will be punished, and those who choose to believe will attain His Mercy. Allah also draws our attention to the fact that He possesses control over His creation and can replace them all with others. He says:

إِنْ يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ وَيَأْتِ بِآخَرِينَ^{١٣٣} وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ قَدِيرًا

**If He so willed, He could remove you altogether
and replace you with new people: He has full
power to do so [133] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 133)**

Some philosophers claim that it is true there is a Creator, but once He created the universe, he left it operating by itself, and He does not interfere with the affairs of His creation! Besides being illogical, this is also refuted by the revelations of Allah Who emphasises that He has created us and has full control over us, and that He can even remove us from existence and create others instead.

(1) Cited by Ahmad and Abu Dawud

The original Arabic text of the verse uses a past verb form in the last sentence: ‘... He has full power to do so’ (*an-Nisa'*: 133). When the past is used in reference to humans, it means that the state expressed was, but it is no more; however, when used by Allah, it does not confine the description ascribed to Him to the past; all creatures are subject to change, but He is the Creator Who has eternally existed with no beginning and no end and has eternally possessed all His Attributes. Allah is the One Who causes all things to change and He never changes. He has always been Fully Capable to do whatever He wills, even before the existence of all things. Allah has not started to have this Attribute when He created humankind; rather, He has created humankind out of His Might. He has always existed and has always been capable of all things. Allah says in the following verse:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ ثَوَابَ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ ثَوَابُ الدُّنْيَا
وَالْآخِرَةِ ۖ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا ﴿١٣٤﴾

**If some want the rewards of this world, the
rewards of this world and the next are both God's
to give: He hears and sees everything [134]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 134)**

But why do people persist in their heedlessness even though the Prophets of Allah have informed mankind that rewards both in this worldly life and in the Afterlife are in His Hand? Why do most people crave worldly gains and disregard the eternal good of the Hereafter? People act mindlessly of Allah even though if they obey Him, they will reap the rewards in this worldly life, like health, wealth, etc., for it is only in the Hand of Allah that our efforts and endeavours can be fruitful. Moreover, the obedient wins matchless rewards in the afterlife. Allah says: ‘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).

Allah teaches us that winning the Afterlife does not mean sacrificing this worldly life. It is a faulty understanding that whoever seeks the reward of this life will not get the reward of the afterlife or vice versa. Rather, Allah wants

His servants to win the reward of both lives. Do not deprive yourself from the pleasures of this life that Allah has made lawful to you, but meanwhile focus on the Afterlife; that is the true life we should aspire to. Now, what does 'reward' convey? There are things that are done for you even though you do not ask for them to be done; such is not really a 'reward.' Other things happen as a result of your action; if you take the necessary action and exhaust the possible means, you will eventually reap the fruit, and that is what 'reward' means.

A good example is farming. You must sow seeds for plants to grow. The differences among people in this world—in terms of their progress versus backwardness, civilization versus barbarism, strength versus weakness—are all dependent on their efforts to employ the components of the universe Allah has created for us, not on those things already made subservient to humankind and already functioning without our interference. Some nations have established great civilizations after achieving breakthroughs in science. All humans are equal in terms of the resources Allah has made for our service without any effort on our part. As for the progress that defines each nation and makes the difference, this requires actions.

A higher stage of progress is achieved when one thinks even how to make use of the resources that already function without our interference. For example, the sun already provides us with light and heat, but we can also use its rays with a convex lens to produce fire. Rain falls naturally from the sky and fills water bodies and valleys. People have not stopped there, but they thought how to use that water to operate huge turbines and produce electricity.

Therefore, civilization is made through three stages. The first stage is based on the natural benefits we effortlessly receive from the natural resources that are already made subservient to us. The second stage consists in utilizing the other components with which Allah has endowed the world—so humankind should discover them and devise ways to make use of them. The third stage is to think how to employ even the natural resources we already use and develop new ways to get extra benefits from them. A good example of the latter is the production of solar energy gathered using machines that have been invented through human labour. We could have stopped at the common benefits we naturally receive from the sun, but effort has been made and fruits have, therefore, been reaped.

Think of the laser technology that works miracles in the field of medicine nowadays. The word LASER stands for 'light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation.' Spontaneous emission of radiation through the sun is a natural source of energy made subservient to humankind; we receive light and heat from the sun without having to work for it. The stimulated emission, on the other hand, is produced when light is amplified when directed through a particular medium that scientists have designed to produce massive energy. The acronym LASER was then invented to sum up and stand for the innovative process.

Accordingly, prosperity is achieved when we are able—through diligent effort and work of the mind—to use what naturally offers benefits to generate more benefits other than that we receive spontaneously.

This is what 'harvest' is meant to convey in the words of Allah: 'If anyone desires a harvest in the life to come...' (*ash-Shura*: 20). It refers to the fruits, the recompense received for a deed that has been done. If you seek the harvest of this world, you have to work for it. No pain, no gain. Allah, out of His Bounty and Mercy, has made the rewards of this worldly life attainable for anyone who works for it, whether he is a believer or a disbeliever. As for the rewards of the Afterlife, Allah has restricted them to those who believe in Him.

Indeed, the life of this world is but a fleeting comfort compared with the Life to come. Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...with Allah are the rewards of [both] this world and the life to come: and Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Seeing' (*an-Nisa'*: 134). Would it not be foolish then to limit one's efforts and aspirations to winning only the rewards of this life when Allah offers us prosperity and success both in this life and in the Hereafter?

It is also worth noting that when Allah mentions rewards, He tells us that effort is essential for us to win rewards of this life, but He does not particularly mention the reward of the Afterlife to tell us that a believer is already rewarded in the Hereafter for whatever he does in this life if his intention is to please Allah, so he wins both here and there as a result of his struggle. The life of this world is, in essence, a transition, a passage to the Hereafter. Seek to please Allah by your deeds, and you will see the fruits of your devotion in this life and the Life to come.

Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘...and Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Seeing’ (*an-Nisa*: 134). We understand from the verse that the rewards of this life and the Afterlife are only attained through working and striving and by doing righteous deeds. A deed is whatever ensues from employment of human faculties. In this sense, talking is also a deed for which one is rewarded or punished. Whatever one says is recorded, and he will be held accountable for every word uttered. So there is talking and there is acting. These are two categories under which human conduct usually falls. To clarify this point, let us ponder these words of Allah: ‘No indeed! You [people] do not honour orphans, you do not urge one another to feed the poor, you consume inheritance⁽¹⁾ greedily’ (*al-Fajr*: 17-19).

When hearing a noble verse calling for giving to charity, the rich would know what they have to do. The poor, however, would perhaps think to themselves: ‘We do not have anything to give!’ Allah *the Exalted* has left no room for such lamentation and guided those, who have nothing, to what they should do: it is by urging others who have money in excess to their needs to give to the poor and needy. Those who can afford should comply with that divine command by giving money to charity, and those who cannot should urge the wealthy to give. To ‘urge’ is only to ‘speak’, to say what encourages the wealthy to feed the needy, but they are rewarded for it, too. Thus, good deeds can be by acting or by speaking. Just as a good action is a good deed, a good word is also a good deed.

We find a similar example in the following verse about fighting for the cause of Allah: ‘But there is no blame attached to the weak, the sick and those who have no means to spend, provided they are true to Allah and His Messenger— there is no reason to reproach those who do good: Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful’ (*at-Tawba*: 91).

Allah exempts the weak, the sick and those who have no means to equip themselves from participating in battles against enemies, so they will not be held accountable for failure to join those who fight for His cause. Instead, they are commanded to sincerely call for the Straight Path of Allah and His

(1) “This could refer to the inheritance of orphans or inheritance generally,” Abdel Haleem, *The Quran, A New Translation*.

Messenger. Therefore, it suffices him, who is incapable of fighting, to spread the word of Allah and remind others of it. At the end of the verse, Allah says to whoever seeks His Good Pleasure, whether through acting or speaking: ‘...and Allah is indeed All-Hearing, All-Seeing’ (*an-Nisa'*: 134). Whatever good deed you do, whether by acting or by speaking, will not be effaced. Allah hears every word said and sees every act done. Therefore, attaining the rewards of this world requires work; that is, employing each faculty in the proper manner to perform its function. It is to let the tongue speak, the hands work and all the other faculties we are endowed with fulfil the purpose they are created for. The heart also has its work, and what is it? The work of the heart is neither heard nor seen. It harbours one’s intentions behind everything he does. It is the place of sincerity. Allah says in a Qudsi Hadith: ‘Sincerity is one of My secrets that I entrust with the hearts of those I love among My servants.’ ⁽¹⁾

The heart bears one’s intention behind every deed he does, and whether or not he is sincere to Allah, this knowledge is confined solely to Him *the Almighty*. Even *Raqib* and ‘*Atid*, the two angels in charge of recording one’s deeds, cannot determine his intentions. For this reason, Allah describes himself in several verses of the Quran as the Knower of Subtleties, the Aware. He knows the deepest and most hidden details of all things and is Aware of everything. Nothing can be concealed from Him and He has Power and Control over all things. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Deeds are judged based on intentions, and everyone ultimately gets recompensed for his intention. Accordingly, whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah and His Messenger will be rewarded accordingly, and whoever emigrates for a worldly interest he pursues or for a woman he wants to marry will be recompensed according to what he has emigrated for.’ ⁽²⁾

As we have explained before, deeds fall under two categories: words and actions because each one employs the faculties Allah has given him. Allah Almighty says in the Quran: ‘O you who have attained to faith! Why do you say one thing and do another?’ (*as-Saff*: 2) Words and actions are both counted

(1) Cited by Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushayri in *Ar-Resala* on the authority of ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb... Its chain of transmitters is weak (*da’if*), but several verses of the Quran and authentic Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad support its meaning.

(2) Cited by AlBukhari and Muslim

as deeds, but there is another kind of deeds for which one is held accountable too; namely, the intention that lies in the heart. Allah is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Knower of Subtleties and Aware, so He hears whatever we say, sees whatever we do and knows whatever is in our hearts. In the following verse, Allah says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا كُوْنُوْا قَوَّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شٰهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ وَلَوْ عَلٰى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوْ
اَلْوٰلِدِيْنَ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ ؕ اِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا اَوْ فَقِيْرًا فَاَللّٰهُ اَوَّلٰى بِهِمَا۟ فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا
الْهَوٰى اَنْ تَعْدِلُوْا وَاِنْ تَلَوْا اَوْ نَعَرَضُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرًا ﴿١٣٥﴾

You who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to God, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or your close relatives. Whether the person is rich or poor, God can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire, so that you can act justly—if you distort or neglect justice, God is fully aware of what you do [135] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 135)

When Allah addresses His believing servants saying: ‘You, who believe...’ know that He establishes the grounds for the ruling that follows this call. Before a judge issues a verdict, he first presents the grounds underlying it. To Allah belongs the Highest Example. The basis on which Allah gives a command is faith in Him, so He always addresses the believers on this basis before prescribing a ruling, as in this noble verse: ‘You who believe, fasting is prescribed for you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 183).

Faith establishes the grounds for the divine ordinance. If you are a believer, you must therefore obey the Lord you believe in. Allah honours by His commands only those who have faith in Him. In the verse we are dealing with, He says: ‘You, who believe, uphold justice...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 135). Faith in Allah is the most sublime form of justice; justice consists in giving everyone the right to which he is entitled. Since it is our duty to believe in Allah as the Only Allah, a believer has already upheld justice in its highest form by embracing faith.

In the verse at hand, Allah commands the believers, who have established justice by attaining faith, to be just in all their deeds as well. Justice is not to

be practiced once and abandoned later. No, but we always have to be steadfast in upholding justice, as Allah enjoins on us: 'You who believe, uphold justice...' (*an-Nisa*': 135).

The Arabic expression used in the original text of the verse is a hyperbole; it does not say 'be just', but 'uphold justice' and maintain this attitude constantly: 'You, who believe, be *qawwamina bi-al-qist* (uphold justice)...' (*an-Nisa*': 135). The Arabic word *qawwam* is an intensive form that denotes steadfastness in the stated action, which is establishing *qist* (justice). Thus, the divine command to every believer means: maintain justice as a lasting attitude and observe it in all aspects of your life.

The word *qist* has been subject to some debate among scholars. The matter can be simply resolved as *qasata* means to commit injustice, and to remove this injustice is '*aqсата*. The latter is prefixed by the letter *alef* (a—the first in Arabic alphabet) which denotes 'removal.' Hence, *qist* means to establish justice from the beginning, whereas *iqsat* (prefixed with the letter *alef*) means to establish justice by removing an injustice that took place at the beginning.

Assume that a first-instance court issued a judgment which it deemed to be just, so this would be *qist*. One of the litigants then appealed that judgment, and the court of appeal detected a mistake in the application of the law and cancelled the appealed judgment. Hence, the latter would be a case of 'removing' injustice; that is *iqsat*. This explication puts an end to the debate over the word *qist*. There are other examples of the aforementioned *alef* prefix which denotes 'removal.' The word '*ujmah* means ambiguity or obscurity in a text. From the same root, '*a'jama-* prefixed with the aforesaid *alef-* means removing that ambiguity or obscurity by offering clarification. The Arabic for 'lexicon' is *mu'jam* since a lexicon provides definitions and usages of words, removing any ambiguity about them. The same applies for *aqсата* that means establishing justice by undoing a wrong that had been committed.

So Allah commands the believers: 'You, who believe, uphold justice...' (*an-Nisa*': 135). As a believer, you have already achieved the noblest form of justice by devoting worship to the One Who is worthy of it; you have embraced faith in Allah, the Creator of the heavens and earth and you must observe justice constantly in everything you do. Still, it is not just about

committing to justice because Allah also says: '... uphold justice and bear witness to Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 135) It is not enough to do the right thing; we have to do it for the sake of pleasing Allah.

You may find a man who establishes justice among people, yet he does not believe in Allah. A disbeliever being just does not qualify him to attain the reward Allah promises those who have faith in Him. To attain such reward, one must uphold justice while having Allah in mind; it must be done solely to please Him *Glorified is He*. It is only within the realm of faith that establishing justice would not be intended for any interest, inclination or purpose other than managing life and the universe in the way Allah has ordained. Otherwise, if everyone decided to live based on their own desires and serving only their interests, life on earth would be ruined. Allah says: 'But if the truth were in accordance with their desires, the heavens, the earth and everyone in them would disintegrate...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

So, a believer must uphold justice with his intention directed to pleasing Allah. A disbeliever or an atheist may be just, but will he receive reward in the Hereafter for his justice? He has established justice with only this worldly life in his mind, so he receives his reward in this life only. History may commemorate him or people may pay tribute to him, but since he has not thought of Allah, he has no right to attain His reward.

'You, who believe, uphold justice and bear witness to Allah, even if it is against yourselves...' (*an-Nisa'*: 135). Normally, a witness is a person who testifies in favour of someone against another. When someone acknowledges a sin he has committed, he is thus testifying against himself. In this manner, a believer always gives testimony that provides evidence for the right judgment to be issued and justice to be established, even if this evidence is against his own self.

When a believer is required to bear witness to the truth, he should speak up and never conceal what should be revealed, even if that would bring afflictions and deleterious repercussions on him. Allah knows what fears or worries His servants may have and, in the Quran, He has presented reassurances to combat them. When a believer bears witness in favour of the truth, he should not fear any person of authority. He should entrust himself, his wealth,

family and everything else with the One Who promises to protect them. Detriment has indeed befallen some people and their families just because they said the truth. Some despots even punished those who spoke the truth by torturing their families, knowing that such punishment would be much more painful. Hence, reassurance comes from the Almighty Allah: do not concern yourself with that; do not let the fear for your children or wealth withhold you from giving a just testimony. Rest assured that Allah is there for you and that He provides for His servants.

The frenzied pursuit of one's caprice and interests is often the reason why he prefers to support falsehood instead of the truth. One would refrain from standing up for a poor obscure person who has been wronged by a man of wealth or authority, just fearing that his testimony would cost him personal gains or interests furthered through the latter. This is forbidden in Islam. A true believer whose faith is firmly established in his heart, must comply with Allah's command and commit himself to justice and truth, even if it would bring on them or their families unfavourable outcomes. Richness or poverty of the ones involved in the case must not sway him from telling the truth. Rather, he should bear only Allah in his mind. Addressing such fears, Allah says—reassuring the believers after stating His command: '...Whether the person is rich or poor, Allah can best take care of both. Refrain from following your own desire so that you can act justly...' (*an-Nisa'*: 135).

It is no wonder that one would give a false testimony in favour of a rich person, but Allah mentions both the rich and the poor, so what can induce someone to say other than the truth for the sake of a poor person? Just as greed would sway some, compassion and sympathy would sway others; a witness may think to himself: 'This man is poor and deserves mercy!' For this reason, Allah warns us against bias for anyone—rich or poor.

Testimony should be based only on the truth and not on any other considerations or implications, like richness or poverty of those concerned. We cannot be wiser than Allah or more caring than Him when it comes to the affairs and interests of His servants. He *the Exalted* says: '... Allah can best take care of both...' (*an-Nisa'*: 135). You have created neither the rich nor the poor; Allah has created both and He is the best Disposer of their affairs. When you are

required to give your testimony in any case, do not think of the richness or poverty of any parties concerned. Just say the truth in full, and Allah will take care of everything. He is the best Guardian and Protector.

Following desires and prejudices is the enemy of justice. An Arabic proverb says: 'Desires and prejudices are the corruptors of judgment.' Prejudices drive one astray from justice. Islamic history abounds in wonderful stories about justice, one of which is about a virtuous man who once went to the Caliph of his time and told him: 'Discharge me of my position as a judge!' The Caliph answered: 'Who would then be fit for this position if you—whose justice everyone attests—want to leave it?!' The judge explained: 'People have learnt, O Prince of the believers, that I love eating dates. While I was in my house, my servant walked up to me with a plate full of dates, and we were still early in the season of dates and it is natural that I would be craving dates since I love them. I asked my servant: 'Who brought these dates?' Hearing the servant's answer, I realized that the sender was someone involved in a dispute brought before me, so I rejected the dates. The day came when I was expected to pass my judgment. The dates' sender and his opponent appeared before me, and, O Prince of the believers, I felt something in me that was trying to prevent me from looking at the cases of the two litigants on equal basis even though I had rejected the bribe!' Based on such grounds, the Arab Muslim judge resigned his position.

Allah then says: '... if you distort or neglect justice, Allah is fully aware of what you do' (*an-Nisa'*: 135). After Allah states His command, soothes any fears that are likely to hinder compliance, He warns the violators saying that if they give a testimony other than the truth, play with words to mislead the judge or refrain from giving testimony altogether, fearing the party against whom testimony should be given, know that Allah is Aware of all that you do.

Prejudices are rooted in the heart, and we have previously learnt that one's deeds encompass what he says, what he does and what he harbours in his heart. Whatever you think or feel is known to Him Who is Aware of all things and Knower of Subtleties. Therefore, your distortion of the truth can never be concealed from Him.

Allah says in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ءَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ءَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَى
رَسُولِهِ ءَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ
وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ءَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٣٦﴾

You who believe, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. Anyone who does not believe in God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers, and the Last Day has gone far, far astray [136] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 136)

Someone may say: Allah starts this verse by addressing His servants: ‘You who believe...’ Then, He commands them to ‘... believe in Allah and His Messenger...’ Are they not already believers, as He calls them, so what is the significance of this command? Let us explain this. One may well profess faith in Allah whereas the creed he holds in his heart contradicts what he professes. The testimony of faith constitutes truth in itself, but it is a lie when uttered by the tongues of those who do not believe in it, for it is completely at odds with what they conceal in their hearts. This is why Allah says: ‘When the hypocrites come to you [Prophet], they say, “We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.” Allah knows that you truly are His Messenger and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). The hypocrites have borne witness that Prophet Muhammad was the Messenger of Allah, which is actually the truth, but what makes them liars? They are liars in the sense that they only claimed to believe in that truth, but they did not really believe. However, Allah knows what they concealed in their hearts, so He exposed them to His Messenger: ‘... Allah knows that you truly are His Messenger and He bears witness that the hypocrites are liars’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). They were not liars in the sense that what they told was itself falsehood, but they deserved the description since they only claimed to believe in that ultimate truth, while in fact they did not. Truthfulness is not confined to telling what is really true, but also holding it as truth yourself. If what one says is at odds with what he believes, he is a liar. Some wrongly believe that there are contradictions in the Quran. In fact, this misunderstanding arises

from failure to realize the meanings of the Quranic verses and the messages they are intended to convey. In the verse we are dealing with, some do not realize that hypocrites' falsehood did not consist in their statement that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. He is indeed! Rather, they lied when they said: "We bear witness...", so their lie consists in declaring faith verbally with their tongues while their hearts do not believe.

By asking the believers to '...believe in Allah and His Messenger...' (*an-Nisa'*: 136), Allah means to call the believers to remain steadfast in their faith. They have already embraced faith, so let them hold fast to it. Another example is found in the following verse where Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad: 'Prophet, be mindful of Allah and do not give in to the disbelievers and the hypocrites: Allah is All Knowing, All Wise' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). Is not Prophet Muhammad already mindful of Allah? Actually, He is the most mindful of Him among His servants, but Allah means by this command to urge him to remain steadfast in this mindfulness.

When Allah says, 'You, who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger...' (*an-Nisa'*: 136), He means to call the believers to remain steadfast in their faith, to hold fast to it after receiving this verse as they have been before the verse. He calls on them never to let the bond of faith be severed. O believers, hold fast to the honour bestowed on you from your Lord. When one is addressed by a description that already applies to him and is then asked to fulfil that description, it means maintain it and remain steadfast in it.

Besides the believers, this verse also invites hypocrites and people of the Scripture to embrace faith. As long as one believes in no Allah other than Allah, this necessarily entails that he should endeavour to find out what Allah wants from him. Allah has sent His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad, to deliver His ordinance to us. For this reason, having faith in Allah requires the believer to have faith in His Messenger, the final Messenger who delivered the final, timeless Message. Reason alone may lead one to believe in the existence of the One Allah Who has created the universe—and sustains it—but how do we know Allah? How do we understand what He wants from us? The answer to such questions can only be found when one accepts what the Messenger of Allah has delivered to us.

Allah has sent His Messenger to inform us of His ordinance—what to do, what to avoid, what reward is promised to believers and what punishment is for those who deny the truth? How can we know all these matters without embracing the Message His Prophet calls for? Therefore, your faith in Allah must be associated with your faith in His Messenger and the Book sent down to him—the Noble Quran. This Book tells you that there are creatures of Allah that you cannot see; namely, the angels, and one of these angels communicated the Allah's revelations to Prophet Muhammad. Faith means to believe in the Unseen since Allah tells us it exists. The people of the Scripture have already believed in Allah, His angels, His Messengers and Books, so they are commanded to believe in Prophet Muhammad as the final Messenger and what he communicated as the Book of Allah.

Allah has told us about the existence of creatures we do not see, like the angels. This suggests that we should ponder the creation of the universe and discover what we do not know. Allah leaves to humankind the task of discovering new beings and new aspects of the universe that were not known to them before. He has provided us with evidence that implies the existence of such unknown things and left us the mission of discovery. A good illustrative case is the discovery of microbes in the seventeenth century. Microbes have always been there, but we could not perceive them. With the invention of microscopes, people managed to see microbes and determine their characteristics, species and kinds; and researchers still seek to attain more knowledge about microbes. In this sense, microbes are relatively new to us even though they have existed for a long time.

If people in the dark ages had been told about the existence of microbes, they would not have believed in them. Microbes are living beings made of the same substance we are made of; yet, they are too small for the naked eye to see them. When scientists invented tools to magnify images of things hundreds of times, we managed to see those tiny creatures. Something being imperceptible does not mean it does not exist.

When Allah talks to us about the creation of angels, jinn and Satan, who runs in the human being the way blood runs through him, what prevents some from having faith in what He says?! A disbeliever or an atheist believes that a

microbe unconsciously insinuates itself into the human body, and the symptoms of illness start to appear. We have learnt about this when the means of knowledge and perception became available. It is logical then to believe that Allah has created other beings from substances other than that from which He has created man: 'You who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and in *Al-kitab* (the Scripture) He sent down to His Messenger, as well as *Al-kitab* (the Scriptures) He sent down before...' (*an-Nisa'*: 136).

In the first occurrence of the Arabic word, *Al-kitab* (the Scripture), in the aforesaid verse, the word is prefixed with *al* that functions here as a definite article, so the word is a definite Scripture; that is, the Noble Quran. In the second occurrence of the word in this verse, it is also prefixed with *al*, but it functions here as a generic article. The prefix *al* in Arabic may be added to a singular noun to refer to the entire kind the stated noun encompasses. Thus, the second occurrence of *Al-kitab* refers to all the Scriptures that had been sent to Allah's Messengers before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

There is another example of the generic *al* in the following verses: 'By the declining day, *al-insan* (humankind) is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds...' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3). The word *insan* is singular, yet it is prefixed with the generic article *al*, so it is understood to refer to all humankind. The words of Allah, '... except for those who believe, do good deeds...' refer to an exception of the referent of the word *al-insan*, which means it refers to all humankind and not to a single person even though the word comes in its singular form. When an exception is made with reference to a word, it means this word has a generic quality.

The definite *al* also gives the meaning of uniqueness or prevalence. When it is prefixed to the word *kitab*, it refers to the Noble Quran—the *al* article here, plus being a definite article referring to particular book, also bears the connotations of perfection or distinction, so *al-kitab* is the perfect Book that has not been distorted. For instance, it is said: he is *ar-rajul*⁽¹⁾ (the one), which means that he is a man singled out for his distinctive qualities, manhood, magnanimity, courage, etc. So, when the word *al-kitab* is mentioned without

(1) This means *al-rajul*, but the // of the definite article *al* is assimilated into the /r/ of the word *rajul* since it is a solar letter.

any particular modifier or description, it is understood that it refers to the Noble Quran unless the context indicates otherwise.

‘...Anyone who does not believe in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers and the Last Day has gone far, far astray’ (*an-Nisa'*: 136). This means that whoever believes in Allah yet does not believe in all that is mentioned in this verse is also a disbeliever.

Some Jews, like 'Abdullah ibn Salam, his nephews Salam and Salama, Asad and Usayd, sons of Ka'b, Tha'laba ibn Qays and Yamin ibn Yamin went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: ‘We believe in you, the Book revealed to you, Prophet Musa (Moses), the Torah and 'Uzayr (Ezra), but we abjure all other books and messengers.’ Prophet Muhammad told them: ‘Rather, believe in Allah, His Messenger, Muhammad, His Book, the Quran, and every Book that was revealed before him.’ They answered: ‘No, we will not do so.’ The verse we are dealing with was then revealed, so they all believed in what they had rejected before.⁽¹⁾

The verse is also addressed to the hypocrites. Allah also calls them to truly embrace the faith that they have only professed with their tongues. He urges them to let the beliefs they harbour in their hearts align with the testimony they have declared. Thus, the verse is addressed to the believers calling them to remain steadfast in faith; it is also addressed to the people of the Scripture calling them to believe in all the Messengers and Books of Allah without any exceptions, and to the hypocrites as well so that they believe with their hearts in what they have professed with their tongues. Therefore, whoever rejects anything Allah mentions in this noble verse is considered a disbeliever, even if he believes in some of what Allah commands. To believe in some and reject some of what Allah commands means faith is not truly ingrained in the heart.

‘... Anyone who does not believe in Allah, His angels, His Scriptures, His Messengers, and the Last Day has gone far, far astray’ (*an-Nisa'*: 136). Going astray is to proceed without guidance, to lose track of the intended goal. He who persists in disbelief after receiving Allah’s admonition has not only gone astray, but very far astray to the extent of losing every sign that leads back to

(1) Cited in *Al-Khashshaf*, by Jarullah Az-Zamakhshari

the Straight Path. Those who go astray and those who are rightly guided actually share the same starting point. However, one of them commits himself to the Straight Path Allah has guided us to, always bearing in mind his ultimate goal of pleasing Allah by obeying Him; the other continues to deviate from the way until he loses every clue that can guide him back to it. He gets lost in the whirl of disbelief. Allah says in the following verse:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ ءَزَادُوا
كُفْرًا لَّمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٣٧﴾

As for those who believe, then reject the faith, then believe again, then reject the faith again and become increasingly defiant, God will not forgive them, nor will He guide them on any path [137] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 137)

The verse describes the hypocrites who professed faith and concealed in their hearts rejection of it. Allah describes them in another verse, saying: ‘Some of the People of the Book⁽¹⁾ say, ‘At the beginning of the day, believe in what has been revealed to these believers [the Muslims], then at the end of the day reject it so that they too may turn back’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 72).

Hypocrites take the issue of faith lightly; to them it is only a word said, not a creed firmly established in their hearts. They would apparently perform the requirements of Islam, the rituals or acts of worship it enjoins on the believers so that no one would suspect them. In their hearts, however, they harbour disbelief and are more dangerous than the disbelievers who declare their enmity to faith and its adherents. Their way is deception, but Allah has exposed them in the Quran over fourteen centuries ago: ‘The Bedouins say, “We have attained to faith.” Say [to them, O Muhammad]: “You have not [yet] attained to faith; you should [rather] say, ‘We have [outwardly] surrendered’— for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts.”...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14)

Allah knows what is in the hearts of the hypocrites, so He has exposed those to their own selves and to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They used to be the first to rush to *salat* (the prayer). When Prophet Muhammad

(1) Refers to Christianity, Judaism and their adherents

peace and blessings be upon him exposed them and explained that they did not really believe, but only outwardly surrendered to the commands of Islam; then, they realized that he could reveal what they concealed in their hearts.

They would have gone even more flagrantly astray and ascribed divinity to Prophet Muhammad for knowing these secrets. To give them no chance to do this, Allah commanded His Messenger to let them know that he was informed of their secret by Him *the Almighty* and he had no supernatural ability to see through their hearts: ‘... Say [to them, O Muhammad]: “You have not [yet] attained to faith...”’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14).

Thus, Prophet Muhammad acknowledged that he only knew their secret when Allah revealed it to him. This prevents anyone from going to the extreme of ascribing divinity to Prophet Muhammad instead of believing in him as the Messenger of Allah who received revelations from Him.

What Prophet Muhammad said should make everyone believe that he was a Messenger from Allah Who has sent down those revelations to him; otherwise, he would have never known them. This is absolutely clear in the context of the verse: ‘The Bedouins say, “We have attained to faith.” Say [to them, O Muhammad]: “You have not [yet] attained to faith; you should [rather] say, ‘We have [outwardly] surrendered’– for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts.”’...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14)

This is an embarrassing yet logical exposure of what they concealed in their hearts. Some of the Bedouins who heard this verse commented: ‘Thank Allah there is a hope that faith may enter our hearts.’ They found this clause particularly expressive of this expectation: ‘...for [true] faith has not yet entered your hearts.’ (*al-Hujurat*: 14) It has not yet entered it, but may do afterwards, and indeed it did, and they became truly believers.

Allah says in the verse we are dealing with: ‘As for those who believe, then reject the faith, then believe again, then reject the faith again and become increasingly defiant...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 137). This refers to those who died as disbelievers even after the Truth was revealed to them. It may be meant to allude to the Jews who had faith in Prophet Musa (Moses), but then disbelieved in Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus); the Christians believed in Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus), but then stubbornly rejected belief in Prophet Muhammad.

Disbelief in Prophet Muhammad takes them out of the community of believers since they deny the Message Allah has sent His final Messenger to deliver in its most perfect form.

Allah informs us of their destiny: '... Allah will not forgive them, nor will He guide them on any path' (*an-Nisa'*: 137). They deliberately intended to make the believers doubt their religion by rejecting faith after having embraced it. Some of the believers might think: 'They have embraced faith before, so what can make them reject it now? They must have detected some defects in the new religion which made them shun it!' Allah Almighty depicts this attitude in the Quran by saying: 'Some of the People of the Book say, 'At the beginning of the day, believe in what has been revealed to these believers [the Muslims], then at the end of the day reject it so that they too may turn back' (*Al- 'Imran*: 72).

They wanted to incite doubt in the believers regarding faith by ostensibly embracing it and then declaring disbelief afterwards; they did so in the hope that Muslims would turn sceptical and forsake their faith. Allah reveals their intention in the Quran and also informs us and them of the punishment that awaits them: '... Allah will not forgive them, nor will He guide them on any path' (*an-Nisa'*: 137). What they did was an act of great treachery against Allah and His Messenger, so they deserved the recompense Allah has prepared for them: ' Allah does not forgive the joining of partners with Him: anything less than that He forgives to whomever He wills...' (*an-Nisa'*: 48).

So Allah concludes the verse, saying: '... Allah will not forgive them, nor will He guide them on any path' (*an-Nisa'*: 137). Guidance carries two meanings: the first is leading someone to the Straight Path by only showing them the way so they have the freedom to go along it or not; the second meaning is guidance through providing support and assistance. The first meaning applies to all humankind; that is, Allah guides them all by showing them His Way. The second is confined to those who accept faith, so Allah guides them to what pleases Him by offering assistance, so they would remain steadfast in the faith they have willingly chosen to embrace. See how Allah addresses this issue in the Quran: 'As for Thamud, We gave them guidance but they preferred blindness, so they were struck by a blast of humiliating punishment for their misdeeds' (*Fussilat*: 17).

Allah has showed them the path of guidance, but since they rejected it altogether and never moved a step in its direction, Allah deprived them of assistance and left them immersed in blindness. Through His Books and Messengers, Allah has made clear to all humankind the path that leads to goodness and righteousness. Only those who choose to follow this path receive help and support from Allah Who says in the Quran: ‘... They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We gave them more and more guidance’ (*al-Kahf*: 13). Suppose you see someone who is lost, so you offer to guide him to the way that would lead to his destination. If he accepts your help with gratitude and shows willingness to listen to you, you would offer further assistance to help him reach his destination successfully. If he rejects your help upfront and refuses to listen, would you offer him more guidance or help? This is how Allah leads His servants to the Straight Path. Allah helps whoever accepts His ordinance and provides him with further assistance and guidance to facilitate the obedience to him. In this respect, Allah says about observing *salat* (the prayer): ‘Seek help with steadfastness and prayer—though this is hard indeed for anyone but the humble’ (*al-Baqara*: 45). Compliance with the ordinance of Allah is hard except for those who are humbly submissive to Him and willing to receive His guidance. Guidance thus takes place in two phases: the first phase is that of leading to the Right Way, and the second is that of offering further assistance to those who accept faith.

Faith should not be subject to doubt or questioning. The essence of faith has been the same ever since Prophet Adam until Prophet Muhammad was sent with the final Message. They all called for the same creed, but were sent to different people at different times and places and with different circumstances. Islam came as the final, timeless Message that completes and perfects all the previous messages and is fit for all people at all times and places until the end of time. True faith means accepting and believing in all that Allah sends—without exceptions. To believe in some of the Messengers and books and shun others is disbelief in the One Who has sent them all. Those who believe in all the Messengers yet do not believe in Prophet Muhammad, or those who ascribe a son or spouse to Allah—the *Exalted* above this—have thus disbelieved in Allah. Islam is the final Message; so whoever denies the Truth it has brought will have no other chance to return to faith, for no other

Messengers will be sent to people. This is why Allah says at the beginning of the verse: 'As for those who believe, then reject the faith, then believe again, then reject the faith again...' (*an-Nisa'*: 137) and says at the end: '...and become increasingly defiant...' Their defiance is manifested in their denial of the final Message sent down to Prophet Muhammad, so they will have no chance to attain faith anymore.

They will have their just recompense: '... Allah will not forgive them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 137). Allah will not guide them to the Straight Path since they have deliberately turned away from Him. On the other hand, Allah will not reject those who accept faith and submit to Him; to them, He offers further guidance through assistance to remain steadfast in following the Straight Path. Allah is in no need of us; He does not benefit from our devoutness, but we are in need of Him to guide us, provide for us, dispose our affairs and reward us for our obedience. Whoever Allah rejects will find guidance nowhere else. He is the Lord and Creator and our hearts are in His Hand. Those He does not guide have actually deprived themselves from guidance since they do not pursue the way that can lead them there.

Allah says in other verses: 'Allah will not forgive those who have disbelieved and do evil, nor will He guide them to any path except that of Hell, where they will remain for ever— this is easy for Allah' (*an-Nisa'*: 168-169). The only way paved for them is that leading to eternal torment in Hell fire. Allah says in the following verse:

بَشِّرِ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَنَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٣٨﴾

**[Prophet], tell such hypocrites that an agonizing torment
awaits them[138] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 138)**

Those whose faith is deeply rooted in their hearts will not show signs of doubt or hesitation between faith and disbelief. Such signs are always manifested by those who have twisted faith, so they always sway between faith and disbelief, and their hesitation is most conspicuous whenever they are tested. Allah has commanded Prophet Muhammad to give them this admonition: '[Prophet], tell such hypocrites that an agonizing torment awaits them' (*an-Nisa'*: 138).

We know that the hypocrite is the one who overtly declares faith and conceals his infidelity. The word *ni* which refers to the holes a jerboa creates as a *faq* (the Arabic for 'hypocrisy') is originally derived from the expression *nafiqa'* camouflage. In order to deceive whoever wants to harm or catch it; a jerboa digs two openings, enters its hole through one of them and gets out through the other one which is concealed, so a hunter would lie in wait for it at the visible opening, unaware that it has actually sneaked out from another invisible one.

'Give glad tidings to the hypocrites.' promising tidings are meant to inform someone about a pleasant or good thing that will happen to him in the future. But are the hypocrites informed of something good that will happen to them? No, promising tidings is always about something good. For this reason, we expect that the hypocrites would be warned against what awaits them rather than being informed of the good that expects them. But Allah *Glorified is He* uses rhetorical styles to magnify the scale of torment. If He were to say: warn them against the grievous suffering that awaits them, the discourse would be probable. As hypocrites, they were prepared to hear evil. But the True Lord said: 'Give promising tidings to the hypocrites that there is for them a painful punishment.' This style is thus intended for the purpose of irony and humiliation; it serves as a tool to help the rhetorician perform his rhetorical task. Sometimes contradictions give us a truer picture than reality. For instance, if you approached a miser and told him: 'Welcome, Hatim,' what would be the stance of anyone attending this incident? You would have transformed him from the reality of the miser to an image of Hatim At-Ta'i, a well-known Arab figure of generosity. In doing so, you would have transformed the miser twice: you changed his status as a miser and then you ridiculed him. The reason is that inasmuch as you call a miser 'Hatim', you castigate, ridicule and humiliate him; for you have changed his mean and contemptible character into the opposite—an elevated, distinct and great character— in order to humiliate and loathe him.

The contrast is meant to reflect the radical difference. For instance, you may come across a tall man whom you call: 'Welcome, dwarf,' this is the contrast. Similarly, you may say to a short man: 'Welcome, giant'; this is also a contrast. If you meet a short man and then sit down to shake his hands, this is a form of ridiculing and sarcasm. The contrasts are used for rhetorical

purposes to convey the meaning intended by the speaker. The saying of the True Lord: 'Give glad tidings to the hypocrites,' means that you hypocrites have accomplished what you desire through hypocrisy; it is as if you have been hypocritical because you like suffering. Since you have been hypocrites because you like suffering, I announce to you that you will suffer. Does the hypocrite not intend to achieve a purpose with his hypocrisy? He does. For this reason, the True Lord depicts his purpose for him as suffering.

When you want to escalate an issue, you shift your audience's attention from something to its opposite. For instance, someone may be thirsty because he is either confined or imprisoned; when he wants to have a sip of water, his guard may deny him. This man may despair about the possibility that the guard brings him a cup of water. But if the guard wants to exacerbate the torture, he may fetch a glass of water and put it near the man. If the prisoner reaches out with his hands to grab the glass, the guard pours the water on the floor to increase the torture. When Allah *Glorified is He* says 'glad tidings', the one to whom it is addressed understands that the subject of the discourse is supposed to be a pleasant matter. If the True Lord then says: 'that there is for them a painful punishment.' this means that the anguish they feel is double. Allah *Glorified is He* has initiated it with an announcement of good news, but then He sealed it with a warning.

For instance—and to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the supreme and most exalted parables—a father may say to his son: 'Study, my son, so that you do not fail.' If the son continues to play, the father may then say: 'Son, the exam is approaching and you have to study.' The boy may not pay attention until the exam day comes. The father then finds out that his son has failed when the exam results are announced. The father may then say to his son: 'I congratulate you on your failure in the exam.' Inasmuch as he says 'I congratulate you' he pleases his son because he is expecting to hear good news. However, when the son later hears about his failure, he gets depressed.

The phrase 'glad tidings' gives an impression which shows on the face; were the impression sad, one's face would appear sad and he would look depressed. By contrast, if the impression were happy, his face would look delighted and pleased. Thus, the face reflects the impressions of the human

psyche, including happiness, delightfulness, illumination, frowning and grief. Therefore, the phrase may introduce either a pleasant or a sad piece of news. However, it is mostly used with happy news, whereas a warning is used to convey sad news that causes depression.

In another verse, the True Lord depicts the suffering of the disbelievers on the Day of Judgment and how He aggravates their torment: 'And if they call for relief, they will be relieved.' (*al-Kahf*: 29)

When we hear the word 'relief', we may infer that the disbelievers will be given something good and that mercy will be bestowed upon them, but the water given to them comes as 'water like murky oil.' The listener or reader of this verse may wonder: 'Is it a form of rescuing or torment?' This image is thereby intended to magnify the suffering. The water given to them is like murky oil; therefore, it foments their pain.

The severity of suffering—as we know—is proportional to the power of the one inflicting it. If the one inflicting suffering is a finite being, then suffering will be finite. If the one inflicting suffering is infinite, then suffering will also be infinite. How severe would the suffering be if it were proportional to the strength of the Powerful? Suffering is described as grievous in one instance, as humiliating in another and as enormous in a third. All those descriptions complement each other, and each one of them describes a specific aspect of suffering; grief is a feeling that the self-experiences due to what it suffers. Great suffering is the suffering that reached its apex; nevertheless, one may endure the suffering even though it has reached its apex. But if the suffering is inflicted by the True Lord, it will be too severe for anyone to conceal it. The endurance of any person, no matter how tolerant he may be, cannot handle such pain. This is an enormous and also grievous suffering in regard to the body, and although one may be patient and enduring at the beginning, he will ultimately collapse; at that point, the suffering becomes humiliation.

Because the hypocrites and the disbelievers are completely enmeshed in materialism, Allah *Glorified is He* describes their suffering as grievous because grievous suffering is only felt by the physical senses. Afterwards, the True Lord mentions some of the characteristics of the hypocrites:

الَّذِينَ يَتَخَذُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
 أَيْبَنُغُوتَ عِنْدَهُمُ الْعِزَّةُ فَإِنَّ الْعِزَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٣٩﴾

Do those who ally themselves with the disbelievers rather than the believers seek power through them? In reality all power is God's to give [139] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 139)

The first sign of hypocrisy is when the hypocrite takes a disbeliever as an ally, gets closer to him, treats him affectionately, elicits his advocacy and support, keeps his company and sits with him rather than with the believers. We know that all human actions must have a purpose; no action could be severed from the purpose for which it is intended. Only the insane do actions purposelessly. By contrast, the actions of any rational person are intended for a purpose and an end he wishes to accomplish. The hypocrites take the disbelievers as allies in preference to the believers; but what is their purpose in doing so? The True Lord exposes this matter and explains that, by doing so, the hypocrites seek to be honoured by the disbelievers. For this reason, they take them as allies in preference to the believers. Allah *Glorified is He* calls their attention to their ignorance because they pursued a path that leads to the exact opposite of the purpose they intended.

Since they seek honour, they ought to have inquired about the true meaning and significance of honour. Honour is robustness and strength. In the context of the verse, the meaning intended is advocacy and prevalence. When it is said that Allah *Glorified is He* is '*Aziz—the Almighty*—it means that Allah *Glorified is He* dominates everything and is too powerful for anyone to overcome His strength or resist His punishment. If it is said that someone is '*aziz*, it means that he is invincible. If it is said that something is '*aziz*, it means that it is rare, and since it is rare, it is precious. Precious metals are indeed rare and scarcely found.

Since the hypocrites seek honour, they ought to seek it from the one who has it. Is it possible that they may seek it from their likes? If you seek honour, it means that you do not have it in yourselves; if you were honourable, you would not have sought to be honoured by the disbelievers. That is evidence that they were devoid of any honour, since they sought to have it from those who are equally subject to vicissitudes and life changes like themselves. Both

the hypocrites and the disbelievers are humans; and since all humans are subject to vicissitudes, they may be honourable today and abject tomorrow. The means to achieve honour are self-sufficiency, power and esteem, and all these factors are subject to vicissitudes.

Hypocrites have sought honour from those who are equal and subject to vicissitudes as much as you are. They did not seek it from the eternal Possessor of all honour, the True Lord. If you really desire honour, you should seek it from the One Who is not subject to vicissitudes—the True Lord. For this reason, the True Lord explained to them that if you want to learn how to pursue honour, you have to change the way you seek it. You take the disbelievers as allies in preference to the believers, and you seek honour from them as well as from others who are equally susceptible to vicissitudes. Those who are susceptible to vicissitudes are in a constant flux of change every day. If the disbelievers are rich one day, they may be poor the next. In human life, you have seen rich people becoming poor, and strong people becoming weak; therefore, seeking honour from those who are susceptible to vicissitudes means that you are not honourable; that is, you seek honour from the wrong source. If you want true honour, you will have to seek it from the One Whose Might does not change—The True Lord, Who says: ‘All honour belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* [alone].’ (*an-Nisa'*: 139) This statement involves a correction of the way in which honour ought to be sought. Everyone must seek honour inasmuch as he believes in Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who confers honour and His Honour and Might never change. ‘All’ here indicates that there are different types of honour: the honour of being rich, the honour of being powerful and the honour of being esteemed. If one wants to know all these types and learn about them, he must know that all of them belong to the True Lord.

In order to properly fulfil their servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*; believers must be conscious that they are the servants of only One God. Since we are servants of Allah *Glorified is He*, He has obviated our need to be abjectly subservient to anyone else. Allah *Glorified is He* salvaged the believer by virtue of his faith and saved him the humiliation of being subservient to any other source of power. Allah *Glorified is He* saved the weak from being abjectly subservient to the strong, and likewise the poor from the rich, and saved the sick from the healthy.

Therefore, when the True Lord says: 'All honour belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* [alone],' this means that if you, human being, seeks a permanent honour that surpasses all other forms of honour, then you will have recourse to Allah *Glorified is He*; He has honoured us inasmuch as we are His creatures. For instance, the True Lord did not let the poor borrow from the rich; rather, He has said: 'Who is it that would loan Allah *Glorified is He* a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah *Glorified is He* who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him you will be returned.' (*al-Baqara*: 245)

Allah *Glorified is He* raises His poor servant to the highest level of honour. The poor servant of Allah *Glorified is He* does not borrow; rather, the loan is required by Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, someone said to a weak person: 'You are asking people for help; are not you bashful enough not to ask?' The poor man then answered: 'I have asked people by the power of Allah's command.' Thus, the needy ask in the Name of Allah *Glorified is He*; this means that the poor take Allah *Glorified is He* as an advocate and ask for help in His name. When man seeks honour from his counterpart, he takes refuge in the power of this being though that power was bestowed upon him by Allah *Glorified is He* and Allah *Glorified is He* might as well take it away.

We should thereby consider the Infinite Power of Allah *Glorified is He* —every power in the world is given by Allah *Glorified is He*; He bestows wealth, esteem and honour. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ يُكْفَرُ بِهَا
وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا
مِنْلَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ جَامِعُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْكَافِرِينَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ جَمِيعًا ﴿١٤٠﴾

As He has already revealed to you [believers] in the Scripture, if you hear people denying and ridiculing God's revelation, do not sit with them unless they start to talk of other things, or else you yourselves will become like them: God will gather all the hypocrites and disbelievers together into Hell [140]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 140)

The True Lord orders the believers to avoid the company of any of the disbelievers whenever they start mocking or denying the truth of Allah

Glorified is He 's Message until they start talking about a different subject. Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded the believers to do so in order that they may not be like the disbelievers, because Allah *Glorified is He* will gather the hypocrites and the disbelievers in the fire. In this manner, only Allah *Glorified is He* protects those who have faith, and He safeguards it against any attack. Those who are jealous about their faith are the true believers. As long as you have believed and accepted Islam as your religion, then do not ever indulge anyone who attacks the religion. If you do so, this implies that he is dearer to you than your faith. Since you have pursued faith as your path and creed, then you must protect your faith against anybody's attacks. If someone dares to censure, ridicule or make false claims about your faith, then your jealousy about it makes it incumbent upon you to give up this person's company.

At the beginning, the believers were a helpless few who were incapable of confronting the disbelievers and the hypocrites. But when the believers abandoned their company, when they badmouthed Allah's Messages, both the disbelievers and the hypocrites realized that honour of faith is dearer to Muslims than their company. By contrast, if a Muslim keeps the company of the disbelievers and the hypocrites while they are disparaging Islam, this would imply that the latter's company is dearer to him than his faith. The disbelievers may then turn that discourse into a continuous discussion to expose the status of faith in the Muslims' hearts. But when a disbeliever sees a believer getting repelled and turned off by any action entailing any ridiculing of Islam, he realizes that a believer's faith is dear to him.

This verse is not the first about this subject matter; it is a reference to a previous ruling. We know that this verse was revealed in Medina which means that there is a verse that was revealed before, while the Prophet was still in Mecca. The True Lord says: 'And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversion. And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people.' (*al-An'am*: 68)

Here the True Lord indicates that He has revealed a ruling related to this matter at the beginning; this was the ruling revealed about the disbelievers in Mecca where the disbelievers took advantage of the weakness of the believers.

Further, at that point, there was no ruling prohibiting the believers from keeping company of the disbelievers. Some of the believers were slaves of the disbelievers. In addition, some of the early Muslims had common interests with the disbelievers. The ruling then came along: if those disbelievers start imputing falsities to the religion, then abandon their company. Here in the chapter of *an-Nisa*’, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds the believers that the ruling commanding them to abandon the company of the disbelievers once they start disparaging faith, is a continuous one. It applies to the believers from the time when they were still living among the polytheists who worshipped idols in Mecca to the time when they live in Medina alongside some of the people of the Book. When Allah *Glorified is He* assigns something, it is always within the capacity of man. Therefore, if one forgets Allah’s Command, he must immediately hasten to abandon the company of those who speak ill of Allah’s Messages once he remembers it. It has been stated in the Quran that if the believers hear people denying or ridiculing Allah’s Messages, they should leave that place. We notice that the condition in the earlier verse was not hearing people denying or ridiculing Allah’s Messages but rather seeing them: By contrast, hearing is mentioned in the verse under consideration: ‘And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* [recited], they are denied [by them].’ What matters here is the awareness of the fact that the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* is being offended, regardless of whether one learns about it through hearing or seeing.

Those who ascribe divinity to others beside Allah *Glorified is He* or others from amongst the enemies of Islam may offend the religion in a visible or audible way. Others may do so through winking or insinuating once they see a Muslim. The saying of the True Lord: ‘so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation,’ indicates that if they embark on an action other than that of offending Allah’s Messages, then the believers may keep their company. This was at the outset of Islam. At that time, the believers had common interests with those who ascribed divinity to others beside Allah *Glorified is He* and the people of the Book; the Muslim community could not stand on its own. If the True Lord had immediately told them through His Prophet Muhammad: ‘you must not company either the disbelievers or those

who ascribe divinity to others beside Me,' this would have impinged on the interests of the believers.

The word 'engage in [offensive] discourse' has a clear concrete implication. It is to engage in discussing something false or, in general, to engage in the discussion of subject about which no conclusion could be reached. The scholars assert that we should not engage in discussing the higher attributes of Allah *Glorified is He* and that it is improper to do so since discussions about these matters tend to be endless.

For this reason, the True Lord says in a different part of the Quran: 'and they did not appraise Allah *Glorified is He* with true appraisal when they said, "Allah *Glorified is He* did not reveal to a human being anything." Say, "Who revealed the Scripture that Moses brought as light and guidance to the people? You [Jews] make it into pages, disclosing [some of] it and concealing much. And you were taught that which you knew not—neither you, nor your fathers." Say, "Allah *Glorified is He* [revealed it]." Then, leave them in their [empty] discourse, amusing themselves.' (*al-An'am*: 91)

You, Muhammad, have informed them that the One Who revealed the Book to you is the True Lord; the same One Who revealed the Gospel of which they have hid some parts and shown some. Having informed them of these facts, you may then leave them to enjoy their vain talk.

In another place, the True Lord talks about vain talk: 'They, the hypocrites, are apprehensive lest a chapter be revealed about them, informing them of what is in their hearts. Say, "Mock [as you wish]; indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* will expose that which you fear." And if you ask them, they will surely say, "We were only conversing and playing." Say, "Is it Allah *Glorified is He* and His verses and His Messenger that you were mocking? "' (*at-Tawba*: 64-65)

'And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah *Glorified is He* [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation.'

Afterwards, the words that terrify the believer and frighten him follow: 'Indeed, you would then be like them.' This means that if you stay in the company of those who mock or deny the truth of the Messages of Allah

Glorified is He you will be a disbeliever like them because you are willing to listen to them, while they attribute falsities to the religion. Whoever is content with a disbeliever is a disbeliever.

The verse thus refers to a preliminary phase in the history of Islam. If the believers constitute a self-sufficient society based on solidarity, not one of them is to keep the company of the disbelievers. Further, no one ought to befriend them unless they initiate it because keeping company with them while speaking ill of the religion is all the more reason for them to continue disrespecting it. Rather, a believer ought to castigate anyone who dares to mock the religion. Believers should also avoid those who deviate from the path of Allah *Glorified is He* or attack it. Unfortunately, though, contemporary societies tend to honour those who attribute falsities to religion. This practice entices people to disparage religion.

By contrast, if we turn our backs upon those who deviate from the path of Allah *Glorified is He*, they will seek another means of attacking the religions and attributing falsities to it and the course it sets. The corruption of the society emanates from the fact that a lot of those who attribute falsities to the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* are honoured and assigned a high status and distinction.

We learn from the saying of the True Lord: 'And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear,' the way in which man becomes aware of things; it is either through hearing or seeing. Therefore, if you, as a Muslim, sense an action that incites corruption, then you must realize that this is a kind of attributing falsities to the religion of Allah *Glorified is He*.

The saying of the True Lord: 'avoid their company' is a license to boycott those who do these things. If someone who mocks and denies the truth of Allah's Messages, goes to a grocery store in the neighbourhood of his house, the shopkeeper in the grocery store ought to refuse to sell to him anything. Similarly, if this person goes to buy something to eat from the butcher, the latter ought to refuse to sell him anything; the same holds true for anyone whom this person may seek to fulfil an interest of his.

If this boycott takes place, this person will be disciplined. Further, everyone will know that the society is jealous about its religion, and that Allah *Glorified is He* is dearer to them than any form of reward they see in society. If each of those

deviants and offenders see that society has boycotted and confined them within certain limits, he would re-embrace the correct path. They would also seek different means of earning their livelihood and feeding their children; that is admissible and deemed legitimate by Allah *Glorified is He*.

The True Lord says: 'Indeed, you would then be like them. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in Hell all together.' Do not think that this life is too long and that the time when this happens is too far ahead. A Muslim must not measure things in terms of the criteria he uses to measure the history of the world, like a century, two centuries or even ten centuries. Rather, a Muslim should know that the world is measured in terms of his own life, and that his life can end at any time. Every Muslim must work not only for the good of his worldly life but in order to go back to Allah *Glorified is He* as a true Muslim in the Hereafter. A believer must also fear being resurrected on the Day of Judgment among the hypocrites and the disbelievers in the fire. This is the fate to which anyone who accepts the mockery or the humiliation of his religion is doomed. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

الَّذِينَ يَرَبُّونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ
لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحِذْ عَلَيْكُمْ وَنَمْنَعُكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٤١﴾

The [hypocrites] wait to see what happens to you and, if God brings you success, they say, 'Were we not on your side?' but if the disbelievers have some success, they say to them, 'Did we not have the upper hand over you, and [yet] protect you from the believers?' God will judge between you all on the Day of Resurrection, and He will give the disbelievers no means of overcoming the believers [141] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 141)

The saying of the True Lord: 'Those who wait [and watch] you' is a description of the hypocrites. When someone waits to see what happens with another person, this means that the former waits for the chance to find out about the latter's news in order to contrive his attitude and his demands of him in the light of such news. We learnt this meaning from the saying

of the True Lord: 'Say, "Do you wait for us except one of the two best things"' (*at-Tawba*: 52).

The hypocrites lie in wait of the believers because, if they encounter something good, they want to avail themselves of it, but if something bad comes along, the hypocrites try to take advantage of it—if they apparently purport to be Muslims in order to conceal their disbelief. 'But if the disbelievers have a success, they say [to them], "Did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?"' If Allah *Glorified is He* bestows His victory upon the believers, and they succeed in collecting spoils of war, the hypocrites would say: 'Did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?' They would thus argue that they are entitled to a share of the spoils of war. Conversely, if the disbelievers triumph, they hasten to them in accordance with the saying of the True Lord: 'whereas, did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?'

They try to take advantage of the disbelievers inasmuch as they claim that they have waited to see what would happen to the believers; upon this pretext, they assert that they are entitled to a share of their victory. The saying of the disbelievers: 'whereas did we not gain the advantage over you,' exposes their stance. When a battle breaks out between the camp of disbelief and that of faith, the hypocrites try to know all the details about the believers' intentions. Once the hypocrites walk onto the battlefield, they pretend that they are capturing the disbelievers, but, in fact, they are protecting the disbelievers from the swords of the believers. Then, they tell the disbelievers: 'we have taken possession of you;' this means, 'we have kept the believers from killing you.' Later, they ask them for the price of what they have done.

Let us consider the eloquence of the Quran when it talks about the triumph of the believers: 'victory.' By contrast, when the Quran talks about the triumph of the disbelievers, it uses the word 'success' to indicate that their victory is only a transient kind of prevalence. Subsequently, the True Lord puts forwards a decisive statement about this matter: 'Allah *Glorified is He* will judge between [all of] you on the Day of Resurrection, and never will Allah *Glorified is He* give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them].'

When Allah *Glorified is He* talks about the fate of the disbelievers and the believers, He does not refer to something too far ahead in the future for the listener to witness. Rather, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to what is certain; He does not tell the believer that he will triumph, since the believer may die before he witnesses any triumph. Instead, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to what is certain, namely, the fate and reward on the Day of Judgment, when the heaven becomes the actual abode of every believer. In addition, this life is too trivial to be the place of the reward for faith.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us not to seek the reward for faith in this life because all ends sought in this world are subject to change. Pleasure in life is transient; it will either abandon man or man will ultimately abandon it. By contrast, the reward for faith persists since the One in Whom you have faith persists. Therefore, the rule of faith states that whoever does good deeds is admitted into paradise. The True Lord says about the good: '[they will be] within the mercy of Allah *Glorified is He*. They will abide therein eternally.' (*Al-Imran*: 107)

This means that paradise will continue to be as long as Allah *Glorified is He* sustains it, though He is capable of ceasing its existence. However, Allah's mercy never perishes because it is one of His attributes, and He is eternal. When the True Lord says: 'Allah *Glorified is He* will judge between [all of] you on the Day of Resurrection.' This means that this judgment is irrevocable because there is no god worthy of worship but Him; therefore, the judgment is final. The True Lord decreed some rulings on some of Muhammad's relatives. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* passed a verdict on Prophet Muhammad's uncle; He has said: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame. And his wife [as well] - the carrier of firewood. Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fibre.' (*al-Masad*: 1-5) The third verse indicates that Abu Lahab will die as a disbeliever, and that Allah *Glorified is He* would not guide him to faith, although a lot of those who had taken an antagonistic stance towards to Prophet Muhammad eventually attained faith in him *peace and blessings be upon him*. The camp of disbelievers has indeed lost a lot of its leaders to the camp of faith. For instance, "Umar ibn Al-Khattab,

Khalid ibn Al-Walid and 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl among others embraced Islam. So what made Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* know that Abu Lahab would not be among those who convert to Islam? Further, why did Abu Lahab not say: 'My nephew said that I shall endure a fire fiercely glowing; I thereby profess that there is no God worthy of worship but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is His Messenger.' But Abu Lahab did not say so; Allah *Glorified is He* Who doomed him to this bleak destiny, knew that he would not ever utter the words of faith. Were Abu Lahab and his wife not capable of saying together: 'We testify that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is His Messenger,' and thus conclude the matter? But Allah *Glorified is He* Whose rulings are irrevocable, has ruled that they were disbelievers. After the True Lord reveals this decisive statement about Abu Lahab and his wife, He puts forward, in the sequential order of the Quran, what clarifies His statement: 'Do not ever think that ruling could be revoked; Abu Lahab will endure a fire fiercely growing together with his wife, the carrier of evil tales. Thus, the True Lord says immediately after the previous verses: 'Say, "He is Allah *Glorified is He* [who is] One," Allah *Glorified is He* the Eternal Refuge.' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-2)

No one will change Allah's ruling. Therefore, the saying of the True Lord: 'Allah *Glorified is He* will judge between [all of] you on the Day of Resurrection,' means that Allah's rulings are irrevocable since there is no other God but Him to revoke His decisions. 'And never will Allah *Glorified is He* give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them].' This is a result of Allah's ruling; Allah *Glorified is He* will not favour the disbelievers over the believers. Further, the disbelievers will not have power to harm the believers. But is this rule valid for this life or the one to come? We know that in the Hereafter the True Lord will ultimately judge everyone according to his deeds after all worldly causes have been suspended. Laws of causality apply only to the worldly life; thus, whoever pursues the proper causes in this life will reach their corresponding effects. The reason is that the Lordship of Allah *Glorified is He* in this world rules that He compensates and rewards both the believers and the disbelievers in proportion to the effort they exert. Hence, if the disbelievers pursued the proper causes and means of achieving success and

the believers did not, Allah *Glorified is He* will give the disbelievers power over the believers. The disbelievers may, in this case, defeat the believers.

An Arab adage teaches us 'not to think that erring is not a means of reaching what is right.' The underlying rationale of this statement is that when one errs, someone may correct his error. For instance, a teacher teaches his students that the last syllable of the word serving as a subject of a sentence should have a 'u' sound. A student may make a mistake and confuse the subject with the object which indicates that, though he learnt the rule, he was oblivious to it. His teacher may then correct his mistake. This correction helps engrave the rule in the student's mind. In this manner, erring may serve as a means of reaching what is right. Similarly, falsehood may be a path to attain the truth.

When falsities spread among people, a preacher of truth may emerge among them. Therefore, falsehood may serve as a cause for truth to emerge. The propagation of falsehood excites people's aversion towards the spread of corruption and causes them to cry out for help. Similarly, when pain befalls man, it drives him to seek a cure inasmuch as pain says to man: something not normal exists in this place, and without it, a man would not have realized he had to consult a physician.

Hence, we must know this rule: erring is a means of attaining what is right. Similarly, falsehood may be a means of attaining the truth, and pain may be a means of seeking cure. Every mistake spurs the one who made it to correct it; however, it does so with some provocation. The history of the Arabic language tells us an interesting story about the great master Sibawih, whom we remember whenever anyone makes a linguistic mistake by saying: 'The one who made mistake must have angered Sibawih.' The reason is that Sibawih is the one who laid down the foundations of Arabic grammar and its rules. Thus, whenever we say *Al-Kitab*, the Book, in reference to Arabic grammar, we often have in mind *Al-Kitab* of Sibawih.

But Sibawih was not originally a grammarian; he was a scholar of the Quran and its readings. One day, he was sitting in a symposium and people criticized him for a grammatical mistake that he made. He was infuriated and felt disappointed with himself. He then said: By Allah *Glorified is He* I will

perfect my command of Arabic until I no longer make any grammatical mistakes. This is how he turned into a leading grammarian.

Another good example is Imam Ash-Shatibi, who was not a scholar of the Quran and its readings; he was a grammarian. He later faced a problem in the science of the Quran readings that he could not solve. As a result, he took an oath to dwell over the study of the Quran and its readings. He then became a leading scholar of this branch of Islamic sciences. Therefore, erring was the main reason for Sibawih becoming a grammarian; and a problem that Ash-Shatibi faced in the Quran and its readings induced him to become a leading scholar of Quran and its readings—although, the former was a scholar of Quran and its readings and the latter was a grammarian.

For this reason, I repeat what I said above: erring is a means of reaching what is right as much as falsehood is a means of reaching the truth, and pain is a means of reaching a cure.

Disbelievers may have apparently triumphed over the believers in some battles like the battle of Uhud; however, this was intended for the cause of edifying the believers. In Uhud, some fighters from amongst the believers violated the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They were then defeated as a prelude for the edification to follow; and it came in the battle of Hunayn, when the believers were too conceited with their numbers: ‘on the day of Hunayn, when your great numbers pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with its vastness; then, you turned back, fleeing.’ (*at-Tawba*: 25) An Arab poet described this scene in the following lines:

A defeat is only considered truly a defeat

If one fails to uproot its causes

Thus if you put a lot of effort in getting rid of such causes

then it would be foolish on part of anyone to censure your endeavour

When one uproots the causes of defeat, he turns his defeat into a victory. This happened in the battle of Uhud. At the beginning, the believers violated the commands of Prophet Muhammad, so they were defeated by their enemies.

However, they learnt from their mistake, so their defeat paved the way to achieve victory.

Therefore, if you, Muslim, see the disbelievers harming the believers, then know that faith has been shaken in the hearts of the Muslims. There is no effect without a cause; if the believers pursue the proper causes, they will achieve the desired effects. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster.' (*al-Anfal*: 60)

If the believers failed to make ready against the disbelievers whatever they are able to muster or if they felt pride in their numbers, then the just result would be their defeat. Every believer has to have faith in the saying of His Lord: 'Then, do they wait except the way of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way of Allah *Glorified is He* any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah *Glorified is He* any alteration.' (*Fatir*: 43)

The profession of faith is not the end; rather, it is the beginning. Every believer will be commensurately rewarded for his deeds. Likewise, He is unhappy with His servant when he errs. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* disciplines and edifies His servants—and Allah *Glorified is He* has the most supreme example. For instance, some of us may not be patient enough to review all the material his children study at school. He thus hires a private tutor to undertake this task. The reason is that the love the father bears for his children may provoke him whenever his boy errs; he may thus beat his child. By contrast, a teacher would not be that provoked. Rather, he will take things lightly. Thus sometimes affection may drive a person to cruelly treat someone that he likes and would otherwise treat mercifully. An Arab poet says:

One may treat someone he loves cruelly to straighten him; and whoever wants to be strict must sometimes be tough with the one who he treats mercifully.

There is another example—and to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the supreme and most exalted parables. If someone walks into a place to find his son, his neighbour's son and another unknown child gambling, he will slap his son on the face and command him to return to the house immediately. As for the other children, the man may only castigate his neighbour's son and may not even talk with the child he does not know. That is, punishment must be proportionate to the level of love and affection. Similarly, our interest in

disciplining someone is commensurate with his status in our hearts; if we do not care about someone, we will not bother about his misbehaviour. Accordingly, if the disbelievers ever harm the believers, we ought to know that something is amiss with the faith of the latter. Allah *Glorified is He* does not want the believers to stay like this; rather, the True Lord purifies them of their errors inasmuch as he is put through difficult circumstances. Therefore, beware of failing to heed Allah's Causes. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ
 قَامُوا كَسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا ﴿١٤٢﴾

The hypocrites try to deceive God, but it is He who causes them to be deceived. When they stand up to pray, they do so sluggishly, showing off in front of people, and remember God only a little [142] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 142)

We know that the hypocrites by nature purport to have faith while concealing disbelief. The True Lord explains: do not think that any creature can do anything that Allah *Glorified is He* does not know. Someone may contrive a plan against you, while he knows that you are aware of his cunning; so, is this cunning? No, the reason is that cunning takes place in secret; you know nothing about it while it is being contrived. In essence, the one, against whom cunning is being contrived, is supposed to be unsuspecting. The hypocrites—since they purport to have faith while concealing disbelief—try to deceive the One Who knows all the secrets concealed in men's bosoms. They should have learnt a lesson from the way Allah *Glorified is He* treated them due to the intermediation of the believers; for the believers spared the blood and wealth of the hypocrites. Further, the Muslims treated the hypocrites according to the rulings of Islam. But what punishment has Allah *Glorified is He* cunningly prepared for those disbelievers? Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for them the bottom part of the Fire. Then, who is more capable of cunning? The truly intelligent person is the one who does not deceive someone whom he knows is capable of discovering his deception. It involves displaying love while secretly plotting to deceive. Who then eventually wins in cunning? The one who conceals a more severe deception—to counteract the deception of his rival—is the winner.

The person deceived always tries to contrive a bigger deception. This means that he has overcome the deception of the one who tried to deceive him. Allah *Glorified is He* has treated them in the same way in which they treated the believers. The hypocrites purported to have faith at the beginning in order to conceal disbelief. Allah *Glorified is He* then treated them on the apparent level; that is, as if they were Muslims. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has secretly decreed to inflict upon them the same or even a more severe torment than that which He inflicts upon the disbelievers; the hypocrites will be thrown at the bottom of the fire.

Every Muslim should be careful enough not to think or mistakenly conclude that deception is an attribute of Allah; thus, no one should call Allah *Glorified is He* as *al-mukhadi'* because Allah's names and attributes are only those which He uses to call and describe Himself. Allah *Glorified is He* may undertake whatever act He wills, but no one is allowed to derive a new attribute for Allah *Glorified is He* from that act. Here, the True Lord presents us with a problem to show that the hypocrites are cunning and contrive evil against the believers. As a Muslim, you must know that a human is only capable of contriving evil in proportion to his capacity which is finite compared to the Infinite nature of Allah's capacity. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* exposes the evil those hypocrites conceal. When they cunningly contrive, Allah *Glorified is He* by His Infinite capability, cunningly contrives against them as well, sabotaging their cunning and punishing them for the evil they do. But do not say that Allah *Glorified is He* is cunning; Allah *Glorified is He* may describe or qualify any act or deed of His in whatever way He wills, but we must not do the same.

The goal of any activity is the key factor that motivates one's faculties to do it. If you love an activity, then you will approach it ardently and eagerly. The degree of eagerness with which one approaches anything is always taken as a measure of how much he loves it. An Arab poet describes the event of two lovers meeting as follows:

The key to judge the meeting of any couple is
the way they crave each other and the time they spend together

The moment at which any two lovers meet is an indication of the affection they share. For instance, if the distance separating them is ten steps, they may

hasten and cover it in three steps; this is an attempt to shorten the time in which they are distant. Similarly, the way in which they greet each other reflects the level of affection they share. One of them may shake the hand of another half-heartedly or coldly. By contrast, he may do so very affectionately and eagerly. He may also embrace the other. Further, the time a couple spends hugging each other whether it is a minute, two minutes or three minutes is also a measure of the affection they share. Thus, the factors that show the degree of affection a couple shares are: the eagerness with which one wants to see the other, the way in which they meet each other and the time they spend together. These factors have been used by poets to express affection and love among people. In the past, lovers used to hide their affection behind greetings. In the western civilization, in which religious values have vanished, men greet women by kissing them. In some countries, a man may shake hands with a woman, but does he do so eagerly? And does she shake his hand with the same eagerness? If you notice that the palm of the hand is straight and flat, then this is an ordinary greeting. But if one of them bent his thumb on the other's palm then you should see which person bent his finger to hold the other's entire hand. The one who does it is more eager than the other. If both of them did it, then both of them share the same eagerness. In addition, one should consider how much time each spent holding the hand of the other. In certain instances, a man and a woman may enjoy talking to each other to the extent that they forget that they are holding each other's hands.

Man approaches different events in correspondingly different ways. If the event is a happy one, we approach it with eagerness; by contrast, if the event is not a happy one, we approach it reluctantly. The hypocrites used to rise for prayer reluctantly and lazily: 'when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily.' It is as if they were performing the prayers as a veil to conceal their hypocrisy and hide it away from the eyes of Muslims. They did not rise to prayers out of their longing to meet Allah *Glorified is He* as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say to Bilal *Allah be pleased with him* whenever he asked him to call for prayers: 'Comfort us with the prayers, Bilal.'⁽¹⁾ A believer should feel comfortable when he prays. By contrast, prayers constitute

(1) Related by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad*

an onerous task for the hypocrite because he only does it to hide his hypocrisy away from the eyes of the Muslims. For this reason, hypocrites rise reluctantly to prayers: 'When they stand for prayer, they stand lazily, showing [themselves to] the people and not remembering Allah *Glorified is He* except a little.'

They purport to be rising to prayers in front of other people to deceive Muslims and so that others would see them praying. Inasmuch as they perform the prayers for the purpose of being seen and praised by other men, they do not say what is required of them to complete these prayers. They only say what they have to say aloud in public. For instance, they would recite the chapter *al-Fatiha* and some of the Quran, but they would not say *subhan Rabi Al-'Azhim*—'praise be unto my Lord, the Great'—while kneeling during prayers, and *subhan Rabi Al-'A'la*—'praise be unto my Lord, the High'—while prostrating.

Every believer has two contending façades; a façade that he puts on in the company of the believers, and another that he puts on when he is in the company of the disbelievers. The façade a hypocrite uses when he is in the company of the believers makes him perform the prayers and remember Allah *Glorified is He*. The façade he puts on when he is among the disbelievers makes him reluctant about praying and he seldom remembers Allah *Glorified is He*.

If we count how many words of remembrance are said aloud in prayers versus how many things are said secretly, we will find that the latter outnumber the former. While kneeling one says: *subhan Rabi Al-'Azhim* three times and while prostrating one says: *subhan Rabi Al-'A'la* three times. By contrast, a hypocrite remembers Allah *Glorified is He* only when he has to do it aloud which is very little. A hypocrite will only do what is seen and heard by others; this is the meaning of showing off. A hypocrite would not say or do anything that is not perceived by other people.

Societies are shaken and ruined by showing off because the True Lord wants every Muslim to do every deed while keeping Allah *Glorified is He* Who knows every secret, in his mind. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called our attention to this matter when he described the meaning of *al-ihsan*: 'to worship Allah *Glorified is He* as if you see Him and to always be

aware that, although you do not see Him, He sees you.'⁽¹⁾ If one feels ashamed of deceiving another human being in an overt manner, how could he have the audacity to deceive Allah *Glorified is He* knowing that Allah *Glorified is He* sees him? Why does this servant consider his Lord the least important of his beholders?

If someone discovers that another deceived him, he punishes him; so would Allah *Glorified is He* not do the same with the one who deceives him? For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* describes the state of the one who is only concerned about people's praise and adulation; he *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'What I fear most is that you may one day slip into the minor polytheism. The companions then said: 'What is the minor polytheism?' Prophet Muhammad said: 'Showing off— When Allah *Glorified is He* commensurately recompenses His servants for their deeds on the Day of Judgment, He will tell them to go seek those about whose praise they were only concerned in the worldly life and see if they could reward you.'⁽²⁾ In addition, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'The one showing off will be called on Judgment Day: "You, wrong-doer; you, traitor; you, deceiver, your deeds have been discounted, and you have been denied any reward. So seek your reward from the one for whom you worked."⁽³⁾ Therefore, the hypocrite ultimately deceives himself. He purports to be praying so that people would see him, and purports to be giving alms to the poor so that people would see him; that is, he does what Allah *Glorified is He* has enacted upon him, but he does not do it for Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: 'But those who disbelieved - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah *Glorified is He* before Him, and He will pay him in full his due; and Allah *Glorified is He* is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39) Further, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran about another form of their hypocrisy: 'His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is

(1) Related by Muslim from the Hadith wherein Gabriel came forth to teach the prophets the fundamentals of faith

(2) Related by Ahmad, Al-Bayhaqi in (*As-Shu'ab*) and At-Tabarani based on a narration by Mahmud Ibn Lubayd based on a narration by Rafi' ibn Khadij

(3) A weak Hadith related by Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya

dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And Allah *Glorified is He* does not guide the disbelieving people.' (*al-Baqara*: 264) Whoever does what Allah *Glorified is He* enacts so that the believers see him, let him seek his reward from the one for whom he has worked.

The True Lord resumes the description of the psychological state of the hypocrites and says:

مُذَبِّدِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ
وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا

**wavering all the time between this and that,
belonging neither to one side nor the other. If God
leaves someone to stray, you [Prophet] will never
find a way for him [143] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 143)**

‘Wavering’ means that it is like an object suspended from the end of a thread; the wind can move such an object in any direction because it is not fixed. The Arabic word translated as ‘waver’ shares the root with the Arabic word for ‘flies’—whose habit is to come back again whenever man repels them. Part of the behaviour of flies is that they go back to the same place whenever they are purged out of it.

‘Wavering between this and that, [true] neither to these nor those;’ but did the hypocrites cause themselves to be in state of wavering or is it their nature? Let us ponder over the Greatness of the True Lord Who fashioned the human soul. There is a commander and a subordinate within the same self. The True Lord says: ‘O you, who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from the Fire.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6)

Then, he wards off the fire inasmuch as he lets the rational, commanding power of his soul direct its commands to the subordinate part—and make the latter obey the former. The evidence is the saying of the True Lord about Cain: ‘And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 30)

This means that part of Cain’s soul drove the rest of it to kill Abel. Allah *Glorified is He* has created the human soul as a set of powers; one of them

seeks comfort and pleasure, whereas the other likes and seeks austerity. The former seeks the praise of people, while the latter does so only to ensure that one has obtained what one needs. Both powers contend within the same soul. For this reason, the True Lord says: 'protect yourselves.' One's soul can safeguard him from slipping into wrongdoing since it has multiple powers. Some powers like to achieve gratification and wealth and merely seek to satiate their desires, but the believing power of the soul consistently tells every one of us: 'remember that all these are transient desires and that their improper satiation may bring upon you deleterious repercussions in the future.'

Hence, there is a conflict between the human powers. The True Lord explains to us this conflict in His saying: 'And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother.' The desire for ascendancy was abetting Cain to kill Abel; however, fear of sinning was a force contending with this drive. The conflict between these two forces inside Cain flared up until the desire for ascendancy ultimately prevailed and drove his soul to commit murder. This shows that the human soul encompasses multiple powers, each of which seeks a distinct goal, but religion harmonises the powers of the soul.

Another example: sexual desire may vigorously overwhelm the soul, but one's belief may deter him by ordering him not to encroach upon other people's honours so that others would not violate his honour. It may also urge him to get married according to Allah's Legislation so as not to have illegal children who may be brought up by other people. Allah has created sexual desire in people, but it should not control the soul. Therefore, the soul encompasses all powers and desires, and man should not let his desires trespass the boundaries Allah has set for them because if desires transgress their boundaries, the world will be corrupted.

For instance, we use electricity to generate light based on criteria fixed by the electrical engineers. They have set the positive and negative poles in specific places so we can generate the light we need or produce the sparkle required for operating a machine. However, if the positive pole is connected to the negative pole in a way other than the one designed by the engineer, an electric failure may take place and cause a fire or any other damage. The same holds true for the human self; if the male has intercourse with the female

according to the laws decreed by Allah, this will lead to happiness; otherwise, social and psychological problems will flare up in the society causing infinitely detrimental effects. Accordingly, the self has multiple drives, not only one.

The desire to eat urges a person to eat, and religion responds to this desire but advises that eating should not turn into gluttony, as mentioned in the Hadith, 'A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him.'⁽¹⁾ Food is there only for the preservation of life.

Man has a desire to gain knowledge, and Islam rules that man must investigate Allah's signs in the universe in order to make the universe more convenient to live in. However, Islam proscribes the use of such desire as a justification for spying on people. Accordingly, the different human faculties are balanced by means of the guidance of Islam. Therefore, every Muslim should harmonize his faculties in the light of the guidance of Islam so that the human faculties become supportive to each other and the human self rather than contending with them. Subsequently, the human faculties will be in harmony with each other, and each body system will perform the task in the manner Allah has intended.

By contrast, a hypocrite lives in an indecisive state of purposely wavering between extremes. He has succumbed to some of his faculties at the expense of others: 'Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers...' (*an-Nisa'*: 143). The disbeliever has an apparent privilege over the hypocrite, as there is harmony within his soul; he does not believe in Islam and overtly admits this fact, though actually this conflicts with his natural disposition, which urges him to believe in Allah.

Someone may wonder: how could we equate the one who apparently declares faith and conceals disbelief with the one who declares his disbelief? The answer is that the disbeliever does not deceive the believers and does not pretend to belong to the believers in the manner the hypocrite does. Rather, he explicitly states that he is a disbeliever, taking the side of the disbelievers, but the hypocrite is wavering and dishonest.

'Wavering between them; [belonging] neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers. And whoever Allah leaves astray - never will you find for him a

(1) Excerpt from a Hadith related by At-Tirmidhi, Al-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah

way.' (*an-Nisa'*: 143) Allah does not directly let any of His Servants go astray without offering guidance to him, as Allah *Glorified is He* teaches His creatures through His Messengers, and the guidance He reveals to them. However, when a person insists on not believing in Allah, He lets him go astray. Although He is Able to force him to have faith, He gives the person the choice to have faith in Him willingly. Allah supports and leads to guidance the person who draws closer to Him, but if he draws away from Allah, He will lead him astray, beautifying the worldly pleasures for him and giving him from its bounties. However, he will not find any way to guidance other than the one set by Allah.

The following story is worth mentioning because it reveals the value of the path of Allah. Al-Asma'i, a great and valuable Arab author, who had a literary sense inclined to beautiful literary styles in poetry or prose, once found a person standing in front of Al-Multazam (the area between the *Hajar Al-Aswad* (the Black Stone) and the Door of the *Ka'ba*). The person was avidly supplicating to Allah saying, 'O Lord! I have disobeyed you; had not I been disobedient, I would not have come here to ask for Your Forgiveness. There is no god but You; I should have felt ashamed of disobeying You, but what can I do now?' Then, Al-Asma'i said, 'O You! Allah will forgive you because you have supplicated to Him in such a good way.' Then, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِن دُونِ
 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ؕ أَن تَرِيدُوا أَن تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٤٤﴾

You who believe, do not take the disbelievers as allies and protectors instead of the believers: do you want to offer God clear proof against you? [144] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 144)

Allah blames the hypocrites for taking the disbelievers as their allies instead of Allah. Similarly, the believers blamed the hypocrites for taking the disbelievers as their allies instead of Allah and the believers. Therefore, the believers must not do this, and Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that He has blamed the hypocrites as they took the disbelievers as their allies instead of Allah, so He warns the believers against doing the same: 'O you, who have

believed, do not take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case?' (*an-Nisa'*: 144)

This command is logically in line with the path of faith because if the believers take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers, this will give Allah a clear case against them, showing that they deserve His torment. It is well-known that the hypocrite apparently declares to have faith but conceals disbelief in his heart. Therefore, the believer should not allow himself to deal with the disbeliever in the same way a hypocrite does; whoever does so presents a clear case to Allah to inflict His torment upon him.

Allah *Glorified is He* sent messengers, supporting them with miracles, and revealed comprehensive guidance to regulate man's actions in life in order not to give the people any proof to support their disbelief, and not to give them the chance to claim that He did not reveal to them how to adhere to this guidance. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* has not let man depend only on his reason to reach the idea of the existence of Allah, Who has created the universe. Allah has not left the people to these suspicions, but He sent us messengers with clear guidance so that people would not have any pretext against Allah after that. Therefore, no one may claim that Allah has not warned him and clarified matters for him. Ignorance of a law does not exempt one from punishment if he commits a crime, but Allah does not punish people without giving them guidance. He is more generous towards His servants than they are towards themselves. Therefore, Allah has sent messengers with the guidance that distinguishes between the permissible and the proscribed matters: '...that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence, and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence...' (*al-Anfal*: 42).

Thus, no one may claim that Allah has taken him by surprise. If the believers take the disbelievers as their allies, draw closer to them and advocate them instead of the believers, they will be more evil than the hypocrites because a hypocrite is wavering between faith and disbelief. By contrast, the proof against the believers is lucid; Allah has revealed the righteous path to them, and they have declared to have faith. Therefore, if they do anything at odds with the faith they have declared, they will give Allah proof that they deserve His Punishment. '...Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case?'

(*an-Nisa'*: 144) The clear case is the comprehensive and unquestionable proof. In the human realm, one may refute a proof in our day-to-day life in the manner a lawyer does—but Allah's proof is a clear and irrefutable case.

Subsequently, Allah says:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا ﴿١٤٥﴾

The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell, and you will find no one to help them [145] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 145)

Let us consider the precision of the manner in which Allah instructs the people to have faith. Allah has not collected everything relevant to the hypocrites in only one part in His Book, but He provides a glimpse about the hypocrites followed by another about the believers so that the listener may have aversion to the status of the hypocrite and like the qualities of the believer. In this context, Allah says, 'Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper.' (*an-Nisa'*: 145)

The word *al-dark* which is mentioned in the Arabic original verse, can be pronounced in this way or as *darak* like the way the Arabic word *nahr* is pronounced. *Al-dark* is always used in reference to the downward direction; as the righteous predecessors said, 'Fire has *darakat* (levels directed downwards), and paradise has *darajat* (levels directed upwards).'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, *al-darak* refers to descending to lower positions, and *al-daraj* refers to ascending to higher positions. In our age, we use the sea level as a reference for measuring height because the earth's surface is not flat, while the sea surface is even.

Similarly, we use water balance to make accurate measurements. For instance, rainfall shows us the work quality of the contractor who paved the street. We may also pour a bucket of water on a bathroom's floor in order to gauge the work quality of the worker. These examples suggest that things may be done to expose the truth of some matters. There is a famous Egyptian saying: 'The one who cements the building is the one who exposes the work quality of the builder.' If someone erects an uneven wall, the one who cements it will be forced to fill the gaps in the uneven parts so that the surface

(1) *Exegesis of Imam ibn Kathir*

of the wall becomes even. Similarly, the painter can expose the quality of the work of the one who cements the wall because he may either find it easy to paint the wall or use a large quantity of materials to fill in the gaps and uneven parts on the wall. Subsequently, the work quality of the painter is exposed by natural elements such as dust. If a worker wants to cheat, he may deliver his work quickly because dust flies in a straight direction if a wall has been painted with a low quality material, dust will stick to it. Therefore, Allah has intended to expose the one who does not do his work properly. Everything ultimately returns to Allah until all creatures go back to Him exposed with their deeds with the exception of the believers, whose good deeds will protect them.

‘Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 145) Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* has previously depicted the hypocrites as wavering and indecisive people who cannot maintain a fixed stance and can never earn the respect of the society wherein they live. Allah says about them: ‘Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 143) Wavering refers to indecisiveness and incapacity of a character to be independent. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* depicts them in this mutilated way in order to demonstrate that His punishment for them is commensurate with what they did.

Allah has prepared the human minds in a way that enables them to receive and accept the rulings that He reveals so that people may not pity for or sympathize with the hypocrites when He punishes them. When Allah *Glorified is He* enacts a ruling, He ensures that no one will dispute with Him as He is the Sustainer of existence and the One. Allah could have said that He will condemn the hypocrite to the lowest depth of the Fire; there is no other power capable of redeeming the hypocrite. Therefore, He has appended the ruling on the hypocrite with His saying, ‘...and never will you find for them a helper.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 145) This indicates that this ruling is bound to be executed, and that none of Allah’s creatures may modify or alter it; to Him only *Glorified is He* sovereignty belongs. Allah also lets those who pursue the proper causes have possessions in the worldly life; however, in the Afterlife no one except Allah will have sovereignty or possess anything: ‘...To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah—the One, the Prevailing.’ (*Ghafir*: 16)

Then, Allah declares that He will give a chance to the hypocrites to change their stance, declare their faith and repent what they did. Allah has allowed them to examine their situations and judge themselves, as He has not denied them the chance to repent. Rather, He says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا وَأَصْلَحُوا وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِاللَّهِ وَأَخْلَصُوا دِينَهُمْ لِلَّهِ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ وَسَوْفَ يُؤْتِي اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٤٦﴾

**Not so those who repent, mend their ways, hold fast to God, and devote their religion entirely to Him: these will be joined with the believers, and God will give the believers a mighty reward [146]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 146)**

There may be a glimmer of hope that urges one to repent so that no one ought to think that the ruling in this case is final and so makes one lose hope and get entangled in more evils. Therefore, He says, 'Except for those who repent...' (*an-Nisa'*: 146); this refers to the one who repents of his hypocrisy. Further, if any corruption has resulted from his hypocrisy, he should fix it, hold fast to Allah and show sincere intentions and deeds. 'Except for those who repent, correct themselves, hold fast to Allah and are sincere in their religion for Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 146). This means that in order for a hypocrite to be redeemed from the lowest depths of the fire, he must repent, fix what he has ruined, hold fast to Allah and be sincere in his religion for Allah alone. Repentance in this context means quitting hypocrisy and fixing the corruption resulted from hypocrisy. But how may someone hold fast to Allah? It is well-known that the hypocrites used to hold fast to the disbelievers because they sought to be honoured by them, i.e., the hypocrites felt comfortable among the disbelievers, so they took refuge with them and their strength. Allah commands them to hold fast to Him only because none can protect against Him, and He is the only source of Honour and Refuge.

It should be noted that the one who repents, corrects himself and holds fast to Allah fulfils all the pillars of faith. But Allah also says, '...and are sincere in their religion for Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 146). So why has Allah stressed the importance of being sincere in this context? The reason is that hypocrisy originally stems from hearts. It is well-known that the heart may sin; any

organ may sin by committing an act of transgression. For instance, the eye sins when it encroaches on the honour of others; similarly, the tongue sins when it assails and insults others. Therefore, every organ may sin in a certain manner. The sin of the heart is hypocrisy, so it is something hidden. The saying of Allah, ‘...and are sincere in their religion for Allah...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 146) is mentioned to affirm that sincerity—which lies in the heart—is necessary for repenting of hypocrisy.

That is to say that the repentance of the heart is different from the repentance of the other organs which repent by abstaining from the sin they committed, but the heart repents of hypocrisy by having sincere faith. Accordingly, Allah has established the merit of the believers who did not fall into hypocrisy, and has associated the repenting hypocrites with the believers. Accordingly, the reason for receiving Allah’s reward is to be associated with the believers: ‘...for those will be with the believers. And Allah is going to give the believers a great reward.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 146)

This indicates that Allah’s great reward will be received only by the believers, and whoever joins the believers will receive the same reward. Allah has ruled that rewards depend on the kind of deed. The hypocrites practiced hypocrisy to benefit from the rights Islam has established for the Muslims in the society, like protection of private wealth and lives so that they would be ostensibly counted as Muslims. When they hypocritically dealt with Muslims, the Muslims gave them the same rights they enjoyed; and when they repented, corrected themselves and became sincere in their religion for Allah, Allah considered them as the believers to whom He has promised to grant great reward. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا يَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ بِعَذَابِكُمْ إِن شَكَرْتُمْ وَءَامَنْتُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ شَاكِرًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٧﴾

Why should God make you suffer torment if you are thankful and believe in Him? God always rewards gratitude and He knows everything [147] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 147)

Allah has clarified that the hypocrites are doomed to the lowest depths of the fire, and then He excluded from them those who repent, correct themselves, hold fast to Allah and become sincere in their religion for Allah. In this verse,

Allah tackles and clarifies the idea of punishment, saying: 'What would Allah do with your punishment...' (*an-Nisa'*: 147). The verse is in the interrogative form, which linguistically means a question that is put forward by an inquirer and requires an answer. When Allah puts forward a confirmed issue, He does not use the predicative form to express it, as He did not say that punishing people does not involve any benefit or harm for Him.

In the verse, Allah has not put forward this issue using a predicative form; rather, He asks the hypocrites a question so that they state the matter He wants to confirm. For instance—and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection—someone may say to another, 'You have insulted me.' The other person may respond by saying, 'No, I did not insult you; I swear that I did not.' He may also add, 'bring forth a witness.' Thus, this matter has gone through three stages: affirming that no insult was addressed, swearing that no insult took place and asking the claimant to bring a witness to prove that the alleged insult did take place.

Another person may respond to the one accusing him of insult, 'I will leave the matter to you; what did I say that you may consider an insult?' Whoever gives this response is sure that if the other person thinks well about his alleged accusation, he will not find a single offensive word.

By contrast, if one is certain that he has insulted the other person, he will be afraid lest the latter may find evidence that supports his accusation. Accordingly, if the accused person says to the accuser, 'What insult did I say to you?' This means that the accuser will search and not find anything. Accordingly, he will reach the truth and judge the matter himself.

When Allah says, 'What would Allah do with your punishment...?' (*an-Nisa'*: 147) He addresses a group of people who would be punished and who disobeyed Allah, but He has accepted their testimony against themselves. The verse indicates that the sinful deserves punishment, 'What would Allah do with your punishment...' (*an-Nisa'*: 147), and is prepared for it because he has disobeyed Allah. However, Allah is willing to accept the testimony of the sinful and his like. This demonstrates that faith is ingrained in the human self, and that whenever it faces troubles, it will resort only to the logic of faith.

Allah clarifies the matter to the hypocrites by asking them what He would do with their punishment, but the hypocrites will not find any reason relevant to Allah that may cause Him to punish them. This means that their natural disposition has been revived and will allow them to ponder the matter.

In day-to-day human life, man is often driven to punish another in order to give vent to his anger or to avenge himself because the latter has caused him some suffering, so he wants to react in the same way. He may also want to avoid the harm the latter may cause to him. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* cannot be in any of these positions. If the hypocrites ponder this matter using only their natural disposition, they will inevitably arrive at the following answer: Allah will benefit nothing from punishing them if they are grateful to and have faith in Him.

This means that when Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wills to discuss and confirm an issue, He prompts the sinful to admit it by putting it forward in the form of a question. Allah could possibly have used the predicative form, but in this way Allah would confirm the matter himself. However, when Allah uses the interrogative form, the answer provided to the question will confirm the matter, as they admit that they disobeyed and went against Allah's Commands. This also indicates that Allah has entrusted them with the answer because it is based on logic and natural disposition. When a disbeliever tries to think ill of Allah, he will not logically be able to do so.

'What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing.' (*an-Nisa'*: 147) What will Allah benefit from punishing the hypocrites if they were not grateful to Him and did not believe in Him? It is well-known that the Allah is so Exalted as to benefit from the obedience or disobedience of any person. However, the benefit and harm ensuing from obedience and disobedience respectively affect the creatures—Allah's servants—not Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah wants us to be obedient in order to preserve the well-being of society and to protect people from the harm they may cause to each other. Thus, Allah wants the people to gain the benefits of obeying Him as, before creating the creatures, He has existed with all the attributes of perfection whereby He has created the creatures. Further, creating the creatures will not

accrue anything to Him. Therefore, Allah says in the following Qudsi Hadith: 'O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as pious as the most pious heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not increase My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all as wicked as the most wicked heart of any individual amongst you, then this would not decrease My Kingdom an iota. O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, and the humans of you and the jinn of you, were all to stand together in one place and ask of Me, and I were to give everyone what he requested, then that would not decrease what I possess, except what is decreased of the ocean when a needle is dipped into it.'⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the result of obeying or disobeying Allah ultimately affects the servants of Allah, not Him. The Mercy of Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is revealed in the fact that He has created the creatures and protected them from the harm they may cause to each other. Allah *Glorified is He* also considers the person who treats Allah's creatures kindly as obedient to Him; thus, He loves him. 'What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe?' (*an-Nisa*': 147) If they are grateful to and have faith in Allah, why should He chastise them? They will not deserve to be punished.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to adjust societies and the interactions among its members so that societies would thrive and develop in an atmosphere of coexistence. Everyone has a specific attribute and a talent needed by the society.

Someone may have a piece of land upon which he wants to build. The landlord is not supposed to have studied engineering in order to design the building and its drawings. He is not supposed to be professional in the construction field in order to build a house, not even learn how to paint a building or become an electrician.

Similarly, the person who wants to wear a gown is not expected to learn how to obtain wool from sheep, spin and weave cotton and sew it afterwards. Everyone must have a useful job to benefit all the people; and since people are in need of each other, they have to peacefully coexist. Conflict must not

(1) Narrated by Muslim, Abu 'Awanah, Ibn Hibban and Al-Hakim on the authority of Abu Dharr

be the foundation of things because it weakens the community and consumes its power in vain. Allah *Glorified is He* wants all the powers of society to support each other, not to conflict with each other. Therefore, Allah says, 'What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe?' (*an-Nisa'*: 147) Consequently, if they are not grateful and do not have faith in Allah, they will be punished, and Allah will not gain anything from their punishment.

But why has Allah associated gratefulness with the attainment of faith? To answer this question, 'gratefulness' must be defined first. Gratefulness is a word of appreciation uttered by the person who has received a favour to the person who has done him a favour. Gratefulness involves saying to the person who has done you a favour, 'May you have plentiful bounties.' What is faith? Faith is to be certain that Allah is One. Which takes precedence over the other: gratitude or faith? Belief follows after taking advantage of the bounties of Allah. When man has been brought into the universe, he has found it well ordered, and he does not have any idea about religion or the Creator yet. Therefore, he will be eager to know who has created the universe for him.

Then, the messengers were sent to inform the people that the power that created the universe is Allah, Who orders them to follow a particular path. This is how faith is related to the bounties Allah has bestowed upon man. Thankfulness comes first, then faith. Thankfulness is a kind of general form of gratitude, whereas faith is a specific form of gratitude. Thankfulness is related to a specific bounty; whereas faith is addressed to the One Who has bestowed this bounty.

'What would Allah do with your punishment if you are grateful and believe? And ever is Allah Appreciative and Knowing.' (*an-Nisa'*: 147) Allah *Glorified is He* informs the believers that He, Who bestows bounties, also thanks for them. How does this take place?

For example—and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection—a person may buy some toys for his son after providing him with all the necessities of life. No one will buy toys for his son if he has not provided him with food and clothes. Accordingly, a person may buy some toys for his son to fill his leisure time if he has already provided him with proper food and clothes and the necessities of life. Then, the father may tell his son that the toy

is for playing only during leisure time, and he should put it in its proper place before he studies. This means that everything in the house has a specific task that it performs. This also indicates that the father wants to discipline his son, allowing him to play with his toy at the time allotted for that purpose, and disallowing him to play with anything else in the house because if he does, he will break something. For instance, he must not tamper with the TV, the clock, the fridge or the washing machine so as not to break them.

The father must point out to him the difference between the things with which he may play and things he must treat seriously. Things specified for serious purposes should only be used when required; for instance, a washing machine is used only when one wants to wash his clothes. Similarly, a watch may not be used except when one wants to know the time and a fridge is used only when one wants to get something out to eat or drink. House appliances must not be approached except for specific purposes. As for toys, the child may play with during the time allotted for playing; however, he must keep them well. When a father watches his son and sees that he adheres to his instructions, takes care of the house appliances and keeps his toys, he will be happy. Thus, if a father does not give his son instructions, his son may spoil his toys. When the son adheres to the instructions of his father, his father will be content and happy with him. He will also buy more toys for his son because he can trust him, as he knows the rules he ought to follow while playing and how to keep his toy. In addition, his son avoids damaging the house appliances. The father will be more content with his son and will buy for him more new toys. If this is the case in the relationship between the father and his son, who are among Allah's creatures, how will the Creator *the Glorified and Exalted* Who has brought all creatures into being, treat them? If man follows the path of Allah in every aspect of his life, he will find Allah All-Appreciative and All Knowing because Allah is pleased with His servant who adheres to His path and gives him in excess. Allah is All-Appreciative in the sense that if His Servants handle His bounties properly according to the purposes specified for them, Allah will be satisfied with them.

Allah manifests His Contentment by giving His servants in excess of what they need for the necessities of life, as Allah *Glorified is He* provides the

necessities of life to everyone, even the disbelievers. He may also give His servants more than what they necessarily need in order to make them happy.

Therefore, the meaning of 'Allah is All-Appreciative' is that Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* is Content with His servants, and will reward them accordingly. Furthermore, Allah may grant His servants rewards corresponding to what they did or even more, in accordance with His saying, '...If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]...' (*Ibrahim*: 7).

Gratitude is shown by the servant towards his Lord and the Lord gives His servant in excess. A person must not pretend to do good deeds like the child who preserves his toy only when he sees his father, but once his father goes away, he damages it. However, Allah cannot be compared to any father, as any father has finite capability, but Allah is the Sublime Creator Who knows everything. He is All-Appreciative and All Knowing. Then, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* says:

لَا يُحِبُّ اللَّهُ الْجَهْرَ بِالسُّوءِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ سَمِيعًا عَلِيمًا ﴿١٤٨﴾

God does not like bad words to be made public unless someone has been wronged: He is all hearing and all knowing [148] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 148)

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wants to protect the believers from hearing evil sayings, i.e., offensive words. The words people use in their speech are often the words they most hear; if one's ear does not hear a certain word frequently, his tongue is not likely to use it. In this regard, if a child grows up in family observing good manners, he will most likely not utter any offensive words. If this child has started to say offensive words, it is realized that he has heard these words in the street because the child's permanent environment does not use such offensive words. When one investigates the source of these words, he may then find out that the child might spend some time in another environment from which these offensive words were transmitted to him.

Therefore, language is always transmitted through imitating the words uttered, and the tongue utters what the ear hears. It is well known that the acquisition of language is not relevant to one's nationality or lineage. For

instance, if an English child grows up in an Arab environment, he will speak Arabic; and if an Arab child is brought up in an English environment, he will speak English.

Furthermore, within the sphere of a single language, there may be words that one would only use if one hears them; if one does not hear these words, he will not utter them. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wants to protect the society of the believers from evil sayings that may be heard by people, and transmit offensive language to them. If people utter evil sayings, the society will look weird and evil sayings will spread. However, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* instructs the people to avoid uttering the evil sayings which Allah does not like. One should not just utter any word he wishes to say, for the utterance of such a word may harm generations to come. Someone may hear him utter this word and repeat it, and the bad example will be transmitted from one generation to the other. But the one who ultimately bears the sin for such a problem is the one who first uttered the evil saying.

Evil sayings may be based either on truth or falsehood; if it is based on truth, no one will, for instance, say that all people are bad. Someone may start by offending another; and a person may claim that someone has offended him. Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* wants to protect the ears of the believers from hearing evil sayings. Therefore, Allah says, 'Allah does not like the public mention of evil...' (*an-Nisa'*: 148). The opposite of this saying is that Allah likes public mention of good. But does Allah treat any faculty in people at the expense of another when He protects the society of the believers in this manner? No, He does not.

We know that the human self has a desire for revenge, self-defence and retaliation, and is inclined towards what relieves and alleviates anger. There is an Arab proverb that says, 'Whoever is provoked and does not get enraged is a fool'; the underlying rationale is that the one who is provoked and does not get angry is deficient. However, this does not mean that Allah prevents people from uttering an evil saying in order to give vent to one's anger, as He stipulates a condition for the utterance of such a word, '...except by one who has been wronged...' (*an-Nisa'*: 148). The reason is that wronging a person means to misappropriate his right. Everyone is ultimately keen to protect

himself and his rights; therefore, if someone is subjected to any form of injustice, he gets enraged and infuriated. Then, he either gives vent to his rage or suppresses and conceals it.

Thus, had Allah only said, 'Allah does not like the public mention of evil...' (*an-Nisa'*: 148), this would have been a suppression of the human psyche. Even though this suppression is in obedience to Allah's Command because He does not like the public mention of evil, one may fail to control himself when provoked. Therefore, Allah has stipulated the condition under which public mention of evil may be permissible, namely, the occurrence of injustice. Allah clarifies that He does not like the public mention of evil, but He only allows it as a means of giving vent to anger because He does not rectify a faculty at the expense of another. Hence, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* says, 'Anger is an ember ignited in the heart of the son of Adam, as you see it in the redness of his eyes and the bulge of his jugular veins. So, whoever senses something, let him stand if he is sitting and lie down if he is sitting. If he is still angry, he should perform ablution with cold water or wash up, for fire is only put out by water.'⁽¹⁾

This means that one should move once one feels angry, as he should either change his position or pray after he performs ablution or wash up. This is in order for him to give vent to his anger to alleviate his suppressed feelings in the same way one may open a valve of a machine to let out some steam.

Therefore, whoever suffers injustice is permitted to make public mention of evil, and action which has two benefits: first, it allows one to give vent to his anger. Second, it allows the wronged person to declare that a certain person is unjust so that people can take their precautions in dealing with him. In addition, no one would delusively think that he can escape from his evil deeds. If everyone conceals the injustice he suffers, injustice will spread in the society. However, the servants of Allah should not expand the connotation of the word 'wronging' because one may be wronged through either words or

(1) *Related by Al-Bayhaqi in As-Shu'ab; At-Tirmidhi from the narration of Abu Sa'id, except for the word tuqad (ignited), which is mentioned in the original Arabic Hadith; Ahmad and Abu Dawud.*

deeds. The Muslim should also measure things accurately and in proportion to the injustice he suffers.

‘...So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 194). Thus, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* allows us exceptions only as necessary. Allah enjoins that no one should go beyond the limits set for necessity; He knows who is wronged through words or deeds, as He is the All Knowing and All-Hearing Therefore, no one should trespass the limits of courtesy.

Accordingly, Allah sets psychological and faith-based constraints necessary for giving vent to the suppressed anger, and at the same time, He does not preclude the possibility for aspiring for a better reaction based on one’s faith. Allah allows His servant to mention evil openly if he is wronged, but if he aspires to a higher status of faith, he may choose not to mention evil openly and forgive his offender. Therefore, there is a difference between a matter that Allah leaves up to man and another that He obliges him to do. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* has left the matter of mentioning evil openly up to man, but He also likes man to forgive; this shows how the principles mentioned in the Quran are coherent and firmly connected. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.’ (*Fussilat*: 34)

As Allah allows a person to make public mention of evil if someone wrongs him, He also gives another alternative which is to forgive the offender. When the wronged person forgives the person who has wronged him, the latter will most probably feel ashamed as he knows that there are others who are ethically nobler than him. Nothing bothers a person more than seeing another better than him in a certain aspect. When a wrongdoer is forgiven by the one he has wronged, he may feel a strong urge to be better than him.

Therefore, Allah regards the faith-based principle: ‘...Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better...’ (*Fussilat*: 34) preferable, and He does not make it compulsory because if someone is given a right and then is given the choice to take or concede it, this will be satisfactory for everyone. As this principle is not compulsory, it nourishes one’s tendency to be generous and noble, but if it

was compulsory, one faculty would be rectified at the expense of another. When someone assails another and the latter repels the evil of the former with a deed that is better, the assailant's character may be rectified. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend' (*Fussilat*: 34). If the assailant persists in his aggression, the one who is trying to repel his evil with something better must bear in mind that Allah never says anything false, and that there must be some deficiency in the latter's behaviour.

For instance, the one who wants to repel evil with a better deed might have told the wrongdoer condescendingly that he would forgive him; such an arrogant attitude does not make anyone become a devoted friend. By contrast, if the one who is wronged really repels evil with a better deed in a humble and tolerant manner, the situation must evolve in the way Allah describes in His saying: '...and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.' (*Fussilat*: 34) Furthermore, Allah puts the contending psychological reactions within clear frameworks; Allah says: '...So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you....' (*al-Baqara*: 194) This ruling is intended to stop assailants from persisting in their wrongdoing. When certain people are not punished for wronging others, they tend to persist in their misdemeanour. However, if they are deterred, they may give up doing evil; thus, society will be protected from the spread of corruption. However, Allah still made the possibility of justly repelling the assault rather difficult.

A question may be raised: who is capable of achieving justice by attacking back just as he has been attacked? For instance, when someone slaps another person on his face, is it possible for the latter to slap the former with the same force and on the same part of the face? Therefore, repelling aggression with an equally aggressive attack is a difficult matter. Since Allah permits one to repel assault in the same way he was assaulted, and one may not be able to do this justly, as he may excessively attack back and become the offender instead of the offended, then forgiving the offender may be an easier and more accessible solution.

The feelings that overwhelm man as a result of having contending reactions towards a certain situation engender different motives that in turn lead to different inclinations. Inclinations are reactions to perceptions; if someone is hurt or attacked by another, the former exerts effort to control his anger, which means that he has difficulty in suppressing his anger. This implies that anger exists in the heart, and man is only required to control his inclinations. The angry person must prevent himself from being inclined towards evil retaliation, even if anger persists in the heart. '...who restrain anger...' (*Al- 'Imran: 134*). This initial stage is followed by a second stage which is: '...and who pardon the people...' (*Al- 'Imran: 134*).

What is required in the initial stage is to prevent any retaliatory inclination, and it is better to forget about the cause of your anger. The most exalted stage a person may reach in controlling his anger and forgiving those who wronged him is to treat them kindly. The reason is that the wrongdoer's faith is deficient. When someone suffers from physical sickness, help may be extended to him from his enemy, forgetting about their antagonism. If it is possible to react in this manner in the case of physical sickness, then it is more proper to do the same with the one who has deficient values. He needs suppression of anger, forgiveness (which is a nobler action) and kind treatment (which is the noblest action in this case).

Thus, Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* allows repelling attack in the same manner one was attacked, but He gives the option to control anger and avoid attacking back even if the cause of anger lingers in your heart. Then, He gives another option which involves a nobler action: forgiveness, which means forgetting about the cause of anger. Then, Allah allows people to elevate to even higher status in their reaction, as He says: '...and Allah loves the doers of good' (*Al- 'Imran: 134*). In fact, all the Muslims desire that Allah loves them. Accordingly, Islam commands the believer to treat the person who maltreated him kindly.

One may wonder how he can treat the one who maltreated him kindly. The answer is that all people are watched by the Sustainer of all existence, Who is neither overtaken by drowsiness nor sleep, and sees everything. The assailant and the one who was assailed are created by Allah, Who protects,

defends and takes the side of the one who was assailed. This renders whatever evil a person may suffer a gift for you. When we think deeply about the whole matter, we will find that when one forgives, he gains more benefits than in the case that he avenges himself. The rationale behind this is that when a person takes revenge, he uses his limited power, but when he forgives, he leaves the judgment up to Allah and His infinite Power. Then, Allah may respond to the offender's attack or infinitely reward the one who has been offended. This is what Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* does when a wronged yet forgiving and righteous servant takes refuge in Him. Subsequently, Allah says:

إِنْ تُبْدُوا خَيْرًا أَوْ تُخْفُوهُ أَوْ تَعْفُوا عَنْ سُوءٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُوًّا قَدِيرًا ﴿١٤٩﴾

**If you do good, openly or in secret, or if you
pardon something bad, then God is most forgiving
and powerful [149] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 149)**

It is well known that Allah does not permit anyone to make public mention of evil unless he has been wronged. This means that evil may either be concealed or explicitly mentioned. Thus, Allah says, '...If [instead] you show [some] good or conceal it or pardon an offense...' (*an-Nisa'*: 149). This means that Allah knows whether a person does good deeds openly or secretly or pardons others for evil. Forgiveness is not considered a merit from the perspective of faith unless the one who forgives is in a position of power; otherwise, he would not forgive. Allah *Glorified is He* forgives while having power. If a person wants to forgive, he must act according to the ethics set by Allah's Guidance, as it involves forgiveness while being able to retaliate. It should be taken into consideration that Allah does not want the Muslims to be humiliated; rather, he wants them powerful. The true merit is to forgive while being able to retaliate because if a person is not able to retaliate, he cannot be considered as pardoning. If a person who is not able to retaliate shows pardon, people considers him as a coward. However, if one wants to follow the ethical code set by Allah's Guidance, he should utilize Allah's bounties in the world for him to become competent and capable so that if he is wronged, he may forgive while being able to retaliate: '...Allah is ever pardoning and Competent.' (*an-Nisa'*: 149)

As mentioned before, whenever the word *kana*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, is associated with any of Allah's Attributes, it indicates an infinite status and permanent attribute, as Allah's Existence is Infinite. Subsequently, Allah says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا
بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ
وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١٥٠﴾

**As for those who ignore God and His messengers and
want to make a distinction between them, saying,
'We believe in some but not in others,' seeking a
middle way [150] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 150)**

Allah *Glorified is He* makes faith a whole issue whose parts are inseparable. Declaring faith is not enough for someone to be called a believer because in order to have proper faith in Allah, one needs a messenger to teach him that the Creator is the One Who has made all the powers in the universe subservient to man and is named Allah. No one can know the Name of the Creator of the universe without a messenger sent by Allah.

We know that the human mind cannot identify the Name of the Creator of the universe by mere deductions, and man has been introduced to a well-ordered universe. Therefore, he must pay attention to the fact that there is the Power that has existed before the universe was created, and that man exists in an integrated universe. Someone may, for instance, hear his father say that the house was built by the father or the grandfather or the like. But no one has told this same person who erected the sky or created the sun, even though people allege to have done things that they have not actually done. It is thus quite peculiar that people do not inquire about the One Who created the universe.

It is worth-mentioning that people are interested in keeping record of the history of trivial or relatively important things in their lives. In this regard, we find a history of rocks and studies on the history of different industries; for instance, the history of the electric bulb that was invented by Edison who managed to generate electricity using limited resources. In summary, there

are records of the history of almost everything in this world, which trace back the development of things to their respective origins. It is worth mentioning that each industry, no matter how trivial or important it is, has been passed from one person to another, and has not been invented in its present form by a single person.

Each inventor started from the point at which his predecessors had stopped and embarked on a new innovation until innovations have reached their present status. Who would possibly believe that a bulb—that one turns on and off so simply and disposes of when it is damaged—has a history? We may then consider the sun that never fades, wanes or is ever extinguished to draw an analogy. A lamp illuminates a small area, while the sun illuminates the entire universe—is the sun not worthy of inquiring about its history?

As mentioned previously, when man investigates the universe, apart from the idea of religion and what the Messengers conveyed about the Creator of the universe, the way He created it and the guidance, he may realize that people's criteria differ based on their positions and their strength. Someone may be sitting on a chair made of sycamore tree, another on a chair made of rosewood and a third may be sitting on a carpet on the floor.

Man depends on the crafts of other fellow humans based on his status and standing. For instance, a countryman or a nomad used to start a fire by rubbing a piece of iron against a stone; then, he might keep the fire lit to use it more than once. As man developed the methods of igniting fire, he used a lamp lit by oil. As civilization developed further, man used a glass gas-lamp that has a numerical meter indicating the level of light it produces.

For instance, there is a grade five lamp whose number indicates the intensity of the light it produces. Thus, the lamp's light intensity is increased according to the space required to be illuminated. As technology developed, man has used torches; with further technological advancement, man has used electricity, neon and recently solar energy to produce light. However, when the sun rises, people turn off the lights, as the sun light ultimately obviates our need for any other source of light. At night one ensures that the source of electricity in his house is intact to avoid any power failure and darkness. If

this is the case with the lamp, what about the sun with which one does not face all these complications?

Throughout history, man has tried to understand Allah's absolute Omnipotence even without messengers being sent. However, no one can know the Name of the Power that created the universe by reason alone, as it should be conveyed by messengers. The Name 'Allah' is bound by a religious text and can only be known through Revelation. Therefore, how did some disbelievers say that they believed in Allah and disbeliever in His Messengers? How did they know that the Name of the Power in which they would believe is Allah? They must have learnt this name through an earlier messenger because having faith in Allah necessitates that one should have learnt His Name from an earlier messenger whom he believed.

Is it sufficient to have faith in Allah as a Great Power? It is obligatory for a person to think about what this Power expects him to fulfil? If this Power commands man to follow religious guidance, then who must convey it?

Therefore, a messenger must inform the people of the Name of the Power that created the universe, explain the path It requires them to follow, and how to obey this Power. Therefore, no one can separate having faith in Allah from having faith in His Messengers; otherwise, such faith would only be a mere belief in a hidden power. In this regard, the one who merely has faith in the Power that created the universe may not have the right to say that this Power is named 'Allah' because this Name must have been conveyed by a messenger.

Therefore, when someone says that he believes in Allah but does not believe in the Messengers, he should be regarded at fault because believing in Allah requires believing in a message transmitted by a messenger. Therefore, having faith in Allah is inseparable from having faith in the Messenger.

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* created Adam after He had created the universe and the rest of the creatures. No one would possibly claim that Adam is the first creature to have existed in the world. A poet once said:

Adam cannot be - by logic - the first creature in the universe,

By inductive analogy, many creatures were created before him.

It can be said that many creatures were created before Adam, but Adam is the first human being. When Allah created him, He taught him all the names so that he may properly lead his life in the world; had not Allah taught him the names of beings, he would not have been able to converse with his children, and he would not have been able to identify the name of any object.

Therefore, Adam had to learn all the names from Allah because language is mainly transmitted through imitation, and no one can use a word unless he has heard it. Language is transmitted to people by their fathers who acquired it from the grandfathers. If we trace this line of transmission, we will ultimately end with Adam. But who transmitted language to Adam for him to utter the first word? It must have been Allah; this fact must be recognized by every rational human being. Thus, Allah's saying, 'And He taught Adam all the names...' (*al-Baqara*: 31), is logical and true from the perspective of inductive reasoning.

When one teaches his child how to speak, he first teaches him names of things, but no one knows how the child learns the verbs of action. For example, one may teach his child the names of some objects such as a glass, a table, a plate and food, but no one ever teaches his child what the verbs 'drink' or 'eat' means. Therefore, names are the basic parts of speech; subsequently man learns verbs through practice and experience.

Allah has placed in this universe formidable evidence of His Greatness as its Creator, and His Message is conveyed by the messengers who inform people that the Name of the Power who created the universe is Allah. They also tell people the Attributes of this Power, and that whoever obeys Him will be admitted into Heaven, and whoever disobeys Him will be condemned to fire. Had not there been any messengers, people would have continued living astray and would not have learnt the Name of the Power who created the universe. In addition, people would not have learnt what this Power expects from them. This is how we may respond to those who worship the sun, the moon or the stars. They may worship the sun because they consider it as the greatest power.

But there is a question to be asked in this respect, which is, 'What is worship?' Worship is to show obedience on the part of a servant to the One Who surely deserves to be worshipped. So, what did the sun command you

(O worshippers of the sun) to do? And what did it forbid you from? They, the worshippers of the sun, would confess that the sun did not ask them to do anything. Accordingly, their worship to the sun is totally groundless. This is based on the fact that the sun has never laid down a methodology for those misguided people—the sun worshippers—to adhere to, nor is it able to do so. In addition, it cannot provide any reward for the one who worships it. We thus reach the conclusion that worshipping any power other than Allah *the Almighty* can be definitively proved null and void. As a matter of fact, true belief in Allah *the Almighty* is absolutely inseparable from believing firmly in His Messengers and Prophets who conveyed the divine Message to humankind.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explains to us how Allah *Glorified is He* reveals to him by stating that He *the Almighty* impart His Revelation to His Messengers and Prophets through the archangel Jibril (Gabriel). The reason is that any Messenger is ultimately a human being, so he cannot be in direct contact with the Ultimate and Absolute Power in the universe. The same applies to our day-to-day life. We know that when someone wants to sleep, he does not want any light to bother him while sleeping, so he tends to sleep during the night to take advantage of the darkness. However, if he wakes up during the night, he fears walking in the house without light lest he may bump into something. For this reason, one may use a small torch even if the light it produces is as weak as what a candle emits.

In truth, such a small torch cannot be directly connected to the electrical power. It has to be attached to a transformer that receives high voltage power and converts it to the proper voltage this torch may take. If this is the relation between a small electrical instrument and the high voltage electrical power supplies, what would be the relation between Allah *the Almighty* and His Creatures?

As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* created other creatures—like the angels—to act as intermediaries between Him and His Messengers and Prophets. He *the Almighty* in turn fully prepared these angels to properly undertake this special mission. Therefore, we say to those who want to have faith in Allah while rejecting to belief in His Messengers: ‘No; your belief as such is not profound.’ In this regard, it is important to know that Allah *the Almighty* has used the word ‘Messengers’ in the plural form to avoid that a particular nation or people would mistakenly think that its Messenger was the only one

sent by Allah *the Almighty* and then deny the others. Rather, every nation must have faith in all the Messengers and Prophets of Allah *the Almighty*. It is true that every Messenger was timely sent by Allah to respond to the needs of his contemporary society. However, all of them—Messengers and Prophets of Allah—were sent to call for one creed. None of them has been sent with a particular creed that is at odds with the others. This yet does not preclude the fact that they employed different methods and discussed different issues pertaining to life and the way of improving it, each according to his time. Confirming this fact: ‘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, Allah is always watching over you.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 1)

Adam and Eve lived together and gave birth to a number of children who, in turn, started to reproduce and make families. Every family was in need of a house to dwell in and a farm to produce their food. In fact, every individual needs at least half of an acre to produce the food he needs. In this vein, it is important to know that the more the offspring grow in number, the more they need to settle in other places; thus, they will make use of the different means of transportation. In other words, someone may depart from a region with limited natural resources to another where there is abundance in rain, thus getting the greatest benefit. He may also travel to places with more natural resources. It was in this way that people scattered here and there. In addition, each group of people started to develop its own customs and traditions, to the extent that it may be afflicted with certain kinds of diseases which do not afflict others. For this reason, He *the Almighty* sent each Messenger from among his own people to be fully able to address and tackle their own diseases and problems. Furthermore, He *Glorified is He* directed and enabled some minds to discover the secrets of the universe. Due to the progress of knowledge, the entire universe turned into a small village. For instance, we, in Egypt, became able to watch an event which is taking place right now in America. In addition, it is unfortunately due to this progress of knowledge that the entire world started to share the same bad habits. So, a bad practice or habit may emerge in America, and then it gets transferred to Germany, and ultimately

infects our society. Thus, it becomes clear that these ambitious advancements turned the world into a small village with the same defects and the same customs and traditions.

That is why the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, the seal of all the Prophets and Messengers, must have been universal to address all humankind and to fit all times and places. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that Muhammad is the best of all Messengers and Prophets, and that his followers, in case they firmly adhere to his guidance are the best of all peoples and nations. In addition, believing in him *peace and blessings be upon him* necessitates a firm belief in all the Messengers and Prophets that were sent by Allah before him. Consequently, those who want to distinguish among Messengers know nothing about religion. The Jews believed in Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, while some of them rejected to believe in 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Similarly, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a Messenger, some believed in him, while others did not. That is why Allah *the Almighty* refers to those who rejected to believe in him *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying: '...They then increase in unbelief...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 90). This clearly means that those who disbelieve in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have committed a sin which will never be forgiven because there will be no Prophets or Messengers after him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad is the seal of all the Prophets and Messengers.

Thus, the verse obviously indicates that the apex of faith entails that one must believe in the existence of a certain power whose name may not be known to him, and whose requirements and commands may be unclear as well. Furthermore, one may be unaware of the reward this power provides to the obedient or the punishment it afflicts upon the disobedient. That is why people are in a dire need of Messengers and Prophets. In addition, reason leads one to the necessity of having faith in Allah and His Messengers. As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* uses the word 'Messengers' in the plural form to indicate that people must firmly believe that He *the Almighty* is the One Who deserves to be worshipped so that no one will be able to declare that he believes in certain Messengers and Prophets while rejecting others. For this

reason, He *Glorified is He* says in this verse, ‘As for those who deny Allah and His Messengers and want to make a distinction between them, saying, ‘We believe in some but not in others,’ seeking a middle way.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 150)

We know that *kafar*—the Arabic word translated in the above verse as ‘deny’—means to veil and conceal. It is taken for granted that one will hide and conceal an existing object. Thus, to disbelieve in Allah *the Almighty* means to deny and conceal His Existence. This obviously indicates that the Existence of Allah precedes denying Him *the Almighty*. As such, the word *kufri* (disbelief) plainly indicates the Existence of Allah. That is why when we ask the disbelievers, ‘What do you conceal and hide with your disbelief?’ The answer shall be, ‘We conceal and deny the Existence of Allah,’ a matter that obviously tells that he had been a believer before becoming a disbeliever.

Thus, Allah’s words, ‘As for those who deny Allah and His Messengers and want to make a distinction between them...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 150) indicate that those who want to do so are foolish as the ultimate goal behind the mission of all the Prophets and Messengers is to inform people about Allah *the Almighty* the One Who sent them. For this reason, we find that Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran says: ‘O, Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be tough with them. Hell is their final home— an evil destination!’ (*at-Tawba*: 74)

In truth, belief in Allah is ultimately inseparable from belief in His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, only fools would want to differentiate between having faith in Allah and having faith in His Messengers. To those who make such a distinction, we say: ‘Faith is of one essence and all the Messengers and Prophets of Allah were sent to achieve one ultimate objective; that is, to call people for the Oneness of Allah.’ This point is proved by Allah’s words in the same chapter of *an-Nisa'* in which He *Glorified is He* plainly states that: ‘Indeed, we have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], as we revealed to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him. And we revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David we gave the book [of Psalms].’ (*an-Nisa'*: 163)

This clearly shows that all creeds are of the same origin and that they are, in essence, various forms of one single creed. So, what do they seek to achieve

by believing in some Messengers and abjuring others? They undoubtedly seek temporary power and authority. In the past, those in charge of religion used to address all matters and issues, be they religious, judicial or even pertaining to engineering. For this reason, people trusted them because they truly believed that they were the ones who delivered the Message of Allah *the Almighty* to humankind. In addition, they thought of them as the heirs of the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. Furthermore, people believed that they were the only ones entitled to acquire knowledge from Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, we notice that most of the advanced sciences in ancient civilizations, like mummification in the ancient Egyptian civilization which is a riddle until today, were all practiced by priests of ancient Egypt. This implies that Allah is the origin of all the knowledge man attained on earth. The question to be asked here is, 'Why did humans then pass their own laws?' The reason is that clergymen usurped the temporary power and authority. But what does the term 'temporary power' mean? In truth, people used to resort to clergymen for advice in all matters, to the extent that they—the clergymen—fully realised that everyone wanted to make them content. People used to give them offerings and sacrifices just like they used to do with their so-called deities. Therefore, clergymen became extremely rich and lived in luxury to the point that they became very overweight due to the excessive amounts of food and the pleasures they used to indulge in. Therefore, when someone asked any of them about any matter, they used to give that person the opinion that would guarantee and assert their temporary power. This is why when a Messenger or a Prophet would come about and try to abolish these privileges, they (clergymen) would deny him so that they would continue to be at the top of the hierarchy of power and authority. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing.' (*at-Tawba*: 9) This means that they bartered away the Messages of Allah for a trifling gain of worldly pleasures; they gave up the Messages of Allah for a disdainful handful of worldly pleasures.

If we extensively investigate the history of law, we will find that the laws of the ancient clergymen accurately represented the early origins of the British, French and Roman Laws. As a matter of fact, the main reason that made people repel ancient clergymen is that they misused their temporary power.

Furthermore, people at that time noticed that each of those clergymen would pass different rulings for identical cases, and that they would be willing to change their verdicts for money. Consequently, people started to have suspicions about them and realised that they would twist their rulings to accommodate their interests. For this reason, people decided not to resort to clergymen for judgement anymore and started to make their own positive laws. Therefore, it becomes clear now that ‘temporary power’ was the main reason why some of the followers of the Messengers were biased towards them, to the extent that if another Messenger came about, they would fiercely resist his Message lest he should take away their temporary power. Thus, they would antagonise the new Messenger or Prophet. In fact, every new Messenger or Prophet is required to teach his followers and those who chose to believe in him that, if a Messenger of Allah comes forth, they should hasten to believe in him. This point is definitely proved by the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* clearly that says: ‘And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], "Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him." [Allah] said, "Have you acknowledged and taken upon that my commitment? " They said, "We have acknowledged it." He said, "Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.’ (*Al-Imran*: 81)

Thus, He *the Almighty* accepted the previous Prophets’ solemn pledge to inform the people of the sequence of the divine Messages from the beginning until the seal of all the Prophets and Messengers—Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘As for those who deny Allah and His Messengers and want to make a distinction between them, saying, “We believe in some but not in others,” seeking a middle way,’ means that they try to draw distinction between Allah and His Messengers by passing judgment, which is primarily concerned with keeping their temporary power. In doing so, they were interested in creating an ‘in-between faith and infidelity’ situation. But there is no possibility for such a thing in religion; you either have faith or you are an unbeliever. If we reflect carefully on the structure of this verse, we will find that its meaning is perfected and fulfilled in the following verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says:

أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴿١٥١﴾

they are really disbelievers: We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve [151]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 151)

As a matter of fact, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'They are really disbelievers,' clearly means that they are complete unbelievers. At that point, we may be faced with the following question, 'Is there one who is a complete unbeliever and another who is not?' The answer is 'Yes.' The one who does not believe in all the heavenly revealed Messages may have some excuse because no Messenger or Prophet had been sent to his people. However, unbelief would be egregious if it were committed by someone to whom a Messenger was sent. That is because this Messenger had informed such a person with the truth conveyed to him through revelation.

We notice that when Allah *the Almighty* talks about the disbelievers, He *Glorified is He* mentions the punishment prepared for them in the same verse. That is why we find Him *the Almighty* clearly stating this fact in His saying, 'They are really disbelievers: We have prepared a humiliating punishment for those who disbelieve.' This verse indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* has already mentioned the punishment prepared for the disbelievers in the Hereafter. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is reported to have said, 'The paradise was shown to me. If I wished, I would bring you some of its fruits.'⁽¹⁾ Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* has created Paradise and Hellfire. In addition, He *Glorified is He* showed paradise to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, to the effect that if he wished, he would have brought his Companions some of its fruits. Therefore, do not think that He *the Almighty* would wait till Judgment Day to prepare the abode of the disbelievers—that is, hellfire. Similarly, He *the Almighty* would not wait to the Day of Judgment to prepare the abode of the believers—that is, paradise. In the Quran, Allah tells that: 'Those are the inheritors' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11).

As such, it becomes clear that Allah *Glorified is He* did not wait and postpone the matter until after surveying who believed and who did not so that He may prepare for each group, in proportion to its number, its proper

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

abode, be it Paradise or Hellfire. Rather, He *the Almighty* considered that all of His creatures might be believers, and thus prepared an abode for all of them in paradise. Similarly, He *Glorified is He* considered that all His creatures might be unbelievers and thus created the fire in such a way that is spacious enough to include them all. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'On the Day We will say to Hell, "Have you been filled?" and it will say, "Are there some more' (*Qaf*: 30) The fire asks for more people to fill the places that were originally prepared for those who were not admitted into it as result of believing in Allah. As for those who disbelieved in Allah and His Messengers, who made a distinction between Allah and His Messengers and who believed in some Messengers and abjured others, Allah will allow the believers on the Day of Judgement to inherit the places originally prepared for them in paradise. Having shed light on the punishment prepared for the disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* then cast light on the reward that will be provided for those who believed in Allah and His Messengers. In truth, this is logical and reasonable.

Juxtaposing opposites helps the mind to assimilate them. For instance, a school headmaster may juxtapose two young men; each of them is a student in the last year at a high school. The headmaster may then say: 'Look! This young man succeeded because he worked assiduously, whereas the second failed.' This contrast prompts the listener to compare between the attitudes of each of the two students. Similarly, He *the Almighty* having shed light on the disbelievers and the punishment prepared for them, cast light on the believers and the reward to be provided for them. He *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ ۖ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُوْلَٰئِكَ
سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرُهُمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا

But God will give [due] rewards to those who believe in Him and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them. God is most forgiving and merciful [152] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 152)

Here Allah *the Almighty* asserts an obvious matter, that is, the believers make no distinction whatsoever among the Messengers of Allah. As a matter of fact, the word *ahad*—the Arabic word here translated as 'any'—is sometimes used to refer to the masculine singular and sometimes to the feminine singular.

In addition, it sometimes refers to the dual masculine, the dual feminine, the feminine plural or the masculine plural. Thus, this particular word *ahad* refers to all the Messengers of Allah *Glorified is He*. The fact that this word may be used to refer to both the masculine and the feminine may be confirmed by the Quranic verse in which Allah *the Almighty* addresses the Mothers of the Believers and tells them that: ‘O wives of the Prophet, you are not like anyone among women. If you fear Allah, then do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech’ (*al-Ahzab*: 32) As such, it becomes clear that the word *ahad* is used in the Arabic language to equally refer to the masculine, the feminine, the dual and the plural. Having talked about the disbelievers who made distinction between Allah and His Messengers, and having told that He *the Almighty* had prepared for them a humiliating punishment, He *Glorified is He* similarly told that the believers who did not make distinction between Allah and His Messengers will receive a great reward. He *the Almighty* finally concludes the verse by telling that He is Most-Forgiving and Most-Merciful. He *the Almighty* then says:

يَسْأَلُكَ أَهْلُ الْكِتَابِ أَنْ تُنْزِلَ عَلَيْهِمْ كِتَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَقَدْ سَأَلُوا مُوسَىٰ أَكْبَرَ مِنْ
ذَلِكَ فَقَالُوا أَرَنَا اللَّهَ فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ يُظْلِمُهُمْ ثُمَّ اتَّخَذُوا الْعِجْلَ مِن
بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ فَعَفَوْنَا عَنْ ذَلِكَ وَإِنَّا لَمُوسَىٰ سُلْطٰنًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٥٣﴾

The People of the Book demand that you [Prophet] make a book physically come down to them from heaven, but they demanded even more than that of Moses when they said, ‘Show us God face to face,’ and were struck by the thunderbolt for their presumption. Even after clear revelations had come down to them, they took the calf as an object of worship, yet We pardoned this, and gave Moses clear authority [153] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 153)

The verse under discussion tells us clearly that the question asked by the people of the Book was wrong, for they were supposed to demand that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked Allah *the Almighty* to make a book physically come down upon them from the heavens. In truth, the polytheists of Mecca who were masters of eloquence, elocution and fluency tried their best to find a flaw in the Quran, but they found nothing. Thus, they admitted

the fact that the Quran was a great and a heavenly revealed Book, but the only problem for them was that they wished that the Quran had been revealed upon one of the masters of the two cities 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) They recognised the greatness of the Quran, yet they were angry at the fact that it had been revealed upon the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a matter that made them intellectually disturbed. As a matter of fact, the polytheists and disbelievers of Mecca believed that the Quran was some sort of magic; other times, they claimed that it was taught to Prophet Muhammad by another human being; they also thought of it as some kind of poetry. Furthermore, they said that it was part of ancient mythology and legends. Having closely scrutinised it, they firmly believed that it was a heavenly revealed Book. Yet, the only problem for them was that it has been revealed upon the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*! They wished it had been revealed upon one of the masters of the two cities. In truth, they did all of this out of envy; a point which is affirmed in the Quran where He *the Almighty* says: 'Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty? But we had already given the family of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom and conferred upon them a great kingdom.' (*an-Nisa'*: 54)

Hence, their statement was by no means objective; it was rather quite remote from truth and abounded with confusion. They once said the Quran was a work of magic, but they did not find any answer when people asked them: 'Why did the Quran not enchant you then? Because if it were actually a work of magic, it would have enchanted you, and you would not have a will independent of the will of the magician.' Then, they claimed that it was none but some sort of poetry; a point that aroused people's surprise, especially if we consider this false claim in the light of the fact that they—the Arabs—were masters of poetry, to the extent that they had hung seven of their most wonderful poems on the walls of the *Ka'ba*. Therefore, it becomes clear that the biggest issue for the disbelievers and polytheists of Mecca was that they had refused to embrace Islam to the extent that whenever their arguments were proved weak and spurious, they used to fabricate new ones.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* explains that if they were asking for a book to physically come down from heaven, a Book (the Quran) had already

been revealed to you exactly as much as the Torah was previously revealed to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Since they believed that a Book was revealed to Musa (Moses) from heaven, why did they not believe in the revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? As a matter of fact, there must be a special meaning in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*, 'The People of the Book demand that you [Prophet] make a book physically come down to them from heaven....' We know for certain that the Book, Torah, was revealed to Musa (Moses) all at once. Further, the Jews asked for the Quran to be revealed in the same a way as the Torah of Prophet Musa (Moses) was revealed. If we ponder carefully over this verse, we will find out that they were asking for a book to be revealed to them directly from the Heavens, as if they wanted to isolate Messenger Muhammad. In other words, it is as if they wanted Allah *the Almighty* to speak to them directly away from him *peace and blessings be upon him*. That is why He *the Almighty* rebukes them in another verse of the Quran and says 'Do they distribute the mercy of your Lord? It is we who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32)

This indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* distributed the means of livelihood to humankind in the worldly life including the topic of revelation which is an infinite, divine Mercy from Allah *the Almighty* so the disbelievers are in no way allowed to interfere in the affairs of the universe. When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The People of the Book demand that you [Prophet] make a book physically come down to them from heaven...', it indicates that they, people of the Book, attributed the revelation to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in spite of the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* never attributed the process of revelation to himself. In truth, all the time, he used to stress that fact by saying, 'Allah revealed so and so to me.'

It was narrated that Ka'ab ibn Al- Ashraf and others wanted Allah *the Almighty* to send down a book to each ordering them to believe in Prophet Muhammad. Thus, they—people of the Book —wanted a book to be revealed down to each of them in a personal way or that Allah *Glorified is He* would send them

another book in addition to the Quran. But how could they make such demand even though they had the Torah?! At that point, Allah *the Almighty* wants to console Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and so tells him not to be disappointed by the people of the Book's demands because they had previously asked Musa (Moses) for something which was even more than that when they said to Moses, 'Show us Allah *the Almighty* face to face.' As a matter of fact, by doing so, they committed injustice against Allah *the Almighty* Himself. As such, you (O Prophet Muhammad) should not be disappointed or even surprised by their demand to you to send down a book upon them from heaven. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The People of the Book demand that you [Prophet] make a book physically come down to them from heaven, but they demanded even more than that of Moses when they said, "Show us Allah face to face," and were struck by the thunderbolt for their presumption.'

In truth, once we see the word *as-sa'iqha*—the Arabic word translated here as 'thunderbolt'—we should first understand that it refers to something that comes from above and starts with a disturbing sound. While explaining that particular verse in the chapter *al-Baqara*, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers' (*al-Baqara*: 19) I pointed out that this act plainly indicates that the sound of the thunderbolts is so piercing that it may even damage the ear drums. Furthermore, the noise caused by the sound of thunderbolts may exceed the isolation provided by one finger because when one blocks his ears, he often does so with the end of his finger and not with all of them. Thus, the level of disturbance caused by the sound of the thunderbolts was so piercing and powerful that whenever they put their fingers into their ears, they failed to shut it out.

Obedying the Command of Allah, thunderbolts may destruct, burn or even come with a fierce wind that wipes out everything. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... and (they) were struck by thunderbolts for their injustice...'. *Azh-zhulm*—the Arabic word here translated as 'injustice'—means to give someone something to which he is not rightfully entitled. In fact, one would not be able to do so unless he usurped that particular thing from its rightful

owner. As such, we should know that their question is a kind of wickedness and presumption because perception implies that the perceiver has comprehended what he perceived.

Thus, if you perceive something with your eyes, this means that your eyes have comprehended this object and encompassed its details. The same holds true for the ears when they hear, the nose when it smells, the sense of touch when it distinguishes between smoothness and roughness, and the sense of taste when tasting food. As such, it becomes clear that perception, regardless of the sense employed, means to fully comprehend the perceived object.

The people of the Book demanded to see Allah *the Almighty* face-to-face. This means that they wanted the instrument of perception—the eye—to realise the essence of Allah *the Almighty*. But when the perceiver is able to comprehend and realise the essence of the perceived object, it means that the former dominates the latter; a matter which is inconceivable to be achieved on the part of Allah *Glorified is He*. Indeed, this is the absolute and ultimate form of wickedness and presumption. It is possible that someone may see another; however, it is not right to think that one could do the same with Allah *the Almighty*. Why so? It is because He *Glorified is He* tells us in the Quran that ‘Vision perceives Him not, but He perceives [all] vision; and He is the Subtle, the Acquainted.’ (*al-An‘am*: 103) It is taken for granted that Allah is the fully capable and thus none may ever be capable of dominating or encompassing Him.

If we select someone to solve a problem, this indicates that his mind is capable of solving it and finding an answer to it. Yet, if he were handed a problem and he failed to solve it, it means that his mind was incapable of handling it. Likewise, anything that is perceived attests that the tool employed to perceive it could dominate it.

At that point, it is of great importance to stress the fact that Allah is fully capable and Most-Exalted, and thus no creature is ever capable of dominating or even encompassing Him. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and (they) were struck by the thunderbolt for their presumption. Even after clear revelations had come down to them, they took the calf as an object of worship...’ As a matter of fact, they should have at least disciplined themselves and quit trespassing the Limits and Laws of Allah, especially after the thunderbolt of punishment

struck them 'And when the two companies saw one another, the companions of Moses said, "Indeed, we are to be overtaken!" (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) The sea was ahead of them and Pharaoh was behind them; logic tells that there was no way to escape Pharaoh's punishment. Yet, Allah *the Almighty* inspired Moses. '[Moses] said, "No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Musa (Moses), in fact, resorted to the Supreme Power of Allah *the Almighty* and thus He commanded him to strike the sea with his staff. The sea was then split into two halves; each like a great mountain. However, after they walked on the bottom of the sea and after they realised the drowning of Pharaoh, they worshipped a golden calf paying no attention at all to the fact that He *the Almighty* had saved them from being destructed by the Pharaoh and his soldiers. They repaid Allah's Favour upon them with denial and disbelief. He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse by saying, '...Even after clear revelations had come down to them, they took the calf as an object of worship, yet We have pardoned this and given Moses clear authority.' The clear proof and authority that Allah *the Almighty* vouchsafed unto Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the strict rule He imposed on them when He *Glorified is He* ordered them to kill themselves. Thus, they brought their swords to kill themselves because He *the Almighty* gave Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the power and authority, and thus no one dared to disobey his command. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَهُمُ الطُّورَ بِمِثْقَلِهِمْ وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْبَابَ سُجَّدًا وَقُلْنَا لَهُمْ لَا تَعْدُوا فِي السَّبْتِ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا ﴿١٥٤﴾

**We made the mountain tower high above them at their pledge;
We said to them, 'Enter the gate humbly,' and, 'Do not break
the Sabbath,' and took a solemn pledge from them [154]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 154)**

As such, it becomes clear that the Jews transgressed the limits and laws when they asked to see Allah *the Almighty* face to face. Then, they transgressed for the second time when they worshipped a golden calf. Allah thereby decided to address them through such commands that have a material, sensible bearing. In this vein, He *the Almighty* caused Mount Sinai to quake over them;

a fact which is clearly mentioned in the chapter of *al-'Araf* in which He *Glorified is He* states that 'And [mention] when We raised the mountain above them as if it was a dark cloud and they were certain that it would fall upon them, [and Allah said], "Take what We have given you with determination and remember what is in it that you might fear Allah.'" (*al-A'raf*: 171)

Only material signs compelled the Jews, who transgressed the Limits of Allah, to carry out the divine orders and commands. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* caused Mount Sinai to quake above them. Thus, they should either embrace and obey what Allah revealed to them wholeheartedly or be killed—since Mount Sinai would fall upon them by Allah's permission. Hence, we can see that they were only persuaded by commands which bore material results. That is why we find that all the Divine Commands and Decrees enacted upon them were expressed in material terms. Allah's saying, '...We said to them, 'Enter the gate, humbly,' means that to enter the gate while prostrating; again, this form of subjugation is expressed in a material sense. The gate Musa (Moses) commanded them to enter humbly was the gate of the village of Ariha in Ash-Sham⁽¹⁾. Allah *the Almighty* then orders them not to break the Sabbath. As a matter of fact, this part of the verse may be explained in the light of another verse in the chapter of *al-'Araf* in which Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about the Jews and how they used to break the law of Sabbath by fishing. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And ask them about the town that was by the sea - when they transgressed in [the matter of] the sabbath - when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day, and the day they had no sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did we give them trial because they were defiantly disobedient.'" (*al-A'raf*: 163)

The word *as-sabt*—Sabbath—is etymologically derived from *sabat* and *yasbutu* which means to calm down. This meaning is confirmed by another verse of the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And it is He who has made the night for you as clothing and sleep [a means for] rest and has made the day a resurrection.'" (*al-Furqan*: 47) This means that sleep is intended to be a period of respite wherein you discontinue your work and rest your bodies. Allah *Glorified is He* forbade them to go fishing on Sabbath days. However, it was

(1) Levantine coast

only on Sabbath when fish would come to their shores enticing them with their fins as they swam everywhere above the water surface. As a matter of fact, this was intended as a test for them because fish would not come to them on other than on Sabbath days. This means that they did not find any fish on the days when they were allowed to go fishing. For this reason, they started coming up with ways to violate Allah's Law; they thus spread nets so that fish would enter on the Sabbath day and would not be able to go out of it afterwards.

As such, the children of Israel disobeyed the command of Allah *the Almighty*. In such a way, Allah tells us about the deceit of the children of Israel. Allah *the Almighty* conferred a lot of favours upon them, yet they disobeyed His commands and violated His Laws. It is of great importance here to know that when Allah *the Almighty* postpones afflicting people with His punishments, He takes into consideration that He created them. In addition, He *Glorified is He* considers that because of their human instinct, they may not easily respond to the call to faith at first. Thus, He calls upon them to have faith, but their instincts refuse to respond, and so He forgives them. He calls upon them again, but they do not respond, and so He forgives them. Allah then calls upon them for the third time, but they do not respond and still He forgives them. Furthermore, even though He *the Almighty* took a solemn pledge from them that they must obey Him, they ultimately disobeyed and broke their covenant with Him. Therefore, Allah, being fully aware of the human nature, informs us of what happened with the children of Israel so that we would learn that if Allah is never bored of calling people to have faith, nor is He bored of constantly forgiving their sins. He *the Almighty* then says,

فِيمَا نَقَضُوا عَلَيْهِمْ مِيثَقَهُمْ وَكَفَرُوا بِهِمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَقَتْلِهِمُ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ وَقَوْلِهِمْ قُلُوبُنَا غُلْفٌ بَلْ طَعَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا بِكُفْرِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا



And so for breaking their pledge, for rejecting God's revelations, for unjustly killing their prophets, for saying 'Our minds are closed' – No! God has sealed them in their disbelief, so they believe only a little [155] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 155)

The people of the Book broke all the aforementioned pledges and covenants. A pledge is a confirmed, clearly codified covenant. Breaking a covenant

means it becomes no longer in practice; this actually is what made them entitled to be afflicted with the punishment He *the Almighty* threatened them with. They refused to acknowledge the signs that Allah sent to vindicate and advocate Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. In addition, they unjustly killed the Prophets of Allah. To justify their attitude, they claimed that their hearts were *ghulf*—the Arabic word here translated by the phrase ‘Our hearts are closed.’ This is why they could not respond to the calls to have faith. Describing their hearts as *ghulf* means that they are covered and sealed, to an effect that nothing may go into them or even out of them. In fact, they put forward this statement by way of emending what Allah said. That is, they said that no misguidance could be purged out of their hearts nor can any faith enter them. In truth, this is the ordinary nature of the disbelievers. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says that the disbelievers will never have faith—whether they are warned or not. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed, those who disbelieve - it is all the same for them whether you warn them or do not warn them - they will not believe.’ (*al-Baqara*: 6-7)

In response to them, we wonder: Were your hearts created closed and sealed? In other words, were they created sealed, accepting no guidance and allowing no misguidance to be purged out of them? Or is it rather that you are the ones who made such a seal and stamped it on your hearts?

In the aforementioned two verses of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *the Almighty* explicitly tells that He is the One Who has sealed their hearts and cast a veil over their eyes. As for the hearts of the disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* has sealed them so that they would not be able to recognise the path to guidance because the heart is the faculty through which one is able to recognise guidance, attain faith and embrace creeds. The veil on their hearing and eyes means that He *the Almighty* covered and closed the faculties whereby they may perceive the clear evidence that enables them to identify the Existence of Allah, *the Most High*. Thus, the heart, the abode of creed and faith, has been sealed and the ears and eyes have been veiled; but the question to be asked here is: Does this truly reflect their inborn nature? No; because if it were, we might wonder: Why did Allah specifically create them with this nature? We may also wonder: Why were those who were guided, not created with sealed hearts and veiled eyes and hearing either?’

However, each of the disbelievers justified his deviation and misguidance to himself and others by saying: ‘Allah created me like this,’ which is sheer lying. Allah *the Almighty* —who is Self-Sufficient and in no need of an associate—will let the disbeliever adhering to his disbelief as long as he is content with it. Thus, their hearts were sealed as a result of their disbelief.

The aforementioned verses of the chapter of *al-Baqara* put forward the evidence in support of this divine law. They tell that when one turns into a disbeliever, his heart is consequently sealed. In addition, his hearing and eyes will be veiled and covered as a result of this disbelief. This point is definitely proved by the verse under discussion in the chapter of *an-Nisa'* in which Allah *the Almighty* makes clear this order, ‘...for saying “Our hearts are closed” - No! Allah has sealed them in their disbelief.’ This is a response to anyone who may say: ‘Allah does not guide me.’ In saying so, this person does not pay heed to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* does not guide the one who abjures Him. The same holds true for the immoral and the wrongdoer. A striking example in this regard is Satan who first abjured Allah and thus Allah forsook and abandoned him.

Let us examine the wording of the Allah’s words, ‘And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge...’ In fact, the superficial understanding of the fundamental rules of the Arabic style may lead someone to wonder: Why was the particle *ma* used in this context? In response to this question, some claimed that *ma* was inessential in this context. To those who claim so, we say that it is totally wrong to say that there is a single letter or particle in the Quran that is inessential. If you say so, this would imply that the meaning of the sentence would be complete without it; such a letter or particle would thus be futile and excessive. Instead, you should say that you do not understand why this particle was used in this context; especially because now we live in an age in which our knowledge of Arabic rhetoric is rather artificial since we no longer possess natural fluency in Arabic. Indeed, if we do not learn Arabic, we will never be able to speak it. By contrast, the eloquent Arab, to whom the Quran was revealed, used to speak Arabic fluently with no need to learn from a teacher. This means that no one, for instance, taught him that the last syllable of the subject of any verbal sentence should have a ‘u’ sound

accent on it, and that the last syllable of the object should have a higher accent on it. Rather, he spoke Arabic naturally and with spontaneous skill.

By contrast, we live in a different age in which foreign accents have dominated our language and filled our ears with linguistic mistakes. We have thus become in need of teaching ourselves the rules of the Arabic language in order to be able to speak it properly.

Most of the rules of Arabic grammar are inferred from the primordial sense of Arabic language that was inborn among Arabs without education. This is how the scholars of Arabic induced the rules of the language. In this vein, they discovered that there is always a 'u' sound accent on the last syllable on the subject of any verbal sentence; also, if the number of the subject of any sentence is dual, then the letter *'alif* replaces the 'u' sound accent; and that if the subject is a regular masculine plural, then the letter *waw* replaces the 'u' sound accent. The rules of Arabic grammar have thus been deduced from the discourse of those who spoke the language spontaneously, naturally and instinctually.

When the Quran was first revealed, the Arabs heard the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'and so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge...' and no one of them said that it deviates from the rules of proper style. We know for certain that some of the Arabs did not believe in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and did not believe in the Quran. Therefore, if there had been a single word that deviated from the familiar rules in language, they would have pointed it out and made a huge fuss about it. The Quran, the everlasting miracle of Prophet Muhammad, challenged the Arabs, who were masters of eloquence and rhetoric, to produce even one verse similar to that of the Quran, but they were unable to do so.

It goes without saying that any deviant would always try to seize any opportunity to expose the mistakes of his enemy, but not a single Arab said that there is a single error in the Quran; a matter that definitively proves that the style of the Quran is in total agreement with the Arabic linguistic instinct.

Allah' words, 'and so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge...' means 'because they broke their pledge to Allah, We have caused them to suffer.' But why was the particle *ma* used here? Some scholars said: 'It was added in this context to stress the meaning.' However, we repeat what

we said before that it is totally wrong to say that there is an inessential particle or letter in the Quran; *ma* was used in this context for a specific purpose.

‘O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger to make clear to you [the religion] after a period [of suspension] of messengers, lest you say, "There came not to us any bringer of good tidings or a warner." But there has come to you a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And Allah is over all things competent. (*al-Ma'ida*: 19) Some scholars have said that the sentence did not originally contain that preposition *min* and that it was added so that the syntax of the sentence would be coherent. In this vein, we say: ‘If the sentence did not contain the preposition *min*, it would be semantically inadequate.’ I will give the following example to illustrate this point—and Allah has the most supreme parable. Someone may say: ‘I have no money’; the word ‘no’ negates the statement that the speaker has money; however, it may be the case that he has too little a sum to be considered money. But if someone says, ‘I have no money at all,’ this means that he has absolutely no money, that he is completely bankrupt and that he does not have anything that could be considered money. Therefore, the meaning of the saying ‘...No bearer of glad tidings has come unto us or any warner...’ with the preposition *min* following the negation article is different from the meaning of the sentence without it. The meaning in the former case is that no Messenger whether in the form of a bearer of glad tidings or in the form of a Warner has ever been sent to them.

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge...’ it means that because they broke their pledge, Allah has done something to them. But if this is the case, why did scholars make all this fuss about the use of *ma* in this context? The reason is the placing of *ma* after the preposition *ba'* and before a verbal noun. This means that they have broken their pledge in every possible way. In fact, breaking a pledge or a covenant has different forms. The particle *ma* in this context is interrogative and is intended to make the statement an exclamation; that is, for what form of breaking and violating their pledge may We punish them?! We punished them because they broke a lot of covenants and pledges they gave to Us. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And so for breaking their pledge, for rejecting

Allah's Revelations, for unjustly killing their Prophets, for saying 'Our hearts are closed'- No! Allah has sealed them in their disbelief, so they believe only a little.' (*an-Nisa*: 155)

So, the question to be asked here is why did Allah *Glorified is He* frame this verse in the existing structure? In fact, the presence of the particle *bal*, the Arabic particle translated here as 'No', indicates that we missed an important point. For instance, when we say, 'Zayd came to me. Oh, No! It is 'Amr who came,' this means that the speaker committed a mistake; initially, he said: 'Zayd came', he then corrected his statement: 'Oh, No! It is 'Amr who came.' By saying so, the speaker negated the coming of Zayd and confirmed the coming of 'Amr.

Allah *the Almighty* has said, '...No! Allah has sealed them in their disbelief, so they believe only a little.' Normally, one would say, 'and so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge, and their unjustly slaying of Prophets, Allah has sealed their hearts.' But Allah *the Almighty* did not say so due to His Great and Profound Wisdom. In truth, in order to fully and perfectly understand this wisdom, we should consider the opposite of the statement '...Allah has sealed their hearts..., ' which is 'Allah has opened their hearts to accept guidance.' In fact, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* expressly reflected their stance. Hence, we see and fully realise the greatness of the Quran since it conveys every meaning in the most accurate way. This is why we have to ponder over and contemplate every word of it.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the reasons why He did those things to them, including their breaking of their pledges, their refusal to acknowledge Allah's Messages and their killing the Prophets wrongfully; it is for all these reasons that Allah did not open their hearts to guidance. Therefore, Allah has sealed their hearts as a result of their denial of the truth. The existence of the particle *bal* obviously indicates that something has been negated, while another has been affirmed. The negation is clearly manifested in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* has not opened their hearts to belief and guidance. As for what is affirmed, Allah *the Almighty* affirms that He has sealed their hearts as a result of their denial of the truth. This fact is mentioned elsewhere in the Quran, in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, 'And they said, "Our hearts are wrapped."

But, [in fact], Allah has cursed them for their disbelief, so little is it that they believe.' (*al-Baqara*: 88)

This verse indicates that it is not that their hearts were already sealed; it is rather that Allah has cursed, alienated, banished and dispensed with them. For this reason, He *the Almighty* has abandoned them to themselves and let desires dominate them. But why has He *Glorified is He* concluded the verse saying, 'So they believe only a little'? This statement indicates that the path to faith has not been completely denied to those people. Therefore, this sentence is put here by way of securing and allowing for a possible change. For instance, one of those may pronounce that he has attained faith and has been concealing it lest he may be afflicted with harm. But how would any of them have a chance to have faith in the light of the verse in which Allah states clearly that 'He had sealed their hearts'? Answering this question, we can say that this part of the verse obviously indicates that the door to belief is open to all humankind, yet the children of Israel who committed the atrocities mentioned in the verse, would be unable to enter that door. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَبِكْفَرِهِمْ وَقَوْلِهِمْ عَلَىٰ مَرْيَمَ بُهْتَنًا عَظِيمًا

And because they disbelieved and uttered a terrible slander against Mary [156] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 156)

Someone may wonder: Has not Allah *the Almighty* already said that their disbelief was one of the reasons why He has sealed their hearts? To this person, I say: Do not think that there is any repetition in the Quran, not even a single word because the Quran is the Speech of Allah *the Almighty* Who forgets nothing and repeats nothing without a reason. In this regard, it is important to know that disbelief is of various degrees; it may take the form of denying Allah; further, it may take the form of denying the Messages and Revelations of Allah; yet, other times it may assume the form of denying Messengers and Prophets; it may also assume the form of not believing in some of the Prophets and it may even be by abjuring some of the heavenly revealed Scriptures.

Thus, there are different forms of disbelief. The particular form of disbelief referred to in the previous verse has to do with denying the Revelations of

Allah *the Almighty* whereas the verse under discussion indicates clearly that their disbelief this time pertains to their denial of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and the terrible slander they made against Maryam (Mary). Hence, it is disbelief in Allah's Revelations and in His Messenger.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'and for their refusal to acknowledge the truth...' is associated by the conjunction of 'and' with His sayings in the previous verse: 'breaking their pledges', 'their refusal to acknowledge Allah's Messages', 'their slaying of the Prophets against all right' and 'their boast: "...Our hearts are already sealed..."'. But we notice here that Allah *the Almighty* did not use the particle *ba'* (preposition) as He did before in 'And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge.'

This shows the infinite Mercy of Allah *the Almighty*. Any of the deeds they committed would have been sufficient reason for Allah to seal their hearts. Yet, they did not do just one deed, they committed all of them. This definitively proves that Allah is neither waiting for His servants to sin nor willing to lure them into slipping in disbelief. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* wants to endear faith to His Servants.

The children of Israel had indeed committed egregious deeds: they broke their pledge, refused to acknowledge Allah's Messages, killed Prophets wrongfully and alleged that Allah had sealed their hearts. It is noteworthy to mention here that the fact He *the Almighty* considered all these deeds as a single crime is due to His Grace and Mercy.

Allah *the Almighty* then tells about another crime of theirs, that is, 'And for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they utter against Mary.' Here, we notice that Allah *Glorified is He* equated their utterance of a terrible calumny against Mary with all the foregoing evil deeds they committed. The reason is that they objected to the mission of 'Isa (Jesus) even though he *peace be upon him* was one of the Messengers endowed with constancy. Indeed, their objection to his mission may have been among the reasons why some people rejected to believe in him.

The creation of 'Isa (Jesus) is undoubtedly miraculous. It goes without saying that all human beings reproduced by mating. Yet, 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was created in a very special way, that is, not through the natural

process of reproduction. So, how come they abjured him and accused his mother, the Virgin Mary *Allah be pleased with her*.

A woman may bear to be accused of, charged and described with any quality, like being a liar, a thief or even being ugly, but accusing a woman of something relating to her honour is the most unacceptable. Here Allah *the Almighty* shows that they have committed two acts of disbelief; namely, they uttered a terrible calumny against Mary, which is an act of disbelief. Then, they refused to acknowledge that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was a Messenger even though Allah has decreed that he would not be born in an ordinary way, in order to honour him and to vindicate his prophecy to the Jews who were completely enmeshed in materialism to the extent that they had said: '...Show us Allah face-to-face...'.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* also bestowed upon them bounties for which they could not even account; He *Glorified is He* bestowed upon them manna and quails when they were lost adrift in the Sinai desert. The colour of manna is like that of cream, its taste is like honey and it often falls on tree leaves in certain environments. As for quails, they are birds that resemble *as-simman* birds⁽¹⁾. They used to obtain manna from trees, collect it and eat it without having to put effort into cultivating it. Notwithstanding, they said: 'And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." [Moses] said, "Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go into [any] settlement and indeed, you will have what you have asked." And they were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing.' (*al-Baqara*: 61)

They did not trust what is in the Hands of Allah; they wanted something material. For this reason He *the Almighty* drew their attention in a rather forceful way. He brought forth something at odds with all material laws; that is, the birth of 'Isa (Jesus) in a rather unusual way. Humans are born to a

(1) Quail

mother and a father. By contrast, He *the Almighty* created 'Isa (Jesus) solely from a mother without a father. Hence, material laws have been broken. Their materialism made them oblivious to the way how Allah *the Almighty* created the first man without Father and Mother.

So, why then were people allured by the creation of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*? Since he was begotten by a mother without a father, the birth of Jesus has broken the material law that governs the birth of human beings, whether male or female. That is why 'Isa (Jesus) irrefutably demonstrates the Absolute Capability of Allah *the Almighty* and that He is the One Who provides all causes and means of subsistence to humans. If humans want a certain effect, they should seek the causes that lead to it; but this does not apply to Allah because He *Glorified is He* is the Creator of all means and causes, and He is fully able to do whatever He wills without recourse to any causes.

We know that there are four different ways to explain the creation of anything: either it came about from two existing things—this is the first explanation; it came about from the non-existence of two things—this is the second explanation; it came about from the existence of the first thing and the non-existence of the second—this is the third explanation; or it came about from the existence of the second thing and the non-existence of the first one—this is the fourth explanation. These are the four different ways to explain how things come to existence. Allah *the Almighty* did not want to make the creation of man—whom He ennobled and to whom He made everything in the universe subservient—to follow a single mechanical pattern, lest someone say that causality is the necessary condition for existence.

At that point, I stress once again that this does not apply to the Creator *Glorified is He*. This point is definitively proved by the fact that He *the Almighty* created Adam *peace be upon him* without either a father or a mother, created us all from a mother and a father, created 'Isa (Jesus) from a mother without a father and created Eve from a father without a mother. This is the conclusion that sound reason should clearly accept—creation is not merely a function of causal relation among natural elements; it is rather, the product of the capability of the Creator. The capability of Allah is also manifest when the causes are already provided, yet there is no ability to give birth to children. A

case in point is when there is a married couple, but they are unable to reproduce due to infertility. 'To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

Creation is thereby not a mere function of mechanical causes; it is rather the outcome of the Will of Allah *the Almighty* Who wants to create. Similarly, He *the Almighty* wanted 'Isa (Jesus) to be born in this way to draw the attention of the children of Israel so that they may give up the path into which materialism has misled them. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* has created Jesus from a mother without a father; a point which definitively proves the Absolute Capability and Power of Allah. But the Jews did not receive this matter the way Allah wanted them to. They abjured Jesus even before he brought about his Gospel and violently opposed his Message. The evidence that they are liars is their desire to maintain their religious authority; they had a religious law stating that any adulteress has to be stoned. So, why did they not accuse Mary of adultery when she delivered Jesus? And why did they not punish her according to the law of the Torah? Why did they wait until 'Isa (Jesus) brought about his Gospel to say: 'You are a sinner and a son of a sinner'? As a matter of fact, all of this clearly indicates that the birth of 'Isa (Jesus) was an explicit sign from Allah that shocked, petrified and kept them from accusing Maryam (Mary) of committing such crime. Indeed, 'Isa (Jesus) spoke while he was an infant in the cradle, and even before Maryam (Mary) said anything about him; what had happened was too incredible for her to speak of. Furthermore, Allah has prepared her for that situation and has commanded her to stay silent when they asked her and to just point to the newly born infant in the cradle. 'Thereupon she pointed to him. They exclaimed: "How can we talk to one who [as yet] is a little boy in the cradle?" [But] he said: "Behold, I am a servant of Allah. He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a prophet and made me blessed wherever I may be; and He has enjoined upon me prayer and charity as long as I live"' (*Maryam*: 29-31).

Thus, they were completely stunned in a way that even the strongest man collapsed. When antagonistic powers see this, they cannot help but become bewildered; for the truth has forcefully manifested itself and falsehood has been eclipsed. Although they had their own way, and it was decreed in their

Torah that whoever commits adultery must be stoned, they did not stone Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her*. The shock was so powerful that it even upset the balance of their envy. The stunning miracle is the discourse of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* while he was still an infant in the cradle: '... "Behold, I am a servant of Allah. He has vouchsafed unto me revelation and made me a prophet"...' (*Maryam*: 30). The surprise made the strongest man collapse and his strength fade away.

This was the situation as far as the Jews were concerned, but what about the followers of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*? The fact that an infant boy was speaking in the cradle is, by all measures, a miracle. So how come that none of their books include the saying of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: '... "Behold, I am a servant of Allah"...'. This statement ought to have been studied carefully and should not have been overlooked. However, these words which assert the humanity of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* should have been preserved.

As a clarification, we do not intend to correct the beliefs or the creeds of others; rather, we only want the logic of faith to be clear in the minds of Muslims. The followers of other religions are free in their belief; however, it is important for us, Muslims, to properly understand our religion and the Quran so that no one will be able to distort our faith.

Allah says: '...And for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they uttered against Maryam (Mary) ...' (*an-Nisa*': 156). As Muslims, we denounce and would not even dare utter the terrible calumny about the Virgin Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her*. *Al-Buhtan*, the Arabic word translated as "calumny", means a horrific lie. There may be a tolerable kind of lie; notwithstanding, it is intolerable if someone says that a pious man drank intoxicants; the one who said so knows that he is lying, and that is a horrific lie (*al-buhtan*), and anyone hearing it would be stunned. Even though the Jews were aware of a precedence of Maryam (Mary) the virgin - as decreed by the command of Allah - that demonstrated how good and upright she was, they were neither abashed, nor did they keep themselves from accusing her of this calumny. The life of Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* before giving birth to 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* had been pure and virtuous. She lived in a sanctuary completely devoted to praying for her

Creator. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* describes such calumny as terrible because it offended the chastity of Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her*. If they looked back at their history, before the birth of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, they would know that every girl among the people of Israel was hoping to give birth to the prophet that would follow Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. The people of Israel told their girls about the way in which the coming prophet would be born; thus, they knew that he would be delivered by a virgin girl. This is identical to the way they foretold the advent of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then denied him, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... But whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it. So Allah's curse is the due of all who deny the truth' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

It is due to Allah's mercy that He gave Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* preludes that would vindicate her, even in front of herself, and make her realize that the entire process happened inasmuch as Allah uttered the command: *kun* (be). Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has not secretly decreed that she would deliver 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and hid this from her; rather, He *the Almighty* has provided her with physical signs—an angel came and breathed into her the pregnancy. Thus, she became aware of the material cause of her pregnancy since the angel came and breathed it into her. Allah *Glorified is He* intended this so that she would not accuse herself or suspect that something may have happened to her while she was sleeping.

Allah *the Almighty* has willed things to happen this way so that she would banish all doubts from her mind. Further, for her reassurance, she was previously foretold that she would give birth to 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* before she reached puberty. As Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* who was her benefactor, brought her food, while she was in her sanctuary, he saw that she already had sustenance. Thus, he asked her: 'O Maryam (Mary), from where came this to you?' 'So she answered: "It is from Allah; behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning"...' (*Al-Imran*: 37).

Logically, any woman must have a husband in order to give birth to a child. But, beyond all reckoning, Allah *Glorified is He* grants sustenance unto whom He wills. What is interesting here is that through this saying she

attracted the attention of Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* to a focal issue of his interest; that is, to have a good offspring. Concerning this issue, Allah says: 'There and then, Zakariyya (Zechariah) prayed unto his Lord, saying: "O my Lord! Bestow upon me [too], out of Your grace, the gift of goodly offspring; indeed, You are the Hearer of all prayer" Thereupon, as he stood praying in the sanctuary, the angels called out unto him: "Allah sends you the glad tiding of [the birth of] Yahya (John), who shall verify a word from Allah, and [who shall be] honourable, utterly chaste and a prophet, from among the righteous" Zakariyya (Zechariah) exclaimed: "O my Lord! How can I have a son when old age has already overtaken me, and my wife is barren?" [The angel] answered: "Thus it is: Allah does what He wills"' (*Al- 'Imran*: 38-40).

Thereby, Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her* has encouraged Zakariyya (Zachariah) *peace be upon him* to pray to His Lord. This was a series of preludes to assure Maryam (Mary) that she gave birth to 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as a result of Allah's Command—*kun*. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* brought the fruits of the summer to her in the winter. Once she told Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* '... "Behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning"...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 37), she drew his attention to the importance of praying unto his Lord to bestow upon him a child—even though he knew that his wife was barren and that he was overtaken by old age. It is well known that when a man says this about himself in this context, he means that he can no longer reproduce. Also, the subsequent Quranic verse gives us a biological precedence long before science discovered it: 'He prayed: "O my Lord! Feeble have become my bones, and my head glistens with grey hair"...' (*Maryam*: 4). These words are a detailed explanation of what he meant when he said that old age had overtaken him. Modern science proves that the bones are the last source for nutrition in the human body; if a man stops eating food, the fats in his body start to sustain him. Similarly, if man stops drinking water which constitutes about ninety percent⁽¹⁾ of his weight, the human body starts to absorb water from its own cells, muscles and flesh. There is an Arabic proverb on malnutrition saying: 'A year burns off one's fat; another year consumes one's flesh; and a third year crushes one's bones.'

(1) This is scientifically inaccurate; the fact is, sixty to sixty five percent.

The body depends first for its nutrition on fats, then exhausts the nutrients in the flesh and afterwards gets them from the bones. Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* implied this fact when he prayed in the verse: ‘... “O my Lord! Feeble have become my bones”...’ (*Maryam*: 4). Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was astonished because he identified the fact that the last source for nutrition (bones) had no sufficient nutrients to supply him with the energy to beget a child.

But which part of the body do the bones supply with nutrients? It is the brain; the chief controller that governs all the faculties of the body. In the same way, as every faculty of the body is subservient to the brain, it also devotes its lifetime subservient to the body faculties; organizing their capabilities to work, think, feel and behave. As long as the brain is sound, any damage that may happen to the body could in theory be compensated.

Henceforth, they are trying nowadays to explain death clinically; that it does not happen as long as the cells of the brain are still alive; if they die, then death happens. It is quite distinctive that the chief controller of the human body—the brain— is located in the highest part of the body inside the skull.

It is as if Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her* had given Zakarriyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* the impetus when she told him: ‘... “Behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning”...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 37). Accordingly, he prayed unto his Lord to bestow upon him a child, so Allah conferred upon him what he asked for. Therefore, the fact that Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning, has been stated by Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her*, and then concretely experienced by Zakarriyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*. Afterwards, the bearer of glad tidings conveyed to her the news that she would give birth to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: ‘Lo! The angels said: “O Maryam (Mary)! Behold, Allah sends you the glad tidings, through a word from Him, [of a son] who shall become known as ‘Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), shall have great honour in this world and in the hereafter, and [shall be] of those who are made near to Allah. And he shall speak to the people in his cradle, and in old age and (he shall be) of the righteous.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 45-46)

However, how could Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her* recognize that she would have a son without being married? Allah continues: ‘She said: “O my Lord! How can I have a son, though no man has ever touched me?”...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 47)

The Virgin Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* grasped well the full implications of Allah’s words. When she heard that the name of her child to come is ‘Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), she realised that he will be related to her and that he will thus be fatherless. She also appreciated that Allah *Glorified is He* will only name her child after her, if he is fatherless. Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَٰكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا ﴿١٥٧﴾

And said, ‘We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the Messenger of God.’ (They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him [157] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*: 157)

We notice that the verse starts with the coordinating conjunction *waw* (and) to know that it is related to the previous ones, namely: ‘And so, [We punished them] for the breaking of their pledge, and their refusal to acknowledge Allah’s messages, and their killing of prophets against all right, and their boastful saying, “Our hearts are already full of knowledge” – nay, but Allah has sealed their hearts in result of their denial of the truth, and [now] they believe in but few things –and for their refusal to acknowledge the truth, and the awesome calumny which they utter against Maryam (Mary)’ (*an-Nisa*: 155-156).

Allah *Glorified is He* enhances the crimes of the people of Israel by this new one: ‘and (for) their (boastful) saying, “Behold, we have killed, ‘Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), the messenger of Allah”...’ (*an-Nisa*: 157). The most surprising in this saying is the phrase: ‘the messenger of Allah’; did they

really say it or not? If they did say so, then this would be an evidence of their habitual stubbornness and denial of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Had they only said that they killed him (without stating that he is the messenger of Allah), their sin would be less horrific. However, if they knew that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was the Messenger of Allah and, despite this, they killed him, then this would have been a horrific sin. Otherwise, if the phrase 'the messenger of Allah' in this verse was not actually said by them, then it has been used here to indicate the sarcastic accent of their discourse.

Let me give an example to illustrate this point: if someone who is famous for his strength is beaten and defeated by another, the latter may then sarcastically tell the people: 'I have beaten the strongest person among you.' Similarly, the phrase 'the messenger of Allah' may be used here to indicate the sarcastic accent of their discourse. Otherwise, it may have been merely said by Allah to show how horrific and abysmal their deed was.

In this verse, notice that Allah *Glorified is He* only mentions the name of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* associated with 'the messenger of Allah' to show the reader how abysmal and horrific their deed was. Consequently, 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* is the messenger of Allah despite all their stubbornness; this point is specially highlighted in the context of Allah's discourse about their denial of His bounties and blessings. This association implies that Allah *Glorified is He* scorns them because He will not send a messenger to guide the people to the right path without protecting him before he fulfils his mission. Thus, Allah says: 'the messenger of Allah' as a prelude to draw our attention to their all-lying discourse. Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* tells us: '...However, they neither killed him, nor crucified him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 157). The clause '...nor crucified him...' is intended to illustrate that no sooner had they assumed that they killed 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* than they declared his death to people. They did so even before they considered the idea of crucifixion. However, the truth was that they killed someone who resembled 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and crucified him afterwards. As soon as they killed this person, they spread the news that they had killed 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* even before they thought of the idea of crucifixion, but Allah *Glorified is He* has willed to decisively abort their sedition. He thus says: '... However, they neither killed him, nor crucified

him...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 157). Allah *Glorified is He* previously draws our attention to the fact that the people of Israel made a lot of fuss upon receiving the news of the advent of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Although, they knew that he would be fatherless and even told their daughters to always keep their eyes open lest any of them would be pregnant with ‘Isa (Jesus); however, they uttered a terrible calumny against Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* who had been chosen for this mission by Allah *Glorified is He*. Typically, the same fuss was made at the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

The fact that there was fuss about both the birth and death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* show us that one has to be consistent in his explanations and interpretations. Once the mind considers the way ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was born, it will realize that it happened in a rather atypical manner. Similarly, when Allah informs us that He *the Almighty* rescued and lifted ‘Isa (Jesus) up as the people of Israel contrived to kill him, the mind should also realize that this was also an extraordinary matter. It would be plausible if one’s mind recalled that the birth of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was extraordinary, so why would not his death be extraordinary as well?

Overall, we should believe whatever Allah tells us. Just as we believe that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was born fatherless, we have to believe that Allah *Glorified is He* has lifted him up into the Heavens. The birth of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* would be rationally inconceivable if Allah had not told us about it. Similarly, the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* ought to be conceivable inasmuch as Allah tells us about it. They are one package—both his birth and death were peculiar. Thus, if we have accepted the first peculiarity about his birth, why would we not accept that his exit out of the scene was also peculiar? Therefore, we must not wonder because Allah tells us that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* exited out of life in a peculiar way; that is, whatever starts in extraordinary and peculiar ways, is bound to end in the same way.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...However, they neither killed him, nor crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 157). The clause ‘... It only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...’ is evidence that the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was an entirely extraordinary process since the killers were not sure whether they had actually killed ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. It is known that the disciples and followers of ‘Isa (Jesus)

peace be upon him used to turn their heads away and hide their names. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... But it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 157).

Narratives differed in explaining how ‘... It only seemed to them [as if it had been] so.’ A narrative said that when people searched for ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to kill him, he hid behind a small door (*khawkha*). In old houses, there used to be two kinds of doors; a door big enough for letting big objects into the house and a small door within this big door for the entrance of people (*khawkha*). Furthermore, there used to be big holes in the ceiling of the house called *rawzana* or *naruza*.

When they came looking for ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* ⁽¹⁾ to kill him he went into the small door (*khawkha*). Then, another man called Tatianos went inside the door after him; but when ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* saw this, Allah inspired him to look up and he saw something lifting him up into the heaven. People outside the house felt that Tatianos took a long time; then, he went out and they perplexedly wondered if this was Tatianos or ‘Isa (Jesus)? Things got mixed up especially due to the resemblance between Tatianos and ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* made Tatianos look like ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* so they killed Tatianos instead. Alternatively, another narrative says that when ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* knew that there was a conspiracy to kill him, he asked his disciples: ‘Who would accept to look like me and enter paradise in return? What greater recompense the disciple could have?! Thus,’ Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* offered to whoever accepted this mission the greatest reward that a believer could ever ask for. It is said that one of the disciples named Sarkhas accepted the mission. Thus, Allah made him look like ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and so the Jews killed him instead.

Another narrative claims that when those who wanted to kill ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* knew that Allah has lifted him up to Heavens, they were afraid that the news would spread among people and make them believe in his message. Furthermore, they were afraid that people would try to take revenge upon those who tried to kill ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Hence, those killers

(1) The entrance of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in the shrine when the Jews wished to kill him.

brought someone who looked like 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and killed him. Afterwards, they declared that they had killed 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. A different narrative says that the one who was killed in lieu of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was one of those who betrayed 'Isa (Jesus) for the sake of the Jews. This person followed those who contrived to kill 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. They walked into the place where he was sitting among his disciples and asked his disciples: 'Which of you is 'Isa (Jesus)?' The desire to repent was then awakened inside the man, and his conscience reproached him for betraying the Messenger 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*; the matter which led him to say: 'I am 'Isa (Jesus).' None of those who planned to kill 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* imagined that anyone would respond that he was 'Isa (Jesus) unless he was actually 'Isa (Jesus) himself. It was quite obvious that they wanted to kill 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* thus they killed the one who admitted to be 'Isa (Jesus), without ascertaining that it was really him. One other narrative says that someone who betrayed 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* for thirty dinars, looked like 'Isa so they killed him instead. As Muslims, we should not pay much attention to any of these narratives. What matters is that the perpetrators actually confessed that they had killed and crucified 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

The Quran, revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: '... However, they neither killed him, nor crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...' (*an-Nisa'*: 157). Additionally, Allah *the Almighty* said that He has lifted 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* up to the Heavens; thus, the matter should be decisively settled for us because we, as believers, do not first examine detailed issues of belief to decide whether to have faith or not. On the contrary, we first believe in Allah the One Who revealed these specific issues and accordingly believe in everything that He *the Almighty* discloses afterwards. Since Allah settles this issue; thus, we must believe Him and the matter ends at this point.

Checking the details of this issue will not help us by any means. It is sufficient that Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...However, they neither killed him, nor crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...' (*an-Nisa'*: 157). This verse shows that the murderers were not sure about the

identity of the one they killed. This uncertainty is expected when matters become confusing.

We often see such confusion arising in any accident that may happen in the presence of a big number of witnesses. Even if there are many people witnessing the accident, still the narratives about the event may differ. Sometimes, it may happen that narratives about an accident's details differ, even if it was recorded on a tape. If this is the case, we should not wonder why there are different details and narratives about an event that took place in the past when there were none of the tools available in our time. Therefore, the disparity of opinions and narratives about the death of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is expected. Nonetheless, it is sufficient for us that Allah *the Almighty* says: '... However, they neither killed him, nor they crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...' (*an-Nisa'*: 157).

Thus, 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is actually alive since Allah did not inform us of his death. Additionally, we should admit that the truth is that Allah lifted 'Isa (Jesus) up to Him as has been mentioned in the relevant verses. As Muslims, we must not think it quite farfetched that Allah *Glorified is He* has lifted 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to the Heavens because the same idea has already happened to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He *peace and blessings be upon him* told us that he was flown up to the Heavens, he met the Prophets and saw a lot of visions. Thus, the idea of the ascension of a human being to the Heavens while he is still physically alive is, in principle, possible. The disagreement may arise over the duration of this ascent for a few minutes, hours or even months; however, this does not contradict or negate the possibility of the ascent in principle. Therefore, if anyone casts doubts on this matter, we can answer by saying that every inconceivable matter is extensively addressed by Allah *the Almighty*. As Allah is the Merciful; He never imposes anything unless our reason can accept it. If there is a matter that our minds would find quite difficult to conceive, Allah gives us the freedom to either accept the text as is or, if found inconceivable, consider them ineffective; for these matters are never related to the essence of creed.

For instance, assume that someone said that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was not lifted up to the Heavens and that he died. In what way will this distort

the creed? This is ineffective; it neither rejects nor embraces the creed. The same holds true for the story of the night journey of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Mecca to Jerusalem. In this concern, Allah says: 'Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem] – the environs of which We had blessed – so that We might show him some of Our symbols: for, verily, He Alone is the All-Hearing and the All-Seeing' (*al-Isra'*: 1).

Allah *Glorified is He* does not mention anything about the ascent of Prophet Muhammad to the Heavens; only the night journey of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Jerusalem was mentioned because the transportation is a terrestrial miracle. It is known that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never went to Jerusalem before this journey, as reflected in the sceptical questions delivered by the unbelievers of Mecca who wanted to embarrass the Messenger by asking him to describe Jerusalem, while they were quite sure that he has never been there before. However, he had seen the caravans owned by them on their way to Jerusalem. Thus, not only did he describe Jerusalem to them, but he also told them the news of their own caravans. When the caravans later arrived to Mecca, the travellers confirmed the verity of the narration of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, the transportation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Mecca to Jerusalem was a terrestrial miracle that could be proved. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* explicitly mentions this: 'Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night from the Inviolable House of Worship [at Mecca] to the Remote House of Worship [at Jerusalem]...' (*al-Isra'*: 1).

By contrast, Allah does not explicitly mention the ascent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the Heavens because no one in Quraysh, nor any of the inhabitants of the earth, saw the lote-tree that marks the end of the Seventh Heaven, the Furthest Boundary where no creation can pass. Furthermore, no inhabitant of the earth was capable of describing the path that the Prophet took in his ascent up to the Heavens.

Since the Quran is merciful towards human reason, it extensively addresses the issues that such mind would find difficult to assimilate. If there is a

conceivable matter for our minds, we can possibly believe in. However, if found inconceivable, we consider them ineffective, but these matters are never related to the essence of creed or to the incumbent assignments ordained by Allah. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has authorized Prophet Muhammad to convey to us some inconceivable pieces of news, in the same way as He *the Almighty* has authorized him to inform us of the incumbent ordinances that, if obeyed, we will be rewarded, whereas if relinquished, we will be punished. As Allah says: ‘...Hence, accept [willingly] whatever the Messenger gives you [thereof] and refrain from [demanding] anything that he withholds from you...’ (*al-Hashr*: 7).

Abu Hurayrah *may Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘By the One in Whose Hands my soul is, surely ‘Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary) will soon descend among you and will judge mankind as a just ruler; according to which he will break the Cross, kill the pigs and abolish the *jizyah* (taxes imposed on non-Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that no one will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever it encompasses.’ Abu Hurayrah *may Allah be pleased with him* then added: ‘If you wish, you can recite (this verse of the Munificent Quran): “Yet, there is none of the people of the earlier Scriptures (Jews and Christians), before his death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death), but must believe in him [‘Isa (Jesus)]; and on the Day of Resurrection he [‘Isa (Jesus)] will bear witness to the truth against them”’ (*an-Nisa'*: 159).⁽¹⁾

These are matters about which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us. Thus, there is no creed-pertinent issue being rationally inconceivable, especially for Muslims. However, some people may try to disprove this issue by claiming that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘As Allah says: “O ‘Isa (Jesus)! Indeed, I will cause you to die, will raise you up to Me and purify you of [the calumnies of] those who are bent on denying the truth”...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 55).

This matter has been previously explained in full in the course of the reflection on the chapter of *Al-‘Imran*. In this regard, we should pay attention to the role

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

of the coordinating conjunction *waa* (and) that links the two Arabic verbs in the above verse; *mutawafeek*—cause you to die—and *rafau 'uka*—raise you up.

Sometimes, it is claimed that the coordinating conjunction *waa* implies order and sequence. Yet, it only indicates connection and association; for instance, we may say that Zayd and 'Amr came. This sentence could mean that Zayd accompanied 'Amr or that Zayd came first or vice versa.

By contrast, if we say that Zayd came *fa* (and soon) did 'Amr. This sentence strictly means that Zayd is the one who came first and 'Amr followed him because *fa* implies order and sequence. Thus, *waa* may only imply association and company in a generic sense and does not qualify or describe such association. Hence, the association between causing 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to die and raising him up to the Heavens does not indicate that death took place first. Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed a number of verses demonstrating the meaning of merely association of the coordinating conjunction *waa* such as: 'As We have taken a solemn pledge from all the Prophets; from you, [O Muhammad], *waa* (as well as) from Nuh (Noah), *waa* (and) Ibrahim (Abraham)...' (*al-Ahzab*: 7).

Allah *Glorified is He* has accepted a solemn pledge from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and He *the Almighty* associated him with Nuh (Noah) and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them* both. Yet, this association does not imply sequence or order as Nuh (Noah) was sent as a messenger many years before Prophet Muhammad. However, why has Allah *Glorified is He* associated the death of 'Isa (Jesus) to his ascension? Allah *the Almighty* willed that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* would know that death is inevitable and that being raised up to the Heavens is merely a transitional period.

Alternatively, there is another reflection on this verse: 'As Allah says: "O 'Isa (Jesus)! Indeed, I will cause you to die and will raise you up to Me"...' (*Al-Imran*: 55). It is known that human is a mixture of body and soul. When Allah *Glorified is He* decrees to end the life of anyone, He immediately takes away his soul from his body without any normal physical reason or damage caused to his body. Correspondingly, a human will immediately die if someone hits him vigorously on his head because the soul cannot continue to abide in the body that has been severely damaged.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* tells ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* that He raises him up (body and soul) without causing damage to any part of his body. The Arabic verb *mutawafeek*—cause you to die—means to take you up as a whole, body and soul, to the Heavens without being killed.

As previously mentioned, ‘death’ and ‘being killed’ are clearly distinct from each other; the former happens when the soul is immediately taken out of the body, whereas, the latter is caused by the destruction of the body, leading to the separation of the soul from it. This distinction is clear in the verse: ‘... If he dies or is killed...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 144).

When the People of Israel said that they had killed ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* has refuted their claim by saying: ‘However, they neither killed, nor crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so; and, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture. For, of an absolute certainty, they did not kill him’ (*an-Nisa*: 157). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* explains that they were not sure about killing the real ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. They were having doubts about the one they had killed; they were wondering whether they had killed ‘Isa (Jesus), Tatianos or Sarkhas!

In this concern, Allah *Glorified is He* has described the attitude of the killers towards the reality of the identity of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as having two phases. After Allah *the Almighty* denied that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was killed, He says: ‘...And, verily, those who hold conflicting views thereon are indeed confused, having no [real] knowledge thereof, and following mere conjecture...’ (*an-Nisa*: 157). The first phase mentioned is that of confusion and doubt, wherein the suspected alternatives about the authenticity of the identity of ‘Isa (Jesus) were seen as equally plausible. The other phase is that of conjecture and presumption, wherein the killers were more inclined towards accepting the alternative of conjectures. This explains that they were doubtful at the beginning and then they started to have conjectures about the one they killed.

Ultimately, Allah *Glorified is He* denies this illusion with absolute certainty, ‘...For, of an absolute certainty, they did not kill him...’ (*an-Nisa*: 157), that they had not killed ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. There are different levels of certainty— knowledge, eyewitness and absolute. It is well known that the absolute certainty is the confirmed matter or a fact about which one is deeply

and profoundly sure and which may never be put into question by one's mind or may never change.

As an illustration, someone may describe Manhattan Island as a ten-million-population, skyscraper-city in New York. If the listener has not seen the city and but has taken this information from a trustworthy person, he may consider it as a certainty of knowledge. However, if the listener visits New York later on, the level of certainty will rise to eyewitness certainty. Furthermore, if someone takes this person on a tour all over the city, then the level of certainty will ultimately rise to absolute certainty.

Allah *the Almighty* presents two levels of certainty in the following verses: 'Nay, you will soon come to understand! And once again: Nay, you will soon come to understand! Nay, if you could but understand [it] with the certainty of knowledge you would indeed, most surely, behold the blazing fire [of hell]! In the end you will indeed, most surely, behold it with the eyewitness certainty' (*at-Takathur*: 3-7).

As mentioned in the previous verses, Allah *Glorified is He* explains two phases of certainty; firstly, Allah bestows upon us certain knowledge about the Afterlife in which believers have faith even before they see it. Secondly, when the believers are going to cross As-Sirat (the hair-narrow bridge) set over the Hellfire on their way to Paradise, they will behold the truth with eyewitness certainty. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not refer to the destiny of those who encounter the blazing fire of the hell because some of them will, afterwards, be admitted into Heaven, and others will be admitted into the hellfire. Likewise, the ones who deny and disbelieve in Allah *Glorified is He* will eternally be doomed to Hell and will never be admitted into Paradise. Those disbelievers are going to behold the blazing fire of Hell with the eyewitness certainty. Whereas, absolute certainty is mentioned in another context in the Munificent Quran: 'But if one happens to be of those who are wont to call the truth a lie [are used to deny the Resurrection], and [thus] go astray a welcome of burning despair [awaits him in the Afterlife] burning in Hellfire! Verily, this is indeed the absolute truth with certainty!' (*al-Waqi'a*: 92-95)

The fact that all those who are accustomed to call the truth a lie and accordingly go astray, will desperately suffer the torment of the blazing hellfire

with an absolute certainty. Those people who did not witness the death of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* would have the certainty of knowledge that he was not killed because they have faith in Allah *the Almighty* who says: '... For, of an absolute certainty, they did not kill him' (*an-Nisa'*: 157). Whereas, those people who witnessed the death of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* knew well that he was not killed; they only had doubts about it. By contrast, those people who killed the one who resembled 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* were absolutely certain that 'Isa (Jesus) was not killed at all, and that what happened for him was, as Allah says:

بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٥٨﴾

**God raised him up to Himself. God is almighty
and wise [158] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 158)**

Allah, the Ever-Invincible, has risen 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* up to Himself. Thus, even though they were, unswervingly, intending on killing him, Allah has sabotaged their seditious plot, for He is, indeed *the Almighty* and the Wise. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ ۖ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا ﴿١٥٩﴾

**There is not one of the People of the Book who will not believe
in [Jesus] before his death, and on the Day of Resurrection he
will be a witness against them) [159] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 159)**

The word 'none' is used in this context as a negating article and is used in another instance in the Quran; as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'As for those of you who [henceforth] separate themselves from their wives by saying, "You are as unlawful to me as my mother", [let them bear in mind that] they can never be [as] their mothers; none are their mothers save those who gave birth to them...' (*al-Mujadala*: 2).

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* corrects the mistake into which those, who separate themselves from their wives by saying: 'You are as unlawful to me as my mother's back. Consequently Allah *the Exalted* says: '...None are their mothers save those who gave birth to them. Thus, behold, they but utter

an objectionable and irrational statement, and is [therefore] a falsehood...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 2). In this verse, the pronoun ‘none’ functions as the negating word; thus, Allah *the Almighty* explains that their mothers are only those who gave birth to them.

Returning to the previous verse, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions that it is decreed that none of the followers of earlier Revelations—the Jews and Christians—would fail to recognize or to attest to the truth refuting the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* at the time of his death. Another issue is that there are several pronouns in this verse; for instance, to whom does the third person pronoun ‘him’ in the Arabic prepositional phrase *bihi* ([believe] in him) refer? Further, to whom does the third person pronoun ‘his’ in the Arabic word *mawtihi* (his death) refer? Does it refer to the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* or the death of any of the followers of earlier Revelations? This confusion results from the fact that the meaning of every pronoun refers to both ‘Isa (Jesus) and the followers of earlier Revelations previously mentioned in the verse. Thus, the verse may be interpreted to mean that none of the followers of earlier revelations will die unless he grasps and admits the truth, refuting the death of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Alternatively, the verse may also be interpreted to mean that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* will not die unless everyone from among the followers of earlier Revelations believe in him and grasp the truth about his death. Thus, all the nouns that precede the occurrence of a pronoun in the sentence are possible references for the pronoun. To know the reference of the pronoun, much elaboration is needed. In other cases, a pronoun may partially indicate its reference; for instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... And no long-lived has his life span lengthened, and nor is lessened, unless it is thus predestined [by Allah]...’ (*Fatir*: 11).

The life of anyone who is pre-ordained to live long cannot be lessened unless Allah decrees this matter. The third person pronoun ‘his’ in Allah’s saying ‘*umurehe* (his life span) partially refers to the reference because the Arabic word *mu’amir* (the long-lived) is a bi-conceptual word; one refers to the person who lives long, and the other refers to his age. However, the pronoun ‘his’ does not refer to the age of the man, but rather to the man himself. The meaning of the verse would be that no one could cause any human being to live a long or short life-span. In another case, the pronoun may have

two possible references, as in the following verse: ‘Allah is He Who has raised the Heavens without pillars, which you can see...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 2).

In this verse, there are two possible references to which the relative pronoun ‘which’ may refer; it could either refer to the Heavens or to the pillars. Both possibilities are equally correct; the pronoun probably refers to the Heavens, and the sentence would mean that Allah, due to His Capability, raised the Heavens high without any pillars so that you can see them and recognise His Might. In an equally valid way, it can also refer to the pillars, and the sentence would mean that Allah raised the Heavens without any pillars as we know them; rather, Allah has raised the Heavens using special laws against gravity or even using unperceivable or unseen pillars. Thus, the single pronoun may have two plausible references.

Returning back to the verse under discussion (*an-Nisa'*: 159), it is noted that there are two plausible references for two consecutive pronouns. Do the pronouns refer to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* or to the followers of earlier Revelations? Alternatively, could it be that one pronoun refers to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and the other refers to the followers of earlier Revelations? Were this the case, which of them refers to ‘Isa (Jesus) and which refers to the followers? Otherwise, could it be that there is a third implicit, indirect, contextualised reference for the pronouns in the verse? It could be indirectly understood from context that these pronouns may refer to a third reference; that is. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whose advent was foretold by ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Indeed, it has been related that Messenger Muhammad, used to say that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* will descend from the Heavens unto the earth to break the Cross and to kill the pigs. Moreover, Messenger Muhammad added that ‘Isa (Jesus) will then pray behind a Muslim man.

Remarkably, why did both Christians and Jews admit the idea of killing and crucifixion of ‘Isa (Jesus)? They can be excused for their thoughts since Allah *Glorified is He* did not explain the matter then, when it actually took place, as He says: ‘However, they neither killed, nor crucified him, but it only seemed to them [as if it had been] so...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 157). The verse indicates that they are exempted of blame for maintaining this conviction, yet they ought to have rejected the idea of crucifixion if they truly believed that ‘Isa

(Jesus) *peace be upon him* was, even if partially, divine. Accordingly, Islam came forth to vindicate 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and establish the truth by refuting his death and providing proof to his alleged followers.

However, the followers of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* did not pay attention to Islam's account of this issue, though they ought to have done so thoroughly. Inasmuch as Allah *the Almighty* recounts the story of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and the truth about his death, He sets a divine decree in the Quran: 'Nay, Allah raised him up to Himself...' (*an-Nisa'*: 158). The Christians do accept the fact that Allah raised him up to Himself; however, they allege that this happened after his crucifixion. On the other hand, we, as Muslims, believe that Allah *Glorified is He* has raised 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* up to Him, and that he was never crucified; we also believe in his descent back to earth. Never, before or after Christianity, did the followers of any religion go as far as imputing, even partial divinity to a messenger. Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* will send him ['Isa (Jesus)] down to earth again—after He had raised him—in order to dispel these false convictions. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* will cause him to die as any of His creatures. People should not excessively linger over this matter; they should consider the issue rationally. Just as we believe that the life of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* started with a miracle, since he was born fatherless, we ought to accept the miracle of his exit out of earth—that Allah *Glorified is He* has lifted him up to the Heavens.

If a Muslim says that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* had died after he was raised up to the Heavens, we ask him,: what about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his similar ascension up to the Heavens in the night journey? He was indeed biologically alive when this happened. Although Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stayed for a short while in the Heavens and then returned down to the earth; however, the idea that Allah has raised a human alive up to the Heavens and then returned to the earth anew, should not sound peculiar in case one considers the infinite Power of Allah.

The dissimilarity between the ascension of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and that of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* merely arises from the difference in the period of time passed in the Heavens. However, this is not an essential difference because the principle is the same. The concern is that both

of them ascended to the Heavens alive and descended down to earth also alive which is plausible and accepted according to the perspective of Islamic *Sharia*. In confirmation to this issue, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Yet, there is none of the people of the earlier Scriptures (Jews and Christians), before his death (at the time of the appearance of the angel of death), but must believe in him [‘Isa (Jesus)]; and on the Day of Resurrection he [‘Isa (Jesus)] will bear witness to the truth against them’ (*an-Nisa'*: 159).

On the one hand, considering this verse superficially, someone may allege that the followers of earlier Scriptures must have already embraced faith in ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. On the other hand, considering this verse thoroughly, it is clear that they have believed in him only provided that he was in line with their whims and interests—rather than in the way Allah decrees them to have faith. They believed that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was perfectly or even partially divine—which encompasses the doctrine of trinity (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit). Allah *the Almighty* decrees them to believe in ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as one of His messengers, a human being and a servant of Allah. Thus, the verse under discussion means that each and every follower of earlier Scriptures, before he dies, will acknowledge that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was a messenger, a human being and a servant of Allah.

The third person pronoun (him) in the Arabic prepositional phrase *bihi* ([believe] in him) refers to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. The other third person pronoun (his) in the Arabic word *mawtihi* (his death) could also refer to ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. In such a case, the verse would mean that every follower of earlier Revelations will believe in ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as a messenger, a human being and a servant of Allah *the Almighty* before the death of ‘Isa (Jesus). This will not be achieved unless ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* returns back to the earth in flesh and blood and tells them that they have been mistaken in denying and disregarding the anticipation of the advent of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the seal of all Prophets; as much as they have been mistaken in falsely accusing his mother Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her*. To demonstrate the verity of his accounts, ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* will not bring forth a new divine *Sharia*; rather, he will pray behind a Muslim—follower of Messenger Muhammad, who has been sent to all mankind.

What will the follower of earlier Revelations say when they see 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* praying behind a Muslim? Certainly, they will declare their faith in the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Alternatively, the verse could mean that every follower of earlier Revelations, who lives during the time of the ascension of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* until his return back to earth, will declare his faith in 'Isa (Jesus) as a messenger, a human being and a servant of Allah. This will take place before the follower of earlier Revelations dies; even in the agony of death when his soul is being severed from the body.

The human worldly whims may preclude the soul from revealing certain truths, suppress it from reaching absolute certainty and knowledge and turn it into arrogance and false pride. However, when the agony of death comes, everything that used to distract man from the truth or faith vanishes. At that moment, the human soul is awakened—as the reality and the truth of everything are unveiled and the delusional allure of worldly pleasures is dispelled. Then, the human starts to judge himself and then realises that he has been following his own whims and interests.

Nevertheless, such late profession of faith is of no avail such as the late faith of the Pharaoh of Musa (Moses), who said as he was on the brink of drowning: '... [And] when he was about to drown, [Pharaoh] exclaimed: "I believe that there is no deity save Him in Whom the People of Israel believe, and I am one of those (Muslims) who surrender themselves unto Him!"' (Yunus: 90) Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Only now? When you had always been a rebel [against Us], and you were among those who spread corruption?' (Yunus: 90) Thus, the late faith of the Pharaoh was of no avail at the time of his death, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'whereas repentance shall neither be accepted from those who continue to do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say: "Behold, I now repent"; nor from those who die as deniers of the truth. It is for whom that We have prepared a painful torment' (*an-Nisa'*: 18).

Allah *Glorified is He* appends the verse under discussion by His saying: '...And on the Day of Resurrection he ['Isa (Jesus)] will bear witness to the truth against them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 159). This demonstrates that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* will testify against those who witnessed his advent during his life span, as well as those who later ascribed divinity to him. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and when Allah says (on the Day of Resurrection): "O 'Isa

(Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)! Did you say unto men, ‘Worship me and my mother as deities beside Allah?’” [‘Isa (Jesus)] answered: “Limitless are Your Glory! It would not have been possible for me to say what I had no right to [say]! Had I said this, You would indeed have known it! You know all that is within my inner-self, whereas I do not know what is in yours. Verily, You alone are the All-Knower of all that is hidden and unseen”” (*al-Ma‘ida*: 116). Allah *Glorified is He* then tells of other atrocities committed by the Jews:

فَظَلَمُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَمًا عَلَيْهِمْ طَبِئَتْ أُحِلَّتْ
 لَهُمْ وَبِصَدِّهِمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ﴿١٦٠﴾

For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before: for having frequently debarred others from God’s path [160] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 160)

Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He proscribed the people of Israel from enjoying a number of the good things of life because of the abysmal deeds they perpetrated and the false stances they took. They committed a lot of horrific sins, wronged themselves and others and turned away from the path of Allah; that is, they refused to embrace Islam when it was revealed. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* elaborates on the reasons for proscribing the People of Israel from enjoying certain good things in life:

وَأَخَذَهُمُ الرِّبَا وَقَدْ نُهُوا عَنْهُ وَأَكْلَهُمْ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ
 وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿١٦١﴾

for taking usury when they had been forbidden to do so; and for wrongfully devouring other people’s property. For those of them that reject the truth we have prepared an agonizing torment [161] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 161)

What are the wrongdoings that Allah *the Almighty* refers to in His saying, ‘Because of the wrongdoings of the Jews, We forbade them certain good things...’? (*an-Nisa'*: 160) Wrongdoings in this context mean giving someone something to which he is not entitled and has no right. The ultimate wrongdoing is when

someone associates others in worship with Allah. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...For, behold, associating others in worship with Allah is indeed an awesome wrong-doing!’ (*Luqman*: 13)

Thus, there are several reasons why Allah *Glorified is He* proscribed the people of Israel from certain good things in life which were previously allowed to them. Allah always prohibits fewer things than his permitted bounties; proscriptions are indeed consistently fewer than what Allah allows. Further, whatever Allah does not explicitly proscribe is allowed and permitted. As Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say (O Muhammad): “Come, let me convey unto you what Allah has [really] forbidden you: Do not associate anything in worship with Him; be good and dutiful to your parents; do not kill your children for fear of poverty [for] it is We Who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them; refrain from committing any shameful sins, whether openly or secretly; and do not kill any human being [whose life] has been declared to be sacred by Allah, except in [the pursuit of] justice [according to Islamic *Sharia*]. That is what He has enjoined upon you so that you may use your reason and stay away from the property of an orphan, save to improve it, until he (or she) comes of age. And [in all your dealings,] give full measure and weight with justice; [however,] We do not charge any human being with more than he can bear; and when you voice your opinion (i.e. judge between men or give evidence, etc.), be just, even if it is [against] a near relative. And [always] fulfill the Covenant of Allah. These are what He has enjoined upon you so that you may remember”’ (*al-An‘am*: 151-152).

In these verses, Allah *Glorified is He* lists the proscriptions He has enacted; there are indeed few prohibitions if compared to the permissible bounties. This shows us how merciful Allah is towards His creatures! Allah has indeed bestowed upon us infinite and innumerable bounties and allowed us to pursue all of them with the exception of a few proscriptions, which were mainly enacted to keep man disciplined.

Some people may argue that Allah has proscribed something because it is harmful. This may very well be the case; however, we should bear in mind that Allah does not proscribe things exclusively because they are harmful. Allah may well proscribe something to discipline the people upon whom He enacts such

a proscription. For instance, if someone is in charge of a family, he may forbid a child to eat a certain kind of food or may reduce his pocket money in order to punish him; surely, to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection.

But why did the children of Israel deserve to be punished through prohibitions? The underlying reason is that they used to go around the path of Allah and twist it to allow themselves to do what Allah has forbidden. Since they have gone astray and made lawful to themselves what Allah has forbidden, Allah *Glorified is He* said, 'You had the audacity to encroach on and pursue what I have prohibited you to do. I thereby have the right to forbid you to pursue some of what I used to allow you before.' Allah intended this so that no one would mistakenly think that by pursuing something which Allah had forbidden; he took something against the will of Allah; for indeed no one can do something at odds with Allah's will. Therefore, Allah may forbid some of what He used to allow him to do.

Forbidding may either be a prohibition of something granted through a prior divine law or a prohibition of a certain habit, natural inclination or something that one may be doing out of necessity. For instance, when someone excessively drinks intoxicants, like wine, he denies himself access to many good things in life that are permissible for them. A physician may tell them their liver has cirrhosis, and they may no longer eat or drink such and such. We thus see how man may wrong himself, and how this may preclude him from pursuing things that were originally permissible.

Similarly, whoever eats or drinks something excessively, like sugar, for instance, will have to suffer the repercussions of consuming more than their body needs of such substance. Allah's law dictates that, when you consume more than your bodily need of sugar, you become sick and you may never consume any sweets again. We thus notice that all diabetic people crave sugar and sweets, and even though they can buy them, they are forbidden to eat them. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* tells them, 'You have denied yourselves what Allah has allowed you through your injustice and wrong-doing.'

The same may hold for another man who has wealth, land and many servants. Those who work for him do the job of grinding wheat on his behalf; they then bake him white bread of the finest kinds of flour that is absolutely

free of any kind of impurities. The man will then eat this fine bread while his servants eat lower quality bread which they also prepare for themselves. However, Allah's law will one day force him to eat brown bread; physicians will order him to eat this for the good of his intestines because he ate too much white bread that is made of the finest kinds of wheat. By contrast this man's servants will get a chance to enjoy eating this fine type of bread; it is thus due to this man's injustice that he was deprived of a good thing that he was once allowed.

Therefore, if you ever see that a man has been deprived of a bounty that he used to be allowed, you have to immediately realize that this man has pursued something that Allah has forbidden, or alternatively, abused a right that Allah had granted him. However, Allah watches over all of us and none of our deeds ever escape His reckoning. Thus, prohibition may be through an explicit law; in this case the punishment for violating this prohibition is decreed by The Legislator. In addition, something may be prohibited because it is repulsive to one's natural inclination or habits. This is often the case when the thing forbidden is something one may excessively use or abuse.

Therefore, we must carefully read this verse, 'So, then, for the wickedness committed by those who followed the Jewish faith did We deny unto them certain of the good things of life which [before] had been allowed to them; and [We did this] for their having so often turned away from the path of Allah.' (*an-Nisa'*: 160)

The same holds for those who practise usury; they accept money in usury to increase their wealth. But do they want wealth and fortune for its own sake or do they want to achieve another goal? It is true that wealth or fortune is a form of livelihood. However, it is an indirect form of livelihood because it is used to acquire things of which man may avail himself, which constitutes the direct form of livelihood. We have said earlier; assume that someone who has a mountain of gold loses his way in the desert and runs out of food. Will his mountain of gold be of any avail to him in this case? Indeed, no. A loaf of bread and a glass of water will indeed be far more valuable to him than all his gold. Does the one who practise usury to increase his wealth do so to enjoy more pleasure in life? If he does so, Allah *Glorified is He* will punish him with many calamities and take away his wealth.

Whoever wants to continue enjoying what Allah has allowed him until he dies must not pursue anything Allah prohibited. If one does so, one will continue to enjoy Allah's bounties and blessings. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...and never does Allah do the least wrong to His creatures.' (*Fussilat*: 46) Man, thus does the most injustice to himself. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, Allah does not do the least wrong unto men, but it is men who wrong themselves.' (*Yunus*: 44)

In this manner, as the Jews wronged themselves, Allah deprived them of good things that they were originally allowed to enjoy. But who caused this to happen? It is humans' deeds. But what changed? Is it the essence of the good things that were prohibited or the ruling concerning them? It is the ruling concerning them; these good things became prohibited instead of being allowed. 'So, then, for the wickedness committed by those who followed the Jewish faith did We deny unto them certain of the good things of life which [before] had been allowed to them; and [We did this] for their having so often turned away from the path of Allah.' (*an-Nisa'*: 160)

But how did they turn away from the path of Allah? They wronged themselves and practised usury. These are deeds that made this slip into the realm of error and falsehood. But they did not stop at this. They wanted to lead others astray and mislead them. This is the meaning of turning away from the path of Allah. Such an attitude made them incur another sin over and above their others sins. It was thus not enough for them to err, but they went further by leading others astray.

Upon hearing '...they shall bear the full weight of their own burdens, as well as some of the burdens of those ignorant ones whom they have led astray; Oh, how evil the load with which they shall be burdened' (*an-Nahl*: 25) a sceptic may wonder: how could the Quran contradict itself? In one instance, it says: '...and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden...' (*al-An'am*: 164). In response to this claim, we say, every sin is reckoned in a different way. If one errs, he alone will bear the consequences of his deeds, if he does not sway others into erring. However, if one tries to lead others astray, he will bear the burden of the sin of abetting others to err.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us more about how the Jews wronged themselves: 'For taking usury when they had been forbidden to do so; and for wrongfully devouring other people's property. For those of them that reject the truth we have prepared an agonizing torment.' (*an-Nisa'*: 161) We have addressed the question of usury before. They used to accept bribes; in doing so, they wrongfully devoured other people's possessions. The same holds for stealing and cheating; these are all forms of devouring other people's possessions. Whatever one takes without a due right, one takes wrongfully. Accordingly, Allah has prepared for whoever does so, a grievous suffering. Everyone has two possible places of which they may assume one in the afterlife: a place in Heaven if he believes and a place in hell if he disbelieves. Thus, no one ought to think that either Heaven or the Hellfire will be too small. Allah has created Heaven on the basis that all mankind may become believers and similarly created Hellfire on the basis that all mankind may become disbelievers.

For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'That will inherit paradise; They will abide therein eternally.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 11) When a believer takes his place in paradise, Allah grants him the place that was assigned for a disbeliever in the paradise if he had chosen faith.

The grievous suffering Allah readied is so painful and debasing, that it can vanquish anyone, no matter how resolute or strong they are; indeed no one can endure the suffering Allah has readied for the disbelievers in the Afterlife.

But did all the followers of earlier revelation take the same course of action? Was there not anyone among them who considered believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Was there not anyone who considered the signs and narratives that foretold the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Torah and the Bible? There were indeed some among them who did. The True Lord *Glorified is He* relates to us the true history of what happened. He thus tells us that those who are deeply rooted in knowledge among the followers of earlier revelations are an exception:

لَكِنَّ الرّٰسِخُوْنَ فِي الْعِلْمِ مِنْهُمْ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَالْمُقِيمِينَ الصَّلَاةَ وَالْمُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ أُولَٰئِكَ سَنُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴿١٦٢﴾

But those of them who are well grounded in knowledge and have faith do believe in what has been revealed to you [Muhammad], and in what was revealed before you – those who perform the prayers, pay the pre- scribed alms, and believe in God and the Last Day – to them We shall give a great reward [162] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 162)

Allah *Glorified is He* did not generalize His statement that the followers of earlier revelations are disbelievers, wrong themselves and practise usury to all of them; rather, He mentioned an exception. A good example is `Abdullah ibn Salam Allah be pleased with him who seriously considered following the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him and knew well that the Jews tend to be corrupt and malicious. He thus said to the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him 'I will believe in you as a Messenger of Allah; I have recognized that you are Allah's Messenger with the same certainty I recognize my son; indeed, I am even more certain that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah than that my son is actually my son.' The True Lord *Glorified is He* says the following about this situation: 'They unto whom We have given revelation to before know it as they know their own children...' (*al-Baqara*: 146). But no one will ever fail to recognize their own child. The same holds for those who are deeply rooted in knowledge; they know that Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him is a Messenger from Allah to deliver His message. The one who is deeply rooted in knowledge is the one whose faith cannot be shaken and is never swayed by impulse or self-interests. He is indeed the one who has attained absolute certainty in his faith. 'But those of them who are well grounded in knowledge and have faith do believe in what has been revealed to you [Muhammad], and in what was revealed before you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162). The saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...in what has been revealed to you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162) refers to the Quran. The Quran is thus the standard against which all previous scriptures ought to be measured. Accordingly,

those who believe in what has been bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Allah, must believe in all that was mentioned in the previous scriptures.

A good observer of the rhetorical and stylistic scheme of the verse is bound to notice a change in the following part: '...those who perform prayer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162). The True Lord *Glorified is He* started the verse by saying: 'But those of them who are well grounded in knowledge and have faith do believe in what has been revealed to you [Muhammad], and in what was revealed before you; those who perform prayer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162).

We know well that when the regular masculine plural in Arabic is in a nominative position, its last syllable always contains a *waw* letter instead of a u-sound accent on its last letter. Further its last syllable would contain a *ya`* letter instead of a lower accent if it is either in an accusative or a dative position. Here *al-muqimin*—the Arabic word here translated as '...those who are [especially] constant in...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162) -is associated through a conjunction with a word in a nominative position; it should have thus been *al-muqimun*. Grammarians call this an anomalous case *kasr al-`i`rab* (an exception to the rules of parts of speech) because the word assumes a part of speech that requires a morphological form other than that which it has. This is thereby a case wherein the general rules of the parts of speech are broken. The Arabic linguistic acuity which first received the Quran noticed this grammatical anomaly.

Indeed, it used to be the case that whenever an Arab heard a linguistic mistake, he would panic. We may well remember the following illustrative story. An Arab⁽¹⁾ nomad once heard a Caliph giving a speech; the nomad noticed that the Caliph made a mistake, so he put his fingers behind his ears to twist and fold them to hear well what the Caliph was saying. Upon making another mistake, the Arab nomad stood up. When the Caliph made a third mistake, the Arab nomad said: I profess that you have assumed the high position of Caliph only by chance. In other words, he was telling the Caliph that he did not merit such a prestigious status.

But if a verse in The Book that is intended to challenge the eloquent contains an anomaly, the eloquent should have wondered: how come Muhammad *peace*

(1) The Arab who heard the caliph erring in grammar while on the pulpit

and blessings be upon him said that he challenges our eloquence with this book even though it contains an anomaly that does not follow the proper rules of grammar. However, no one said this. This indicates that they realized the rationale underlying this linguistic anomaly. Allah *Glorified is He* intended it to attract the attention of every reader to the importance of the issue to follow: ‘...those who perform prayer...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 162).

But why is this matter so important? The reason is that prayers constitute the main pillar of Islam. All the other pillars relate to specific events and so happen only once or periodically. A Muslim may profess that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His messenger only once in his life time. Similarly, every Muslim is obliged to fast only one month every year. Also, one has a license not to fast if one is undergoing certain strenuous conditions. Further, one pays *zakat* (alms to the poor) every year or whenever they harvest their crops. Finally, one is only bound to do pilgrimage if he can financially and physically afford the journey. Thus, the only pillar of Islam that is practised continuously and daily is the prayer. In this respect, we may understand the following noble verses: ‘What has brought you into hell-fire? They will answer, “We were not among those who prayed.”’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 42-43)

Islam encompasses five explicit pillars. It is possible that a Muslim may not be able to fulfil them all. For instance, a Muslim may only be able to fulfil the first two pillars; there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His messenger alongside praying constantly. Allah *Glorified is He* uses the expression: ‘...those who are [especially] constant in prayer...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 162), to show how the prayers sustain affection and closeness between Allah and every Muslim. One may worship Allah through fasting only in one month every year; similarly, one may demonstrate their obedience and love to Allah by paying *zakat* only when they receive the revenue of their land or wealth. Further, one may worship Allah through pilgrimage only if they are financially and physically capable of undertaking it. By contrast, when one prays five times a day every Muslim constantly pledges their loyalty to Allah.

We have previously said that the prayers encompass all the other pillars of Islam. In praying we profess that there is no deity worthy of worship except

Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His messenger. We also know that as much as *zakat* involves sacrificing a portion of one's fortune, prayers also involve sacrificing a portion of the time one could have otherwise devoted to work. Thus, praying involves paying *zakat* through the sacrifice of time. Similarly, in fasting one abstains from all the good of life which Allah allows them. But in prayers, one also does the same. Finally, one orients himself towards Mecca every time they pray. Thus, every time a Muslim prays, it is like performing pilgrimage.

In conclusion, Allah brought forth a grammatical anomaly in His saying: '...those who perform prayer...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162) to pay our attention to the importance of this form of worship. In addition, some scholars argued that the True Lord *Glorified is He* used such an anomaly to praise those who are constant in prayer because they consistently declare their loyalty to Allah. Indeed, so long as a Muslim is sound, he should never cease to demonstrate such loyalty.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...and spend in charity, and all who believe in Allah and the Last Day...' (*an-Nisa'*: 162). This asserts that all acts of worship are essentially intended to avow the servant's adherence and loyalty to their faith in Allah. Faith, as we know, is twofold. On one hand, the apex of faith is to believe in Allah; on the other hand, having faith also consists in believing in the afterlife. Allah *Glorified is He* says that the reward of those among the followers of earlier revelation who stick to this code of conduct and show this level of faith will be: '...these it is unto whom We shall grant a mighty reward' (*an-Nisa'*: 162). It is a mighty reward because they chose not to blindly follow the general orientation of their people and took a resistant and resolute stance in rejecting their attempt to falsify and paraphrase Allah's religion. Further, they deserve a mighty reward because they attested to the truth of the Quran's assertion the arrival of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was foretold in the Torah. Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا
إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى
وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ﴿١٦٣﴾

**We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did to Noah
and the prophets after him, to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac,
Jacob, and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and
Solomon – to Dawud We gave the book [of Psalms] [163]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 163)**

We know that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to directly attribute a discourse to Himself, He uses the first-person. The first-person pronoun has three facets. In certain instances, Allah uses *`inna*; in other instances, He uses *`innani* and in others he uses *nahnu*. In this verse Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did....' (*an-Nisa'*: 163) In another place in the Noble Quran, we encounter the saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He* 'Verily, I, and I alone, am Allah; there is no deity save Me....' (*Ta Ha*: 14) In a third place, He says: 'Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 09)

Here Allah *Glorified is He* uses *`inna* because the bestowal and guarding of His reminder, i.e. The Quran, involves the manifestation of a diversified array of His attributes. When Allah addresses His creatures, He does so in a way that manifests the traces and effects of His attributes in the universe in which we live. The universe in which we live abounds with beings that serve man; these beings in turn needed a lot of might and greatness to constitute for man a proper environment in which he can live and thrive. Further, the preparation of the universe for the reception of man required much power and might. The perfection and infallibility of the universe in which we live reflects the perfection of the attributes of the Master Who fashioned it. It required infinite knowledge of things, wisdom of design and provenance to fit everything in its proper place, a capability to demonstrate that perfect harmony, and affluence and abundance to bestow different parts of the universe with different bounties. When discussing a work of His whose production involved the manifestation and the use of many of His attributes, Allah uses either *`inna* or *nahnu*. When, the

True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about Himself He says '*innani* meaning 'Behold I am Allah.' In such a case, '*ina* and '*nahnu* are never used.

In the verse under consideration, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent revelation to you [Prophet]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 163). This means that We have inspired for man, a path and course of life that enables him to properly exercise his mastery over the universe.

This means that Allah has inspired man with a path and a course of life that enables him to properly exercise his mastery over the universe and preserve his life and his world. The preservation of the universe requires knowledge, wisdom, capability and mercy. For this reason, revelation teaches us that a whole array of perfect attributes collaborated and manifested themselves in the creation of the universe. Due to Allah's mercy towards His creatures, He gave them venues to explore and recognize these attributes: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors...' (*Fatir*: 27).

Allah *Glorified is He* sent down water from the sky. None of His creatures take part or have control over this process; it is only a few centuries ago that man discovered that water evaporates and then vapour forms clouds. Subsequently, cloudscondense and rain falls. Therefore, man does not interfere in the whole process. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky...' (*Fatir*: 27). Afterward, the True Lord *Glorified is He* acknowledges the effort and role of His creatures. In this vein, He says: 'and We produce thereby fruits of varying colors...' (*Fatir*: 27). Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'I bring forth'; rather, He acknowledged that His creatures use the reason with which He endowed them to use His blessings. In this respect, Allah acknowledges and appreciates the role of His creatures in ploughing, sowing the seeds and irrigating the land to grow crops. Therefore, the Quran uses '*inni* to refer to the unity of the Essence of Allah. By contrast, it uses '*inna* to refer to an array or the totality of Allah's attributes because all of Allah's actions involve the employment and manifestation of a number or all of Allah's attributes including; His Will, Knowledge, Capability, Wisdom in addition to His Infinite Capacity to diminish or outspread things, His Exaltation, Humiliation and His Compassion. Therefore, in such contexts

Allah uses either *`inna* or *nahnu* because both have a glorifying tone. In this context, the True Lord *Glorified is He* glorifies Himself to manifest an array of His perfect attributes. For this reason, some spiritualists who tasted the greatness of Allah and the beauty of His attributes say:

Exalted be my Lord over any suspicion or doubt

He is indeed too great to be comprehended

Whenever He wants to celebrate His sanctified unity, He refers to Himself by *'inni*. And whenever He wants to refer to the collective power of His attributes He refers to Himself by *`inna*. Upon considering this matter, we will realize that the True Lord *Glorified is He* does absolute justice toward His creatures because He made it possible for them to know Him. In this manner, Allah allowed His creatures to bring about and create things. When Allah *Glorified is He* addresses a matter that is the combined result of His Power and Capability alongside the capability of His creatures, He uses the particle *nun*—which implies glory and greatness because Allah is ultimately the One Who provided His creatures with these capabilities.

Allah *Glorified is He* created being out of nothing; however, He endowed His creatures with a creative capability to bring about and change things. But it should be kept in mind, that there is a difference between creating matter from nothing and creating something from matter that already exists. Allah *Glorified is He* created everything from nothing, yet, He endowed His creatures with the capability to use the things He created to make and innovate new tools and objects to promote the quality of their lives. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* continuously reminds His creatures of His grace and bounties. He thus says: ‘...so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 14)

Allah *Glorified is He* thus endowed His creatures with a creative power. However, His creatures can never create anything out of nothing; they create things from the abundant elements Allah has made available for them on earth. Allah’s creatures thereby create new objects from the elements Allah created. The one who created the glass which we use to drink water did not do so out of nothing. It is true that glass, as a substance, did not exist before man invented it. However, no one would contest the fact that all the elements, of which glass is made, are present in several environments, including sand and

others. Reason used these elements to create a new substance from the damp sand; further, it designed tools to shape and fashion this glass. This is how man created glass from elements already available in nature. Therefore, the difference between what Allah creates and what His creatures create is that Allah creates from nothing, whereas His creatures create new things from what Allah created and made subservient to them. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* described Himself by saying: ‘...so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 14)

Thus, humans are only capable of creating things from the elements Allah created and made available to them; you are completely incapable of creating out of nothing. Allah *Glorified is He* is indeed the best of the creators and no one’s creation would ever compare to His. As much as Allah has bestowed upon His creatures a creative capability, Allah describes Himself as the best of the creators. Further, Allah’s creation is as we have already said, (I am repeating this so that it would be anchored in people’s minds) always soulless and inanimate. In other words, humans are incapable of creating a male cup and another female cup so that they may copulate and reproduce new small cups that may then grow into mature cups. By contrast, Allah breathes the secret of life into inanimate matter and enlivens it. For this reason, Allah is the best of creators.

If you investigate, all living beings in the universe, you will find that there is an active yet secret power present in all of them. If you consider what a human is made of, you will find that they have several senses including smell, taste and touch. Most of these senses function spontaneously and involuntarily. For instance, whenever you open your eyes, you will immediately see your surroundings, even if you do not deliberately will to see. Similarly, if you do not want to see you will simply close your eyes. But if you do not want to hear you cannot order your ears to stop receiving sounds. In the same manner, you voluntarily open your mouth to eat and taste but you do not order your nose to smell; your nose just senses whatever odours or scents are around you. Further you may voluntarily extend your hands to touch. But you cannot deliberately will to laugh; is there any organ you may order to laugh? You may come across things or events that stimulate your laughter, but you cannot

order any organ in your body to laugh. Similarly, you cry when something stimulates you to cry; however, you cannot order any specific organ or sense in your body to cry. For this reason, Allah associated laughing and crying with life and associated nothingness with death. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And that it is He alone who causes [you] to laugh and to weep; And that it is He alone who deals death and grants life.' (*an-Najm*: 43-44)

Allah made certain organs in humans function spontaneously and involuntarily. No human being knows how they exactly happen or get excited. No one may keep their ear from hearing. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not command one not to hear a specific thing; however, one is commanded not to overhear or eavesdrop on others.

Our tradition did not require us to prevent ourselves from hearing anything because no one can possibly block his/her ears from hearing anything. However, one can voluntarily choose not to eavesdrop on others. Thus, Allah made His enactments in line with the capabilities of man and within the realm of what is up to him and can voluntarily choose. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when you see those who engage in [offensive] discourse concerning Our verses, then turn away from them until they enter into another conversion...' (*al-An'am*: 68).

Here Allah *Glorified is He* used the word *ra'yt* (meet) which literally means to see; even though the context is related to the sense of hearing because no Muslim can prevent himself from hearing if other people around him indulge in blasphemous talk about Allah's messages. However, Allah ordered whoever hears such a discourse to turn their back upon those who promote it. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us what is concealed and kept a secret. Indeed, even though a lot of things in the universe may seem to be acting agents, yet, in reality, all of them are completely submissive to the will of Allah. For this reason, spiritualists and those who have true knowledge of Allah say, 'It is due to Allah's goodness and generosity towards you, that He attributes certain actions to you, even though He is the Cause of all causes'.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator underlying everything and is indeed the Cause of all causes. The most that any of Allah's creatures may do is to orient and direct some of the active powers or energies that Allah created in the

universe. It is indeed due to the greatness of the True Lord *Glorified is He* that the strong cannot give any of their strength to the weak. None who is strong may say to another who is weak, 'Here! Take some of my power and strength so that you may endure life.' By contrast, Allah invites the weak to resort to Him and promises them that if they do, He will give them strength to endure and do whatever they wish. Thus, no creature of Allah *Glorified is He* may voluntarily give their strength to another; rather, they may use the ramifications or effects of their strength to help the weak. A good illustration of this point is a situation wherein a strong person helps another weak person to carry something that is too heavy for the latter to carry. In such a situation, the strong use their strength to help the weak; however, they cannot transfer their strength or power to the weak so that they may carry that heavy object.

By contrast, Allah does not only use His Power to support His creatures; He rather, bestows some of it upon the weak whenever the latter resorts to Him. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who gracefully endowed affluence to whoever is rich or affluent and deprived whoever is poor of it; similarly, He is the One Who endows mercy to whoever is merciful, capability to whoever is capable and wisdom to whoever is wise. All these bounties are thus originally educed from the True Lord *Glorified is He*. This sums up our explanation of the use of '*inna*'.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* put the verb *awhayna* (the Arabic word translated in the verse under study as inspired) in the plural form. But what is *al-wahy* (revelation)? Originally, the word means to inform or reveal to someone something secretly or in a concealed manner. But there are several ways in which one may reveal a secret or apprise another of it. Means of communications are tools used to transmit what a speaker says to a listener; alternatively, one may reveal something to another using certain signals that the others see. These signals are used explicitly and not implicitly. By *awhayna* Allah means that He informed and revealed to whoever He talks about in His discourse certain knowledge in a secret way. The word *wahy* has different meanings; every act of informing someone of something secret is a *wahy*. But who revealed secretly? Further to whom did he reveal secretly? And what was revealed secretly? To respond to these questions let us consider how Allah *Glorified is He* talked about the genre of beings. He said the following about the

earth even though it is inanimate: 'When the earth is shaken with its [final] earthquake. And the earth discharges its burdens. And man, says, "What is [wrong] with it? " That Day, it will report its news. Because your Lord has commanded it.' (*az-Zalzala*: 1-5)

These verses indicate that Allah *Glorified is He* has set the lifetime of earth to end on Judgment Day. By analogy we sometimes—and to Allah belong the supreme and most exalted parables—try to estimate the life expectancy of products; we make or set them to collapse or stop functioning at a specific time. Similarly, Allah revealed to the earth, even though it is inanimate, to quake at a certain time, namely, on the Day of Judgment.

Accordingly, to help us know Him and understand His discourse, Allah *Glorified is He* left traces of His existence and power in the way He created His creatures. If one wants to wake up at 3 a.m., a time at which he is not used to waking up, he must set the alarm to go off at that time. The relation between this man and his clock is analogical to the relation between Allah and His creatures. Allah created the earth and set it to explode at a certain time in accordance to the laws of its constitution. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* set certain animals to follow specific courses of actions: 'And your Lord inspired to the bee, "Take for yourself among the mountains houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct.' (*an-Nahl*: 68) Allah *Glorified is He* has thus secretly inspired bees to behave in a certain manner and He made such behaviour part of its instinct. There is a difference between matters that a being instinctually does and matters that it voluntarily chooses to do. Instinctual matters are rather mechanical and cannot be changed; however voluntary decisions can be reversed and modified.

A good example of mechanical structures is that of computers which man uses to store data. This machine cannot say to the one who feeds it with data, 'do not store in me such packs of data.' Further, it cannot keep anyone from retrieving the data stored in it, if this person knows how to use it. Computers are incapable of choosing or making decisions.

By contrast, human reason is characterized by its capacity to select information and knows how to release this information in the relevant situations. Further it consciously determines what things should be kept as a secret and which

could be revealed to others. Human reason may even go as far as choosing to lie or tampering with facts and changing them. However, a computer or an electronic mind is incapable of doing so; it is only capable of retrieving the data that was stored in it. Accordingly, man is more rationally developed.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* created the universe, He endowed every being with an instinctual structure that befits its functions and purpose in life. In this vein, He endowed man with the capacity to freely choose between different alternatives. By contrast, He ruled that all others beings would mechanically follow their instincts. A being that is wholly governed by its instinct cannot choose anything; thus, its life follows a fixed, unchanging law.

This mechanical nature is quite evident in the cosmological order: in the heavens and the celestial spheres, the earth and the planets. All these follow the laws that Allah has set for them. The same also holds for terrestrial beings like plants. One may plant a tree. As this tree grows, the capillaries of its roots may then spread downward in the land to absorb minerals and other nutrients. However, every plant, in accordance with the biological structure Allah set for it, absorbs only a specific assortment of nutrients; thus, a plant may benefit from a nutritive substance that is of no avail to another.

Botanical scientists discovered these facts through their study of the growth of plants. Some of them, whose faith is weak, or those who are not always conscious of Allah, may say, 'plants can feed themselves due to the theory of fine capillary tubes.' This theory—as we know—states that liquids rise in capillary tubes whose diameter does not exceed that of a hair; the liquid then rises above the surface of the container in which it is originally placed although, as we all know, liquids settle at the same level in any container in which they are placed. When we place these capillary tubes in a vessel that contains liquid, the liquid rises in them above the level at which they originally settled in the vessel. The reason is that the pressure on the water inside these tubes is way less than that on the water in the vessel; scientists thus assumed that plants nourish themselves in this manner.

We say to these scientists: but what about the fact that plants select certain nutrients from the soil and leave out others. Liquids rise in vein-tubes irrespective of the nutrients they may contain. It is because you are not conscious of Allah

that you claim that nature does so; you thus overlook a very important fact; that our Lord caused each plant to selectively choose a different combination of nutrients from the same soil; if plants depended only on the phenomenon of capillarity they would all use the same set of nutrients indiscernibly. The True Lord *Glorified is He* thus rightly says: 'Glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*. Who creates, then makes complete. And Who makes (things) according to a measure, then guides (them to their goal).' (*al-A 'la*: 1-3)

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who determines the nature of all beings and guides every being to the fulfilment of its purpose. In this vein, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '... [all] watered with the same water: and yet, some of them have, We favoured above others by way of the food [which they provide for man and beast] Verily, in all this there are messages indeed for people who use their reason!' (*ar-Ra 'd*: 4)

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* endows every plant with a specific instinct that is different from any other member of its species. In this respect, even though a peasant may plant paprika beside sugarcane and then plant pomegranate beside both, each of them will taste differently. Paprika would be chilly and spicy; sugarcane would be sweet and the taste of pomegranate would be a mixture of both sweetness and sourness; the last would be different from the first two. These different tastes would be there if plants exclusively depended in their nourishment on the physical phenomenon of capillary tubes. But another scientist may contend that this difference in taste is due to natural selection. At the stubbornness of such a scientist we wonder, why do you not admit that such selection is caused by Allah instead of going around in vicious circles?

To sum up *al-wahy* is to reveal something to someone in secret. But secret revelation does not always have to be through an agent; sometimes, certain characteristics or features stay latent in something and then reveal themselves at some point or when a specific event happens. This is analogous to the beep of an alarm that goes off at a set time. The following saying of the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives an example of how He inspired animals: 'And your Lord inspired to the bee, "Take for yourself among the mountains houses, and among the trees and [in] that which they construct.'" (*an-Nahl*: 68)

It is quite thought provoking that an American scientist who devoted his life to the study of the life cycle, species and environment of bees discovered that bees first inhabited and started producing honey in hives found in mountains. Subsequently, man started to discover beehives in high trees that he did not grow; finally, man managed to domesticate and breed bees and build special gardens, hives and farms for them. This scientist never read the Quran or learnt about the three kinds of beehives it describes. However, this scientist empirically studied the life cycle of bees in a robust manner and arrived at the same result the Quran had foretold centuries ago. Indeed, in almost every century and age a scientist discovers new facts that vindicates and attests to the truth of the Quran and its claims. However, Allah's revelation and inspiration to man assumes a different form; the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And so, [when he was born,] We inspired [thus] the mother of Musa (Moses), "Suckle him [for a time], and then, when thou hast cause to fear for him, cast him into the river..." (al-Qasas: 7).

No messenger went to the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to advise her. However, she knew for certain that she had to cast her son into the river to save him. Muslim scholars have put a lot of effort to make the meaning of *al-wahy* more accessible to us; they said that revelation is a kind of certain knowledge about something that one suddenly acquires without knowing its source; such knowledge is always supported by evidence that it is inspired by Allah. For this reason, one does not seek rational clues to accept or believe in it. A good example of this form of revelation is Allah's discourse on the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* quoted above: 'And so, [when he was born,] We inspired [thus] the mother of Musa (Moses), "Suckle him [for a time], and then, when thou hast cause to fear for him, cast him into the river..." (al-Qasas: 7). By Allah, would a woman in the whole world comply if we told her to throw her child if she is worried about him? Of course, she would not! But the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* followed the revelation of Allah and took it for granted. As soon as Allah's revelation entered her heart and He secretly inspired her, she believed it; further, since this revelation was from Allah, the human soul received and embraced it with certainty and faith and Satan was not capable of casting doubts in it about its truth. Thus, the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* cast her son into the

river after she had suckled him. But Allah wanted to comfort her and assure her about the destiny of her son. He thus explained to her that He has issued His orders to the river to cast the child ashore and arranged that his enemy, namely the Pharaoh of Egypt, would pick and bring him up in his palace. Similarly, Allah inspired the disciples of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [remember] when I inspired to the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My messenger 'Isa (Jesus)". They said, "We have believed, so bear witness that indeed we are Muslims [in submission to Allah]." (*al-Ma'ida*: 111) Allah also inspired the angels. For instance, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '[Remember] when your Lord inspired to the angels, "I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved..."' (*al-Anfal*: 12).

Allah's revelation encompasses all species whether these species are invisible like the angels or visible and perceptible like humans like, the disciples of 'Isa (Jesus) and the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*. Allah *Glorified is He* says 'We inspired' to bring to our attention that Allah is not the only One Who inspires and reveals matters in secret. Satan and devils do the same with their followers: 'And indeed do the devils inspire their allies [among men] to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you shall most surely be polytheists.' (*al-An'am*: 121)

Allah *Glorified is He* also says the following about Satan and the devils: 'And thus, We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring to one another decorative speech in delusion. But if your Lord had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and that which they invent.' (*al-An'am*: 112)

Accordingly, *al-wahy* consists in secretly inspiring or revealing something to someone. It is not restricted to the True Lord *Glorified is He*; rather, revelation could be from Allah, Satan and the devils or from those who support and follow Satan. Further, revelation and inspiration may be directed to inanimate things, animals, angels or humans.

Thus, if we would like to put forward a comprehensive definition of revelation we would say, revelation in language is to reveal or inspire something to someone secretly. This revelation could be either from Allah or from the

devils. It could also be directed to any being on earth whether animal or human being. Further the subject matter of this revelation could either be good or evil.

The word *wahy* can bear any of these senses. Accordingly, if it is used in a generic manner it can be construed to indicate any of them. But in Islamic Law, it is used in the context of only referencing Allah's secret revelation and inspiration to His messenger. The same holds for the meaning of *salat* (prayers). Linguistically, it may mean invoking Allah or asking Him for something; it may also mean blessing the name of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* whenever his name is mentioned; it could also refer to the prayers enacted on us whether these are deeds or sayings. However, the term has been coined by the scholars of Islamic Law to refer to the five daily prayers and the special movements and statements they involve, starting by saying, 'Allah is greater than all', to initiate one's prayers until one terminates their prayers by saying, and 'May Allah's peace and mercy be upon you.'

'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*⁽¹⁾ said the following about this comprehensive sense of *salat*. He once asked Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* 'How have you been today?' So Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* answered, 'I like allurements, hate the truth, pray without performing ablution and feel that what I have on earth is more than what Allah has in the heavens. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was infuriated. Indeed, if it had not been for 'Ali, who suddenly entered, 'Umar could have taken a decision against Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with them*. 'Ali asked 'Umar *Allah be pleased with them* 'What is the cause of your anger, Commander of the Believers?' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'I have asked Hudhayfa about how he has been today and he said such and such things.' So 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, "O Commander of the Believers, by liking allurements, he meant that he likes his wealth and his children, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...Your worldly goods and your children are but a trial and a temptation...' (*al-Anfal*: 28). By hating the truth, he meant that he hates death which is an uncontested truism; indeed, who among us likes it commander of the believers? By praying

(1) 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* asking, 'How are you Hudhayfa?' and the strange answer of Hudhayfa which was then explained by 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb may Allah be pleased with them

without performing ablution, he meant that he blesses the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* whenever his name is mentioned. Finally, by claiming that he possesses on earth what Allah does not possess in the heavens, he meant that he has a wife and a child on earth whereas Allah does not have either in the heavens.' Thus, Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* used allurements, death and prayers in a special sense. I have deliberately adduced this example to demonstrate the distinction between linguistic generic meanings of words and their specific meaning in the context of Islamic Law.

This also shows the difference between *al-wahy* as a term and a concept in Islamic Law and its linguistic meaning. The linguistic meaning of *al-wahy* is to reveal or inspire something to someone secretly. However, as a religious term, *al-wahy* refers to the revelation of Allah to His messenger. All other forms of revelation and inspiration are deduced from the generic linguistic sense.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says in the verse we are explaining: 'Behold, We have inspired thee [O Prophet] just as We inspired Nuh (Noah)...' (*an-Nisa'*: 163). The word *awhyna* indicates that Allah made a secret revelation to a messenger of His. To understand why Allah's revelation was secret, we need to bear in mind that Allah's attributes are absolutely perfect and that all creatures are subordinate to the power of Allah *Glorified is He*. Accordingly, no one can be directly in contact with Allah because He is absolutely sublime. Even the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could not bear to be in such contact. For this reason, Allah used the angels, who are luminous creatures, as intermediaries to communicate His message to His messengers. Further, Allah prepares His messengers for the reception of His revelation even before He sends it down to them through angels.

There is an hierarchy of relation. The highest being, namely, Allah, initially communicates His discourse to the angels and then the latter reveal it to a selected set of His creatures. This selected set, i.e. the Messengers, have been fashioned by Allah to receive His revelation. Subsequently, those messengers deliver Allah's message to other humans. This chain is intended to alleviate the awe of being in direct contact with Allah; nonetheless, messengers are always shaken in awe when they receive revelation from the angels. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said the following about his first

encounter with the angel of revelation, 'The Truth was revealed to me when he was in the cave of Hira'. Gabriel *peace be upon him* came to me and said, 'Read!' So, I answered, 'But I cannot read.' Gabriel grabbed and held me so close to the extent that I was exhausted; he then let go of me and said, 'Read!' So, I replied, 'But I cannot read.' So, he grabbed and held me so close until I was exhausted again. He then let go of me and said, 'Read!' So, I answered, 'But I cannot read.' So, he grabbed and held me so close for the third time and then let go of me. He then said, 'Read in the name of your Lord, who has created; created man from a clot. Recite and your Lord is the most Generous.'⁽¹⁾ (*al-'Alaq*: 1-3)

After these events took place, the Messenger of Allah *peace be upon him* returned to his wife Khadija bint Khuwaylid *Allah be pleased with her*. His forehead was soaking with sweat and his heart was pounding. He then said: wrap me with clothes, wrap me with clothes. They then covered and wrapped him with clothes until his fear was dispelled. However, what happened was natural. For Gabriel *peace be upon him* is an angel who encountered Muhammad ibn `Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him* who is a human being. This had to happen so that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would get used to receiving revelation from Gabriel *peace be upon him*.

However, did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* continuously receive revelation in this state of trembling and suffering? No; Allah's revelation would sometimes stop for a while. In such cases, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would long for it. Further Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* became capable of enduring the exhaustion involved in receiving revelation. However, his forehead continued to soak with sweat whenever he received revelation. He also used to find difficulty in moving when this happened. In addition, if he received revelation while he was riding an animal, it would slow down and cry out in pain. Similarly, whenever Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received revelation while he was leaning his thigh on the thigh of one of his Companions, the weight of Prophet Muhammad would increase to the extent that it would almost break the leg of his Companion. Prophet Muhammad

(1) *Al-Bukhari*

used to bear all these hardships and forms of fatigue during the reception of revelation. The reason is that a chemical change used to happen in the body of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he would realize that what he was receiving was not an ordinary discourse but rather a discourse miraculously revealed by Allah.

When revelation descended upon the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* it used to have a jingle sound like that of a bell; this sound heralded that revelation was due and about to start so that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prepared himself for its reception. When the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was initially enervated by the reception of revelation, Allah *Glorified is He* due to His mercy caused revelation to stop so that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would long for revelation due to the sweetness of what was revealed to him. This longing, in turn, made him prepared for and willing to go through the troubles entailed in receiving revelation. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ceased to receive revelation for a while, his adversaries said, 'The Lord of Muhammad abandoned and alienated him.' They only admitted that Muhammad has a Lord in this situation; they did so after they had denied the truth of the claims of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. They thus failed to be intelligent enough not to exploit this situation and express their view about it in a way that does not contradict with their prior stance. The truth was that the True Lord *Glorified is He* saw the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was exhausted and enervated upon receiving revelation; He thus suspended revelation for a while so that the Messenger of Allah would long for the sweetness he found in revelation and prepare himself for enduring the pain entailed in its reception.

The Prophet's longing for and love for revelation completely alleviated any pain he may have experienced in receiving revelations. Indeed, when one of us is on the way to visit someone they like, they may be willing and may not mind to walk through a valley of mud or on thorns until they reach this person. Accordingly, the fact that revelation stopped for a while was intended to make Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* long to and crave for revelation and so that every one of us would pay attention to the following

saying of Allah *Glorified is He* when they read the Quran: ‘And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life].’ (*ad-Duha*: 4)

This means that the life to follow will please you. Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Have we not opened up thy heart, and lifted from thee the burden that had weighed so heavily on your back? And [have We not] raised for you your reputation?’ (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* thus addressed this matter. He wanted to tell the believers, not to think that the Lord of Muhammad—as they say—has alienated and abandoned him. No. Rather, He suspended revelation to him for a while to prepare him for the reception of more revelation. Allah thus gave them an example from the universal laws they observe every day to show that the change in the flow of revelation is quite normal; yet, their disbelieving ways blinded both their sight and insight. In this respect Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘By the morning brightness; and [by] the night when it covers with darkness; your Lord has not forsaken thee, nor has He become displeased with you.’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-3)

We need bear in mind that Allah *Glorified is He* chooses to swear by whatever He wills about whatever He wills. The morning brightness is at the beginning of the day; it is the time for working, labouring, effort exertion, earnest actions and exhaustion. By contrast, night and nocturnal hours are the time for comfort and rest.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains that if you consider the law governing the sequence of day and night, you will realize that Allah made daytime for working and night-time for resting. Similarly, the fact that revelation stopped for a while was intended as a period of respite so that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would restore his energy and prepare himself for the reception of new revelations. The True Lord *Glorified is He* swears: ‘By the morning brightness; and [by] the night when it covers with darkness; your Lord has not forsaken thee, nor has He become displeased with you.’ (*ad-Duha*: 1-3) Does the fact that the night follows the day, indicates that Allah has cursed mankind and deprived it of daytime? No; night is a bliss that Allah conferred upon mankind so that people may rest and prepare themselves for a new day.

Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the verse under consideration when a Jew once asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask Allah *Glorified is He* to reveal to them a book from the heavens: 'The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down to them a book from the heaven. But they had asked of Musa (Moses) [even] greater than that and said, "Show us Allah outright..." (*an-Nisa'*: 153).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* ordered the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to explain to them that Allah has sent down revelation to him as much as he sent down revelation to previous messengers. Did you not suspect that Allah *Glorified is He* sent down revelation to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*? You have definitely suspected and cast doubt upon the fact that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* received revelation from Allah. However, let us set aside your suspicions and what you deny and consider instead what you believe in. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 163).

Thus, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not the first to receive revelation: 'We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 163). Scholars often bypass this matter rather quickly and inattentively. However, let us ponder over it for a while. We say this statement may falsely give the impression that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was the first to receive revelation. The truth is that Adam *peace be upon him* was the first to receive revelation long before Noah *peace be upon him* did. But there is a diametrical difference between the revelation Adam *peace be upon him* received and the revelation the Prophets received after him.

A good example is Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. Nuh (Noah) was sent to warn his people against Allah's punishment and to promise them His mighty reward should they obey Him. As for Adam *peace be upon him* his people came forth after him. For this reason, Allah did not advocate Adam with a miracle because he is the father of all mankind. Children always imitate their fathers; even the children of atheists mimic their fathers. Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to Adam *peace be upon him* His saying: '...there shall most certainly come to you, guidance from Me: and those who follow My guidance need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 38) Sending guidance to Adam *peace be upon him* in this context, refers to the coming of revelation.

But why was Nuh (Noah) mentioned first in the verse? The reason is that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was sent to a nation that was already there. For this reason, he needed to be advocated by a miracle that confirms the truth of his message. Allah sent Nuh (Noah) to all mankind, as there was no one on earth except them. But Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all mankind, as Islam is the seal of all religions. There were other nations besides his own when he was missioned. 'We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as we did to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him, to Ibrahim (Abraham)...' (*an-Nisa*': 163), why did Allah say, 'prophets after him', (after Nuh [Noah])? And why did Allah name the Prophets after mentioning '...revealed to Abraham'?

Scholars reasoned that this style stresses the honour of those prophets. '...to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and the Tribes, to 'Isa (Jesus), Ayyub (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Harun (Aaron), and Sulaiman (Solomon) — to Dawud (David) We gave the book [of Psalms].' (*an-Nisa*': 163). It is as if the True Lord is telling Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when the Jews ask you to have a book sent down to them from the Heavens, say to them, 'Allah inspired me as much as He inspired previous prophets; I am thus not a peculiarity.' Still, 'And even if we had sent down to you, [O Muhammad], a written scripture on a page and they touched it with their hands, the disbelievers would say, "This is not but obvious magic."' (*al-An'am*: 7) Indeed, every denier insists on his denial. They were not arguing to reach the truth; they were just sophistically contending falsities.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted* thus lists the names of the Prophets whom He inspired: '...to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), and the Tribes, to 'Isa (Jesus), Ayyub (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Harun (Aaron), and Sulaiman (Solomon) — to Dawud (David) We gave the book [of Psalms].' (*an-Nisa*': 163) Here, we notice that Allah mentioned revelation in general. However, when He mentioned Dawud (David), He explicitly said that He named the revelation He sent upon him, the Book of Psalms even though He had not mentioned any of the names of the books that he revealed to the previous Prophets, like the Torah in the case of Musa (Moses), or the Bible in the case of 'Isa (Jesus). The reason why He mentioned the book that was revealed to Dawud (David) was because it included all the universal laws

common with the other laws, i.e. praising Allah and exalting Him. There were no legal rulings in the Book of Psalms.

But someone may argue that no legal rulings were enacted on `Isa (Jesus) in the Bible. We say this may be the case; but the Bible complements the Torah. It thus only addressed spiritual aspects because the Torah that existed before it contained all the legal rulings. Therefore, despite the major differences between the Jews and Christians on the issue of `Isa (Jesus) and his mother, they agree as much as they call the Torah and the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments respectively. They also consider them a single book calling it 'the sacred book.'

But what is the meaning of *az-zabur* (Book of Psalms). It is derived from the term *zabr al-bi`r* which refers to the following process. When people dug wells to obtain water, they were often afraid that dirt would fall back and shut the hole of the well. For this reason, they used to make walls on the sides coated with either stones or, as they do in the Egyptian countryside, with cement. The term *zabr al-bi`r* was then used in a generic sense to refer to any kind of repairs done to wells. The term later transcended this usage. For instance, they called reason *zabr* because it makes sense of matters. Likewise, walls on the side of a well keep dirt from falling inside the well, exactly as reason protects man from going astray. Reason bridles desires from leading man astray and misguiding him. Thus, those who think that the function of reason consists in haphazardly unleashing the mind to irresponsibly produce and pursue false ideas are mistaken. We tell them, you must first understand the meaning of the word reason for you to properly fathom its function. Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ
نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَى تَكْلِيمًا ﴿١٦٤﴾

**to other messengers We have already mentioned to you, and
also to some We have not. To Moses God spoke directly [164]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 164)**

The prophets of Allah mentioned in the previous verse are not all the prophets in whom every Muslim is required to believe. We were taught at

Al-Azhar University that we have to believe in twenty-five prophets. One of the poets mentioned those prophets in the following verses,

‘We have proof that there are eight prophets.

After the ten we mentioned in addition to the seven remaining:

Idris (Enoch), Hud (Eber), Shu'aib (Jethro), Saleh (Shelah) as well as Dhul Kifl (Ezekiel), Adam and then the seal of all prophets, Muhammad. ’

In the chapter of *al-An'am*, the True Lord says: ‘And that was our (conclusive) argument which we gave Ibrahim (Abraham) against his people. We raise by degrees whom We will. Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing. And we gave to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) - all of them We guided. And Nuh (Noah), we guided before; and among his descendants, Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) and Ayyub (Job) and Yousef (Joseph) and Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron). Thus, do we reward the doers of good. And Zakariyya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John) and 'Isa (Jesus) and Ilyas (Elias) - and all were of the righteous. And Ismail (Ishmael) and Alyasa' (Elisha) and Yunus (Jonah) and Lut (Lot) - and all of them we preferred over the worlds.’ (*al-An'am*: 83-86)

Eighteen Prophets are listed in these verses. In addition to these, there are seven others; Idris (Enoch), Hud (Eber), Shu'aib (Jethro), Saleh (Shelah), Dhul Kifl (Ezekiel), Adam and Muhammad. Allah thus mentioned twenty-five Prophets in the Quran. However, the verse that precedes the verse under discussion has not provided the names of these twenty-five Prophets. Allah mentioned some of the names of the prophets in the chapter of *al-An'am* and others in the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara*.’ Thus, the True Lord says: ‘and (We sent) messengers about whom we have related (their stories) to you before and messengers about whom we have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Musa (Moses) with (direct) speech.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 164) This verse indicates that there are more prophets than the twenty-five. The True Lord mentions in the Quran: ‘And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner’ (*Fatir*: 24).

This verse indicates that Allah only told us the names of the most prominent prophets whose nations were larger than those of the others, or exerted intensive effort in communicating their messages to them, For

instance, Allah sent some prophets to nations whose population was more than a hundred thousand people like Yunus (Jonah): 'And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more.' (*as-Saffat*: 147) The old world lived in isolation from each other. People did not possess the means whereby they could communicate. Thus, every nation suffered a specific set of ailments and was characterized by a special demeanour. For this reason, a different prophet had to be sent to every nation to treat the specific set of ailments it suffered. Every prophet was in turn required not to mention the ailments that plagued other societies so that they would not be transmitted, by example, to the nation to which he was sent. The True Lord knows through His eternal knowledge that His creation will use the capacity for thinking and innovation with which He has endowed them to investigate the universe and innovate means of communication, and turn the world into a single village. When this happens, whatever happens in the East will immediately be known in the West. Further, social and political ailments will be spread in the world. Hence, there will be a need to send a single Prophet who can deal with the totality of ailments and problems the world suffers; this was the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the seal of all prophets.

The True Lord aptly uses the verb 'related' in the context of telling us about the history of prophets for a good reason. It indicates that the Prophet of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* has nothing to do with the details of these stories; rather, the events involved in every prophet's story are put forward in context as they happened. Further, Allah eternally knows that His creation will innovate the art of storytelling.

It is quite peculiar that people call it the art of storytelling. The novelist often composes imaginary tales that do not have anything to do with reality. In real history writing, its authors add elements from their imagination to the actual events upon the assumption that these are the requirements of perfecting the art of storytelling. They thus lose sight of honest reporting. For this reason, the True Lord explains to us that the stories of the prophets besides all other stories in the Quran are all true, real and actually happened.

The stories of the Quran relate to us true events, as reported by the True Lord, not any of the creation. There is indeed a difference between the

confidence one may have in the narrative of the True Lord Who only relates stories to His creation to bid them to stick to His path, and the confidence one may have in a narrative related by any of Allah's creation for any purpose, whether it is entertainment or anything else. Most of the stories written by man abound with things made up by human imagination like the novels of Georgie Zeidan about Islam and the prophets. When he was asked why He added things from his imagination to the actual stories, he answered in the traditional way and said, 'I did so to serve the plot of the stories.'

Accordingly, we must distinguish between the narratives relayed to us by fellow humans and those put forward by the True Lord. We must always keep this distinction in mind so that no one may ever dare to add something from his imagination to a narrative conveyed to us in the Quran. If this happens, someone may one day have the audacity to say that narratives are the same and that nothing sets apart the one found in the Quran from any others. The Quran is not written by an author; it is rather, the speech of the Sublime Creator, Who relates past stories to teach and guide us to the righteous path. We should always heed the fact that Allah eternally knows what happens and will happen in His universe. He said: 'We relate to you, [O Muhammad], the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran although you were, before it, among the unaware.' (*Yusuf*: 3)

Allah related the best of stories in the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he is the one who will deal with all mankind including the nations to whom prior prophets were sent. In so far as this is the task of the Prophet Muhammad, Allah informed and explained to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his nation the story of every prophet with his nation, and the key events that happened during his life including the ailments of that society. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* —as we know— and his nation after him are tasked with preaching the path of Allah to all mankind. Hence, they must be aware of the truth about the prior prophets and their respective societies. Allah says: 'We relate to you, [O Muhammad], the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran although you were, before it, among the unaware.' (*Yusuf*: 3)

Accordingly, those stories inform of the undertaking of every prophet. Historiography—as we know—is connecting events with the times when they

happened. This may assume different forms. We may focus on the events and then mention the people who were involved in these historical events. Alternatively, we can write the history of a specific period by talking about the key figures who lived in that period and then mention the main events that took place in their lives. The word biography indicates a specific person is the centre of the story and the main events that occurred around him. In contrast, when we make a certain event the centre of the story, the focus is primarily directed to the event with less focus on the people involved in it.

Here is a good example; when we write the history of *Al-Hijra*, this event is the centre. In this wake, we talk about how the Prophet Muhammad travelled with Abu Bakr, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and other Companions *Allah be pleased with them* immigrated with them. The event of immigration from Mecca to Medina and its details constitute the focus of all the historical narratives about *Al-Hijra*.

By contrast, when we write the biography of a specific person, like the biography of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, the life of the Prophet Muhammad constitutes the centre of attention and discussions because we are primarily concerned with relating the events of his life.

The same holds for the stories of the prophets the Quran relates. They are the centre of the narrative, and then the events they lived through are mentioned. The messages sent from the heavens to mankind to relay to them the path of Allah consist of two main parts. Firstly, a theoretical part which The True Lord wants to impart to His creation through His Prophets. This part often consists in a body of knowledge that they should learn. Secondly, any message always has a practical side. The True Lord wants His servants to act and live their lives in accordance with the knowledge He imparts to them. Indeed, acquiring divine knowledge is not a luxury; rather, it is a responsibility to apply what one learns by adhering to the set of do's and don'ts which Allah enacted. If one was only required to know what Allah wants to impart him without having to do anything based on such knowledge, the quest of life would be rather easy.

When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the disbelievers of Quraysh to profess that there is no god worthy of worship but Allah, they resisted because they knew that such a profession was not a mere

verbal utterance. They knew well that such a profession involves a set of requirements. They also knew that if they make such a statement; they would be acknowledging that no one is entitled to absolute mastery or lordship except Allah. This in turn implies that all servants of Allah would be equal, the thing which they would never accept.

Every divine book revealed from the heavens was intended to be learnt and then acted upon. This means that acquiring divine knowledge necessarily implies acting upon it; for knowledge is worthless if it is not transformed into action. Every prophet was required to convey to his people the rulings of Allah and explain to them that they are required to live their lives per these rulings. Significantly, divine rulings always fall within the realm of human capability.

Allah tells the story of previous prophets so that we may learn that some people learnt and acted upon what they learnt. Indeed, actual stories give us an illustration of the practical application of divine knowledge. For this reason, the True Lord relayed to us the story of the prophets in the Quran. For instance, Allah told us the story of Nuh (Noah) when Allah commanded him to build a ship, and how his people used to ridicule him for executing the command of Allah. Allah also tells us about how He then commanded Nuh (Noah) to take on the ark he built, a pair of each kind of animal, one of each sex. The True Lord says: 'And he constructed the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent of his people passed by him, they ridiculed him. He said, "If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you ridicule. And you are going to know who will get a punishment that will disgrace him on earth and upon whom will descend an enduring punishment in the Hereafter." So, it was, until when Our command came and water came forth from the valley, We said, "Load upon the ship of each creature, a male and a female, and your family, except those about whom the word has preceded, and include whoever has believed." But none had believed with him, except a few.' (*Hud*: 38-40)

Nuh (Noah) should not have overlooked the saying of the True Lord: '...except those about whom the word has preceded.' He should have realized that it indicated that some of his family will not believe. However, 'Noah called to his son who was apart from them, 'O my son, come aboard with us

and be not with the disbelievers.’ (*Hud*: 42) The response was: ‘[But] he said, "I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water.’ (*Hud*: 43) So, Nuh (Noah) replied: ‘There is no protector today from the decree of Allah, except for whom He gives mercy.’ (*Hud*: 43) After the son of Nuh (Noah) drowned and the water sank into the earth, Nuh (Noah) invoked Allah and said: ‘My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!’ (*Hud*: 45)

This is one aspect from Nuh’s (Noah’s) story by which the True Lord informs us about those who rightly deserve to be considered by the children of the prophets. Allah’s messages are essentially a paths and way of life; whoever adheres to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* deserves to be from his lineage but whoever fails to follow him does not deserve such an honour. For this reason, the True Lord responded to Nuh (Noah): ‘...he was not one of your family.’ (*Hud*: 46). Only those who follow the path of the prophets deserve to be related to them. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* indicated to us this principle when he said about Salman Al-Farisi *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Salman is a member of the house of the Prophet.’⁽¹⁾

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say that Salman is an Arab or that he is a Muslim. He rather said that he is a member of the house of the Prophet. In the same manner, but in a different sense, the True Lord explained to Nuh (Noah) in the context of talking about his son: ‘Indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is one whose work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge.’ (*Hud*: 46)

Some people put forward erroneous interpretations of the meaning of ‘he was not of your family.’ They said that that the mother of Nuh’s (Noah’s) son was the one who fornicated. To those who make such a claim, I say, ask your Lord for forgiveness and consider well the underlying fundamentals of the ruling: ‘Indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is one whose work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge.’ (*Hud*: 46)

Accordingly, the basis of ascribing the fatherhood of any of the prophets to anyone is not blood lineage, marriage or descent; it is rather the deeds of

(1) [*Al-Hakim and Al-Tabarani*]

the latter and their degree of conformity to the path preached by the relevant prophet. Those who slurred the wife of Nuh (Noah) need to ask Allah for forgiveness. The True Lord is far removed from deceiving His prophet. Even if we assume that the mother of Nuh's (Noah's) son fornicated —God forbid—, what is the fault of the son? He would have nothing to do with his mother's sin. But the saying of Allah: '...he is [one whose] work was other than righteous...', indicates that only those who act upon the teachings and divine path imparted by the prophets merit the honour of being their sons.

Let us consider the saying of the Prophet of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to his tribe; Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* related when the verse: 'And warn, [O Muhammad], your closest kindred' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 214) was revealed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* started to tell the tribes of Quraysh one by one saying, 'O tribe such and such, spare yourself from the fire.' He then went to Fatima and said, 'O Fatima, daughter of Muhammad, spare yourself the fire; I do not have anything for you in respect to Allah except for the fact that you have ties of kinship.'⁽¹⁾

Allah gives examples of wives. He says: 'Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so those prophets did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, 'Enter the Fire with those who enter.' (*at-Tahrim*: 10)

Betrayal in the context of the foregoing verse is not infidelity. It is rather used to indicate that even a prophet cannot force his wife to have faith in Allah. Everyone is absolutely free to embrace any creed he wills. Thus, no man has the right to force or impel his wife in any matter related to her faith, even if he claims to be divine. For instance, the True Lord says the following about the wife of the Pharaoh: 'And Allah presents an example of those who believed; the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.' (*at-Tahrim*: 11)

These glimpses demonstrate that everyone can voluntarily choose and will be judged for his faith irrespective of his kinsfolk or spouses. Nuh's (Noah's)

(1) [*Al-Bukhari, Muslim, An-Nisa'i, Ahmad and At-Tirmadhi*]

son was the one whose conduct was unrighteous. This is shown by the saying of the True Lord: ‘...he is one whose work was other than righteous.’ Allah thus did not mention the son of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* in person. He mentioned his conduct.

Every prophet has a story that the Quran relays so that the path of Allah would become clear in people’s minds. Allah uses the stories of the best of humans, whom He chose to guide humanity as found in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Allah tested him at the beginning of his life with the daunting experience of being thrown in a fire. At that time, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a young man full of hope. So how did Ibrahim (Abraham) react?

The True Lord willed to redeem Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* from the fire. However, Allah let the disbelievers get a hold of him and threw him in the fire. He did not command the heavens to rain to extinguish the fire. All of this was intended so that Allah would establish an indisputable proof of His existence, and so that Allah’s plot against those disbelievers would be tight. Abraham was not capable of escaping from them; further no rain fell. On the contrary, the fire continued to grow and glow. However, Allah ordered the fire not to burn Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he was thrown in it.

It has been related by 'Ubay ibn Ka'b *Allah be pleased with him* that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said that when they tied Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to throw him in the fire, he said: “There is no god worthy of worship but You, Allah, Lord of all things; may all exaltation and praise be unto you; no one shares Your absolute dominion over everything. They then put Ibrahim (Abraham) in a ballista and threw him from afar into the fire. Gabriel *peace be upon him* then received him and said, ‘O Ibrahim (Abraham), do you need me to do anything for you?’ So, Ibrahim (Abraham) answered, ‘I do not need anything from you.’ So, Gabriel said, ‘Then ask your Lord for whatever you need.’ So, Abraham said, ‘It suffices that He is aware of my status. Allah then ordered the fire to cool and be a source of peace for Ibrahim (Abraham).’⁽¹⁾

(1) Quoted from (*At-Tafsir*) of *Al-Qurtubi*... It was also mentioned by *Ibn Kathir* in his (*Tafsir*) and *Az-Zamkhashar* in (*Al-Kashshaf*).

This dispelled the plot of those who conspired against Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and infuriated them. Thus, Allah gives us examples from the lives of early prophets in the Quran so that we may learn and benefit from them. Because we learn from the experiences of prior prophets in forging the path of our lives, we will become the best nation ever.

The True Lord tested Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* at the beginning of his life. He also tested him towards the end of his life through his son. Ibrahim (Abraham) had succeeded in the first test, which was the most important thing for him at that time; but when one gets older he starts to dedicate his life to his offspring.

Allah chose to test Ibrahim (Abraham) through his son towards the end of his life. But Allah did not tell Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that his son would die, and that he had to endure this loss. Further, He did not tell him that someone will slay his son. Rather, Allah commanded Ibrahim (Abraham) to slay his son, and this is the ultimate form of trial. In addition, Allah did not reveal this command to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* through direct revelation. He did not impart this command to his heart, nor communicated it to him through a veil or through an angel. Instead, Allah communicated His command to Ibrahim (Abraham) through a dream: 'O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offer you in sacrifice to Allah).' (*as-Saffat*: 102) Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* told his son about the command of Allah to him as he exactly saw it in his dream; and we know that the dreams of the prophets are all true.

Someone may say, 'Why did Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* not tell his father that this was just a dream? Further, why did Ibrahim (Abraham) not abruptly slay his son without telling him about the dream'?

We say, it is due to Ibrahim's (Abraham's) *peace be upon him* concern, fear and great care for his son that he wanted him to be rewarded for getting killed and sacrificing his life for the cause of abiding by Allah's Command. Thus, Abraham said: 'O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offer you in sacrifice to Allah).' (*as-Saffat*: 102) Ismail (Ishmael) answered *peace be upon him*: 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast.' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

Notice that Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* did not ask his father to slay him but instead asked him to do what he was commanded. This demonstrates that Ismail (Ishmael) understood that it was not his father who wanted to slay him; it was rather Allah Who commanded his father to slay him. Further, had Ibrahim (Abraham) abruptly attacked Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*, he would have become furious and his heart would have been filled with hatred towards his father to the extent that he could have attacked him. Thus, Ibrahim's (Abraham's) care and pity for his son made him explicitly tell him that the command to slay him was decreed from the heavens. Ibrahim (Abraham) did thus as much as any other tries to ease things for his son.

However, Allah manifests His care for His creation by rewarding them after death. For this reason, Ibrahim (Abraham) did not want to deprive Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*, of the reward Allah bestows upon those who abide by His commands. Thus, both Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*, had the honour of obeying Allah's Commands. In this vein, we can easily see that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) course of action reflects his utmost care for Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them* in this world and in the hereafter. This teaches us that the True Lord only wants us to abide by the rulings of Allah and the fate He decrees. The True Lord says: 'And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead.' (*as-Saffat*: 103)

This is the honour one wins for obeying Allah's Commands. At the outset, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* abided by the command of Allah. He then discussed the matter with his son who in turn chose to submit to the will of Allah. Both won the honour of submitting to the will of Allah and abiding by his commands. Both succeeded in the divine test. The True Lord says: 'We called to him, "O Abraham, you have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.' (*as-Saffat*: 104-105)

The True Lord spared both Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son *peace be upon them*, the difficulty of going through the slaying process. For this reason, we always say that Allah does not relieve anyone of something he enacted upon him unless he accepts Allah's will. Those who continue to suffer what Allah decreed on them are the ones who do not accept it. If Allah decree that someone suffers an illness, and that person accepts Allah's decree and considers his

endurance of it a proof of his faith, Allah will relieve his suffering. Indeed, people say that in health one enjoys a bounty from Allah; but in sickness one lives in the company of Allah.

Abu Hurayrah related that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'On the Day of Judgment, Allah *Glorified and Exalted* will say to some of His servants, "I was sick and you never visited Me." So, His servants would answer, 'But how would You, Lord of everything, suffer any sickness?' Allah would then say, "Were you not aware that my servant was sick and you did not visit him? Did you not know that, had you visited him, you would have found me there?"⁽¹⁾

Who dares dispense with the company of Allah? If every patient knows that he is in the company of Allah while he is sick, he would be shy to cry out of pain or complain about it. However, we do not ask patients or those who are sick to do so. We only ask them to turn to Allah and supplicate to Him by saying, 'O my Lord I am willing to endure any suffering or pain for the sake of meriting Your forgiveness.'

The True Lord says: 'And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead.' (*as-Saffat*: 103). This saying indicates that Allah's decree is never relieved unless the one upon whom it has been enacted accepts and submits to it. If we see someone suffering from something that Allah decreed, we must infer that this person never accepted the ruling of Allah. However, Allah did not only relieve Ibrahim (Abraham) of obeying His command to slay his son and ransom Ismail (Ishmael) with a tremendous sacrifice, but He also foretold Ibrahim (Abraham) the news that he would have a new-born named Ishaq (Isaac). 'And we gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous.' (*as-Saffat*: 112)

Now let us consider another view from the Quran that gives us the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* so that we may further learn of Allah's reward for those who adhere to the path of faith. The events we are about to discuss took place at the time when Musa (Moses) was being prepared for receiving Allah's message.

(1) [*Muslim*]

Musa (Moses) was on his way to Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them*; at that time, he had not yet received the message of Allah. This shows that Musa (Moses) had a natural inclination to faith and that Allah had carefully fashioned and prepared him for the reception of His message. Reaching the well of Madyan, he found two girls trying to keep their cattle away from the water. The Quran gives us an account of the conversation that took place between Musa (Moses) and the two girls in their first encounter: 'And when he came to the well of Madyan, he found there a crowd of people watering their flocks. And he found aside from them, two women driving back their flocks. He said, "What is your circumstance?" They said, "We do not water until the shepherds dispatch their flocks; and our father is an old man.' (*al-Qasas*: 23)

The saying of the two women, 'We do not water until the shepherds dispatch their flocks; and our father is an old man' (*al-Qasas*: 23) indicates the principles and values on which they were brought up. They only went out of their house because their father was a very old man. Accordingly, even though they went out to work out of necessity, none of the two women forgot who they are, and that she must ensure not to trespass certain behavioural norms. They thus said, 'We do not water until the shepherds dispatch their flocks...' (*al-Qasas*: 23). This means that they would water their animals after the crowd around the well walked away. The daughters of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* only acted as far as necessity required. They did not take such necessity as a pretext to violate the norms and restrictions to which they should adhere as females and thus run the risk of getting stuck in the crowd of men around the well. So, what did Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* do? He watered the animals on their behalf.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had a strong faith-inspired resolution even before he became a prophet. The True Lord explains to us this point so that no one would wonder, 'How can I be like a prophet commissioned by Allah'?

The unique faith-inspired resolution depicted by this episode from the life of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* ought to motivate every believer to adopt the same attitude. If a believer sees a woman going out of her house for any purpose, he should hasten to take care of her needs until she returns to her house without taking advantage of the situation in a way which contradicts

the proper behaviour of any true believer. If this faith-inspired resolution were to spread among us, not a single woman would be cast on the street except for a pressing necessity. In addition, this part from the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* showed us the keenness every woman should have to protect herself and preserve her dignity. In this respect, one of them said to her father Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* after he invited Musa (Moses) to reward him: 'One of the women said, "O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.'" (al-Qasas: 26)

This statement indicates that no woman may go alone outside her house for a long time or beyond a certain distance. However, being wise, Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* realized that he could not hire a strange man and let him live among his two daughters. Thus, his faith led him to the right solution; he called upon Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and told him: 'He said, "Indeed, I wish to wed you one of my two daughters, on the condition that you serve me for eight years."' (al-Qasas: 27) In such a case, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would be married to one of the girls and would thus be prohibited to marry the other.

We need to carefully heed these stories so that we may learn how we can be religiously cautious in a constant manner. Now let us consider another aspect from the life of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when the True Lord invited him to become a prophet. Let us consider how he received this mission with a pure and devoted soul. Musa (Moses), was so keen to deliver Allah's message in full that he asked the True Lord to send with him his brother Harun (Aaron). 'And my brother Harun (Aaron) is more fluent than me in tongue, so send him with me as support, verifying me. Indeed, I fear that they will deny me.' (al-Qasas: 34)

Musa (Moses) recommended Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* to participate with him in delivering the message of Allah because he was keen to succeed in his task. He knew that delivering the message of Allah required eloquence and articulation and he was worried that the lisping in pronunciation he used to suffer because of a piece of amber that burnt his tongue when he was young, might make him falter. Interestingly, he did not hesitate to invoke the help of his brother. This is in diametrical contrast with contemporary rulers

who are often afraid to appoint competent prime ministers or deputies who have better capabilities than they do, lest they should eclipse them.

These scenes that the Quran depict teach us a lot. The True Lord wanted to prove to the followers of Muhammad the precision of the path it prescribed. Because Allah has revealed to us a path to learn, He requires us to implement it in our lives. Further, the requirement to apply the path of Allah is not something new; it is found in the stories of all the prophets who learnt the path of Allah and applied it in their lives. The biggest problem any recipient of the path of Allah may slip into is to learn it and yet fail to act upon it.

Recently a lot of people argued that religious education at schools does not help improve the behaviour of the students. To those who make such allegations we say: you do not understand the nature of religious education. It is not like teaching geography or geometry or any other science. To excel in geometry, a student needs to learn how to use the given to make correct inferences; this is the requirement for excellence in the field of geometry. However, geometrical theories do not require man to adjust his behaviour in life. It does not give any practical guidance or sets of do's and don'ts.

Geometrical theories are separate from the lives of the students. By contrast, when a student learns his religion, he learns to obey Allah's Commands and avoid his prohibitions. The challenge involved in achieving religious excellence thus consists in applying what one learns. If a student notices that those who teach him the religious rulings, whether at home or at school, hardly ever apply or adhere to these rulings, he will fail to properly learn his religion. For instance, a student may learn that lying is prohibited by Allah, but if this student finds that lying is quite widespread among those who teach him in the society, he will lie to others. Similarly, a student may learn that praying is the key pillar of Islam, and that it ought to safeguard every Muslim against committing sins and bad deeds; yet, if this student notices that no one around him prays or that prayers do not safeguard those who perform them against committing sins that Allah prohibited, he will not care to pray regularly. Thus, the failure of religious education to fulfil its purpose does not stem from the absence of good teachers; it is rather due to the absence of an exemplary practical application of the teachings of religion.

Now let us return to our discussion to the stories of the Quran. These stories were put forward to illustrate to us the practical application of the theoretical teachings of religion by demonstrating how the prophets of Allah implemented it in their own lives. You, followers of Muhammad, are not inferior to any of the preceding nations. On the contrary, you are the best nation ever. Accordingly, you must learn from and avail yourselves of the good examples that earlier nations who received Allah's messages passed on to you.

This is the meaning of the saying of the True Lord: 'and (We sent) messengers about whom We have related (their stories) to you before and messengers about whom We have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Musa (Moses) with (direct) speech.' (*an-Nisa'*: 164) The Quran has relayed to us the main events that took place in the lives of the prophets so that we may learn the wisdom underlying them.

Scholars distinguish between a prophet and a messenger. Some of them argued that every messenger is by default a prophet but not vice versa. To those who maintain this view we say: if we carefully consider the linguistic sense of both words along with their terminological use, we will be comforted: The Quran says: 'And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet.' (*al-Hajj*: 52)

Thus, both prophets and messengers are sent by Allah. However, Allah sends a messenger to preach rulings and beliefs that were not revealed in earlier messages. By contrast, prophets are sent to implement what was revealed in earlier messages. Accordingly, Allah sends prophets to give through their lives a practical example of applying the messages of Allah. Accordingly, prophets only apply and adhere to the codes of the divine messages that preceded them; they do not bring forth any new divine laws. On the other hand, Allah sends messengers to deliver new laws and decrees to mankind and act upon them. This is the extra mission a messenger undertakes.

The True Lord sent the messengers to deliver His laws and apply them. But Allah sent the prophets to give an example of proper conduct; prophets apply what the law the messenger prior to them put forth and preached. Thus, prophets are often sent to nations that have a long history of defying and arguing with messengers.

Obstinacy made the children of Israel take pride in being the nation to whom the greatest number of prophets were sent. While this is true, we need to bear in mind that prophets and messengers are often sent to cure people from the ailments they suffer. Similarly, if someone goes to physicians frequently, this means that they suffered from several diseases. The same holds for the children of Israel; they suffered from a lot of ailments. Accordingly, the fact that the greatest number of messengers were sent to them is not an exaltation of their status as much as it is an indication of the numerous problems that plagued their vision and society.

Both the messengers and the prophets are sent by Allah. The difference between them consists in the fact that the messengers of Allah deliver new laws from the heavens, whereas the prophets only apply the laws the messengers had already delivered before them. So, technically speaking, a messenger is the one to whom a divine law is revealed to both deliver to the people and practically apply it among them. The True Lord then appends the verse by His saying: 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech.' (*an-Nisa'*: 165) Undoubtedly Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was among the prophets to whom the following saying of the True Lord refers, 'We have inspired.' Someone may wonder: why did Allah specify Musa (Moses) by saying: 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech.' (*an-Nisa'*: 165)

Here we need to note that the revelation whereby Allah communicates with his prophets is the revelation in the technical sense of Islamic law. This is different from the above explained generic meaning of revelation in language. The True Lord had explained the way whereby He addressed His selected prophets to deliver their message to His creation: 'And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation, or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He wills. Indeed, He is Most High and Wise.' (*ash-Shura*: 51)

The True Lord communicates with the prophets either through inspiration, or from behind a veil or by sending a messenger like the angel Gabriel *peace be upon him*. If we ponder over this verse, we will realize that there are three kinds of divine revelation: a special inspiration, a speech from behind a veil or a direct messenger sent by Allah. These three forms of communication are the kinds of revelation.

This means that Allah would never speak to a human being except through sudden inspiration, or from behind a veil, which is a divine speech that His prophets used to hear without seeing the one saying it, namely, Allah. Finally, revelation through a messenger refers to the descent of Gabriel *peace be upon him* to communicate Allah's revelation to His prophets.

The saying of the True Lord: 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech' (*an-Nisa'*: 165) indicates that Allah revealed to Musa (Moses) His message in two ways. First, Allah revealed to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* His message in the same way in which He communicated His revelation to all others prophets. Second, Allah revealed His message to Musa (Moses) in a special way, namely, through a speech from behind a veil in the sacred valley.

The saying of the True Lord *tukaliman* (spoke) is the root of the Arabic word *kallam* in the verse under consideration. It makes us wonder why Allah used the root of the word? The reason is that revelation in general is a speech. Thus, secret inspiration, speaking from behind a veil as well as sending a messenger are all forms of the speech of Allah. Speech is what conveys the intention of the speaker to the one he addresses; the evidence is that Allah called the three forms of revelation *kalam*. The secrecy of revelation refers to the secret way of conveying it. This means that no one hears the revelation except the messenger. Further, Allah may reveal His message to His messenger by inspiring it to his heart. Both methods fulfil the function of speech since its purpose, as we have explained above, is to convey the intent of the interlocutor or speaker to the one he addresses.

The verb 'spoke' indicates that Allah spoke directly with Moses, and that His speech was overt rather than covert. Further, this indicates that the True Lord did not send any messenger to Moses to deliver to him His revelation. Accordingly, 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech' (*an-Nisa'*: 165) draws our attention to the fact that His revelation to Moses was not of the kind that He explained in His saying: 'And it is not for any human being that Allah should speak to him except by revelation or from behind a partition or that He sends a messenger.' (*ash-Shura*: 51) Therefore, Allah said: 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech.' (*an-Nisa'*: 165)

Scholars asked themselves a rational question: how could Allah speak then? To those scholars we say: if a qualification that is used to describe Allah's creation is used to describe Him, it needs be understood considering Allah's saying: '[but] there is nothing like unto Him.' (*ash-Shura*: 11) We thus need to bear in mind that existence is attributed to both Allah and man, the existence of man is different from that of Allah. Similarly, though knowledge is attributed to both Allah and man, the knowledge of Allah is different from the knowledge of man. Further, though capability is attributed to both Allah and man, the capability of Allah is different from the capability of man. Finally, though Allah says that He is established on His throne and a human being may say that he is established on his chair, the two cases are incomparably different. Thus, if an attribute that qualifies man is used to qualify Allah, the latter must be understood considering Allah's saying: '[but] there is nothing like unto Him.' (*ash-Shura*: 11) If scholars adhere to this principle, all disagreement among them regarding the attributes of Allah will come to an end.

Accordingly, while the True Lord says that He has two hands and a face, no one should think that the hand of Allah is like a human hand. Rather attributing a hand to Allah should be understood considering Allah's saying: '[but] there is nothing like unto Him.' (*ash-Shura*: 11) The same holds for Allah's face. As long as we agree that all of Allah's attributes should be understood in the light of the above verse, there is no need for scholars to ferociously fight with each other over the characterization of these attributes. Further there is no need for these scholars to fight over the interpretation of these attributes; they should not thus split into two groups: a group that calls for interpreting the attributes of Allah and another that calls for dogmatically accepting them without any interpretation. The latter argues that if Allah says that He has a hand, we should just accept what He says without any attempt on our part to interpret His statement. To the scholars who call for abstaining from interpreting the attributes of Allah, we say: why do not you say that attributing a hand to Allah falls within the realm of His saying: '[but] there is nothing like unto Him.' (*ash-Shura*: 11)

Indeed, because we learnt through our experience in this world that the same thing or attribute may be ascribed differently to different people, we

must acknowledge that Allah and whatever is attributed to Him is incomparable to anything we know.

For instance, someone may receive an invitation to dine with a mayor of a certain village. The latter may then serve the former an assortment of foods that reflects the status of the village and its leader. The same person may then receive an invitation to dine with a governor of a city; this governor may serve this man an assortment of foods that again reflects the status of the city and its leaders. Finally, the same person may receive an invitation to dine with the president of his country; the former will similarly serve him an assortment of food that reflects the status of the country and its president. Hence while the same person was invited to dine three times, the level and quality of the foods the mayor may serve him is different from that the governor may serve him; yet, both are different from what the president of the country may serve him. If it is thus the case that a single thing may be done in different ways by different humans based on their status and level of distinction, would not it be only logical to assert that the Creator and anything attributed to Him has an incomparable status?!

The True Lord told us that He spoke with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he was in the valley and sent him a fire to attract his attention. The True Lord says: 'Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa. And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed to you. Indeed, I am Allah. There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance. Indeed, the Hour is coming - I almost conceal it - so that every soul may be recompensed per that for which it strives. So, do not let one avert you from it who does not believe in it and follows his desire, for you then would perish.' (*Ta Ha*: 12-16)

The True Lord said all this to him; further, Allah initiated the speech. Subsequently, Musa (Moses) received the revelation in the same way other prophets did.

Revelation was conveyed to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through inspiration, speech from behind a veil and through a messenger.

A good example of revelation through inspiration is the Qudsi Hadith, as well as the set of laws and decrees the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him left for us. A good example of revelation through speech from behind a veil is the enactment of prayers. The prayers were not enacted through Gabriel *peace be upon him*; rather Allah directly enacted praying.

Here, I do not want to plunge into a vain discussion regarding whether the True Lord spoke with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and the latter heard Him when He enacted prayers, or whether the Prophet *peace be upon him* saw Allah when He was addressing him or not. It is needless to over investigate issues that Allah did not teach us about. Indeed, courtesy with Allah requires us to avoid any such discussions or investigations. Allah said: 'And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge.' (*al-Isra'*: 36)

As for the Quran, it was completely revealed through the messenger of the angels, Gabriel *peace be upon him*. No part of the Quran was revealed through inspiration; only Qudsi Hadith was inspired. The reason is that one may think that inspiration is thought induced in him by a genie or a devil or such thing. Thus, all the verses of the Quran were revealed through Gabriel. Further, every time the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received revelation from Gabriel, his body used to undergo certain physical and chemical changes so that he would not doubt that Gabriel was the one speaking. Allah wanted the Quran to be revealed in an absolute way that no one may doubt.

Upon receiving revelation through Gabriel, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* used to hear a sound like the jingle of a bell. Subsequently, the forehead of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would soak in sweat, and his body would become heavier to the extent if he was on the back of riding animal, the animal would kneel and bend down until its stomach touches the ground. Also, if the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was leaning his thigh on the thigh of one of the Companions, the latter would feel that his thigh is about to collapse. All these were material, cosmic signs that no one could doubt.

For this reason, when some scholars literally interpreted the following saying of Allah, they argued that if the True Lord had not sent a prophet, people would have been justified in saying: 'And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before him, they would have said, "Our Lord, why did

You not send to us a messenger so we could have followed Your verses before we were humiliated and disgraced?"' (*Ta Ha*: 134)

We say to those scholars, if you properly examine this verse, you will realize that you disagree on an issue upon which no disagreement should have occurred. Does man know what Allah requires of him using reason alone? Or is reason only capable of leading man to the existence of a higher power that created and governs the universe? But can rational thought lead man to the name of this power or its requirements? Can reason identify the reward this power has prepared for those who follow the path of life it has set and the punishment it prepared for those who failed to do so? Reason cannot solve any of these questions. Reason can indeed furnish a proof of the existence of supreme power that created, organized and governed, but transcends this universe. However, a messenger is required to inform people of the name of this power and deliver to them the requirements of the path prescribed by this power and the decreed laws. There should thus be no contradiction between the role of reason and that of the prophets in guiding man to the existence and the worship of Allah.

Despite the fact there is no such contradiction, people are prone to acknowledge the importance of reason and rational knowledge more than they acknowledge the importance of prophecy and the kind knowledge it conveys. How was man capable of discovering electricity? No one does not know or would deny that human reason is the faculty that seeks to unveil Allah's secrets in the universe and enables man to achieve useful discoveries and inventions. If you ask anyone who is the founder of the theory of relativity, everyone will tell you Einstein. If you also ask anyone who is the first one who discovered gravity, everyone will immediately tell you Isaac Newton. We learn by heart almost all the names of the key inventors and discoverers. Do you know the name of the one who invented the way to generate electric power which we use to run factories, light our houses and made the generation of electricity a widespread industry with a wide range of products that suits all financial capabilities?

But by Allah, how come you know the name of the inventor of electric generators and electric bulbs but remain ignorant of the name of the Creator

of the sun that illuminates half the earth every 12 hours. No one has claimed to be the manufacturer of the sun even though we know the inventors of almost every innovation in the universe. The bulb, for example, no matter how big it is, only illuminates a small perimeter; beyond the range of this perimeter, the light fades away and darkness prevails. This is nothing compared to the sun that illuminates half the terrestrial sphere every 12 hours.

The creation of the sun required a capability and wisdom proportional to its creation. Further, the sun does not have a glass cover that can be changed if it breaks as is the case with electric bulbs. Accordingly, human reason had to infer that a Creator must have fashioned all the beings in the universe and that this Creator cannot have renounced His Right of creating these wonderful beings. Sometimes we come across people who claim to the possession of something they do not actually own. But if the Creator informs through His messengers *peace be upon them* that He has created the universe and no one objected to Him, no one should wonder whether He is the Creator of these beings or not. He is their Creator until someone objects to that.

The role to be played by reason is to discover the power that creates and governs the universe; however, this role does not dispense or do away with the important role that the messengers of Allah play. Reason, however, can lead one to have faith in a supreme and indefinite power which is great enough to create a universe of such a great and wide scale before mankind even came to being. However, reason can never identify the requirements of that power whether in the form of commandments or prohibitions. Further, it does not know what rewards this power promises those who do good things in their lives and what punishment it has prepared for those who do bad deeds; for this reason, it was necessary to send messengers to mankind to inform them of the divine commands.

Accordingly, the proof of the existence of Allah *Glorified is He* evolves in two phases. The first phase is undertaken through believing in a supreme and indefinite power. The second phase is fulfilled through the role of the messengers of Allah *Glorified is He* who informed people of His Names, Attributes, requirements, reward and punishment. Thus, scholars should agree on the role of reason and that of prophets as there is no necessity for disagreement.

I am calling for this so that those who are always fishing for vulnerable points to attack the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* would not keep in doing that. Let me also add that scholars should find a common ground to agree on instead of confusing people through their disagreement. Simply, the messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* is the authority on issues with which reason has nothing to do.

Historically, we know that the biggest problem of philosophy is that it had set a narrow scope for searching. In the past, philosophy used to be the mother of all sciences; for instance, geometry was a branch of philosophy and so was mathematics. The same used to apply to natural sciences like chemistry, physics and the origin of languages.

However, when empirical scientists discovered that philosophers are always searching for theoretical abstractions and never focusing on applied experiments, they gave up on philosophy and established the modern empirical sciences that are separate from philosophy. Ever since, these sciences contributed numerous inventions and discoveries that have helped to make our lives easier and with which we still avail ourselves.

Nonetheless, philosophers continue to pursue their theoretical ventures and digressions and turn their back upon applied and experimental sciences. Therefore, we find no philosophical school agree with the other because they all want to know the unseen which is essentially unknowable through reason and which is only known through prophets.

I have always given an example that I tend to repeat frequently to illustrate this point. Let us assume that we are sitting in a room and the doorbell suddenly rings. We will rationally agree that someone must be at the door and that they have rung the bell. However, if we try to imagine or make surmises about the identity of the visitor, someone may say that the visitor is a man whereas another may guess that it is a woman. Further, someone may think that the one who rang the bell is a policeman, whereas another may say that they are a friend. Another may say that it is someone who came to give us glad tidings or even to warn us about something. Our surmises tend to differ because we delved into the process of imagination. Thereby, matters and questions of this sort should not be investigated by reason. Indeed, it would be more reasonable to

agree that there is a visitor who rang the doorbell and then let the visitor reveal their identity and tell us their name, characteristics, and the reason for their coming. Once this happens, no disagreement may take place among us.

However, philosophers slipped into the mistake of confusing what is imaginable with what is rational. We can never identify the Name of the Creator and His Commandments through reason alone. The Creator must tell us about Himself. Indeed, since our reason leads to having faith in a supreme power that created this great universe, we must believe that such a power must tell us about itself. Thus, if a messenger comes forth to solve the riddle of the creation and tells us that the power that created the universe is called Allah *Glorified is He* we should follow him. Sending messengers, therefore, comforts the human soul and satisfies its desire for knowledge. Every rational person should be happy that Allah *Glorified is He* has sent messengers to enlighten mankind and should also yearn to hear and learn from them because they come about to solve the key riddle regarding the origin and the creation of the universe in such a precise way that has for long preoccupied the human mind. Further, messengers told us about the commandments of this power.

Messengers settle the disagreement and resolve this riddle and satisfy the desire of the human mind. For this reason, the companion 'Ali ibn Abu-Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* was once asked, 'Did you recognise that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* because you knew your Lord? Or did you know your Lord based on what Muhammad told you?'

'Ali (who was described by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the gate to knowledge) replied, 'If I had known my Lord based on what Muhammad taught me, I would have been more certain about Muhammad than I am about my Lord. Further, if I had known that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* because I knew my Lord, I would not have needed a messenger from Allah *Glorified is He*. The reality is that I had rationally recognised the existence of my Lord and then Muhammad came along and informed me of what my Lord required of me.'

Thus, 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* settled the matter. Reason instinctually arrives at the necessity of having faith in an indefinite power that underlies the universe. This power created it and continued to confer the livelihood upon all

the creatures, sustain and support them. Afterwards, Allah's messengers came to inform us of His Name and what He requires us to do and not to do.

Those who disagree about the great role played by reason versus that played by the messengers of Allah *Glorified is He* and in proving and informing mankind about the Existence of Allah may dispense with all these vain arguments. Reason alone cannot prove or inform mankind about Allah *Glorified is He* and His Commandments. Therefore, a messenger is needed to inform us about this power. However, someone may sophistically argue that every messenger may need another messenger to explain and verify what he said and that this will go on forever.

We must know that Allah *Glorified is He* has fashioned all the messengers to be infallible to undertake the task of delivering His Messages. For instance, our Prophet Muhammad ibn `Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to establish an entire *ummah* (the followers of Islam) in twenty-three years whose goodness will remain until the Day of Judgment. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did so because he delivered to his people the Message of Allah *Glorified is He* to guide them to the way of doing well and avoiding evil deeds. But he *peace and blessings be upon him* was only capable of doing all that because Allah *Glorified is He* has fashioned him to be of great moral character. We thus learn that Allah *Glorified is He* has sent messengers to relieve the mind of the necessary task of searching for the name of the power that created the universe and its requirements.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ
بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٦٥﴾

**They were messengers bearing good news and
warning, so that mankind would have no excuse before
God, once the messengers had been sent: God is
almighty and all wise [165] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 165)**

We know that the Arabic word *al-bishara* means to tell someone about a good matter that will happen in the future. By contrast, the word *an-nidhara*

is to tell someone about a bad or evil thing that will take place in the future. Allah *the Almighty* is the Invincible and the All Wise Who has placed everything in proper order; why? Because His messengers were sent to promise those who do good deeds with admittance into heaven and to warn those who go astray about being doomed to the fire. So, do not think that those who disbelieved in Allah *Glorified is He* will be able to do anything to save themselves from His Punishment; for He is Mighty and is not in need for His creations.

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* does not forbid any behavior except through an explicit text. Similarly, He does set the laws that no one should violate. So, He informed us that He is Ever Exalted in Might and All Wise. His Mighty and Wisdom allowed and enabled us to know His Guidance. Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَٰكِنَ ٱللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ أَنزَلَهُ بِعِلْمِهِ
وَأَلْمَلَيْكَةُ يَشْهَدُونَ وَكَفَىٰ بِٱللَّهِ شَهِيدًا

**But God Himself bears witness to what He has sent
down to you — He sent it down with His full
knowledge – the angels too bear witness, though God
is sufficient witness [166] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 166)**

The word *lakin* (but) indicates that what follows is a supplementary modification of and an addition to what preceded it. We can deduce the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* that He ‘bears witness’ indicates that what will follow is a statement made by Him. The adversaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* do not bear witness that He deserves to receive this Message. But Allah *Glorified is He* corrects what they said and explained to them that He has created man and He knows best the law of his preservation. Thus, the Path that Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to His messengers is the law that preserves mankind.

Even though the people of the Book⁽¹⁾ do not bear witness to the truth of what Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon Muhammad *peace and blessings be*

(1) (Jews and Christians)

upon him and denied what their books foretell about the arrival of the seal of all messengers and prophets, but Allah *Glorified is He* does bear witness to this truth and He is sufficient as a witness.

Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed the Quran with His Knowledge and nothing, no matter how secret or small, escapes His Knowledge. Further, He has created everything and He knows—and He is the All Knowing—the laws that best fit and govern them. Per our human experience and conventions, the one who manufactures something is often the one who sets the rules of its operation and maintenance so that it may properly serve its functions. Similarly, because Allah *Glorified is He* created man, He has set for him the law of his preservation through His Commandments and prohibitions. For this reason, how could Allah *Glorified is He* who has created, not know His Own Creation, when He is the Most Subtle, the All Aware.

If a watch breaks down, we will immediately take it to a specialized technician to examine it and identify the damage that occurred to it. The same holds for the Creator of man. All absurdities and falsehood in the world are because man tries to decree laws for his own preservation beyond what Allah *Glorified is He* decrees in His Guidance even though man avails himself of Allah's Creation and would not claim that he created himself or any other creature.

We advise those who want to maintain themselves to let Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created all mankind to set for them, through His commandments and prohibitions, the law required for their preservation. If they then want to develop and pass new laws, they should do so considering the Path of Allah *Glorified is He*. If any defect emerges in human life, we must seek its remedy in the first law of the Creator, i.e. The Quran. Indeed, troubles often ensue from man's oblivion to the fact that he is the creation of Allah *Glorified is He*. Further, man always tries to set laws for himself apart from the Path set by Allah *Glorified is He*. These sufferings and asperities mankind suffers will come to an end once they return to the law of the Creator.

Not only does Allah *Glorified is He* bear witness but also the angels do because they merited the honour that one of them, namely Gabriel *Allah be pleased with him* delivered revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In addition, the angels record the good and bad deeds of man;

further they carry what was written on the Preserved Tablet and deliver that with which they have been entrusted. However, even though the angels know a lot, Allah *Glorified is He* said that He is sufficient to bear witness. But why has not Allah *Glorified is He* said that He is sufficient to bear witness and the angels also? The reason is that Allah *Glorified is He* does not need the testimony of the angels to substantiate whatever He attests to.

Also, we must not seek the testimony of the angels to substantiate the testimony of Allah *Glorified is He*. If we do so, this would mean that we trust in the angels more than we trust in Allah *Glorified is He* since He alone dates a testimony of mankind and that of the angels. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should know that Allah *Glorified is He* is sufficient as a witness.

Afterward, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا ضَلًّا بَعِيدًا ﴿١٦٧﴾

**Those who have disbelieved and barred others
from God's path have gone far astray [167]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 167)**

The result of disbelief will return only to the disbeliever; any disbeliever has the freedom to choose whether to disbelieve or to believe. And it will be more harmful if they misguide others; they went far astray and tried to misguide others. Therefore, they bear not only their burdens, but also that of those whom they have misguided in full scale.

But, how may they turn others away from the Way of Allah *Glorified is He*? They may do so when those who have been led astray try to keep signs of guidance from reaching people. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Quran and speak noisily during the recitation of it that perhaps you will overcome."' (*Fussilat*: 26)

Had they understood the meaning of this verse, they would not have said what was mentioned in it, namely, making noise that would keep people from hearing the Quran. Therefore, they acknowledge that the Quran guides to the righteous Path if it reaches people. If the Quran did not have such an immediate and powerful effect on people, they would not have said so. They

thus conceded that they would be defeated if the Quran reached other people who are called for guidance.

If Allah *Glorified is He* has said that they have indeed gone astray, this would be sufficient. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has used the root of the verb to add strength and assertion to the sentence. This indicates that what they did was the ultimate form of going astray which is worse than going far astray.

When we consider the word *ba'id* (far), we know that if something is described as far, this indicates that it is quite temporally distant from its source. Similarly, if someone goes astray, the worst thing they can do is to live their entire life this way. However, if the one who goes astray tries to lead others astray, they would be trying to extend the state of being astray; for, in this case, it will extend beyond their lifetime because new generations would continue to be led astray.

In mundane terms, going astray, may, for instance, assume the form of taking a wrong path instead of a right one and losing one's way. In this manner, the ultimate form of going astray would be losing one's way in a desert without food and water until one dies. But the one who goes and leads others astray as well as spread misguidance in their life and after their death. They have thus prolonged the span of misguidance.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَظَلَمُوا لَمْ يَكُنِ اللَّهُ لِيَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَلَا لِيَهْدِيَهُمْ طَرِيقًا
إِلَّا طَرِيقَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا

**God will not forgive those who have disbelieved and do evil,
nor will He guide them to any path [168] Except that of Hell,
where they will remain for ever this is easy for God [169]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 168 - 169)**

The discourse in these verses starts with a discussion of disbelieving and wrongdoing. As for disbelieving, it means to veil the existence of the Supreme Being, while wrongdoing means to live per a human order that does not lead to any pleasure or happiness in life; whoever leads their life in such a manner wrongs themselves. Further, this human order and way of life ultimately lead

those who follow it to torment in the Hereafter. The one who becomes a disbeliever is the one who veils the Existence of Allah *Glorified is He* and in doing so deprives themselves of the Path that Allah *Glorified is He* reveals to mankind in order not to go far astray. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...then whoever follows my guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy...’ (*Ta Ha*: 123). In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...whoever follows My guidance there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve...’ (*al-Baqara*: 38)

Those who follow whims and out of interest stick to ways and paths of life that were conjectured by humans live a miserable and harsh life. No one ought to think that those who only follow their interests would lead an infinitely comfortable and liberal life. No; those who do so may transiently satisfy their immediate desires but in the long run, they suffer a lot and live in abiding misery. Accordingly, whoever pursues this path wrongs oneself.

Someone may wonder how come they are described as they have wronged themselves. There must be someone who wronged and another party who was wronged; so, who is wronged and who is the wrongdoer? Every one of them is both the wrongdoer and the wronged. The human being is composed of several various abilities. The power of desire wants to limitlessly pursue the satisfaction of its whims. By contrast, man’s values and norms restrain him and try to keep him on the righteous Path.

Those who commit disbelieving and refuse to follow the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* let the power of desire dominate and overrule their values and norms. Islam, came about to establish a balance among the powers of the human soul so that none of them may prevail over the other.

Allah *Glorified is He* will not forgive those who have disbelieved and do evil, nor will He guide them to any path except that of hell, where they will remain forever. This is the Ruling of Allah *Glorified is He* regarding those who deny the truth and wrong themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* will never forgive them and He will not guide them to any path except that which leads to hell to eternally abide therein. Next, the Almighty Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الرَّسُولُ بِالْحَقِّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَآمِنُوا خَيْرًا لَكُمْ
وَإِنْ تَكْفُرُوا فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴿١٧٠﴾

**The Messenger has come to you [people] with the truth from
your Lord, so believe – that is best for you – for even if you
disbelieve, all that is in the heavens and the earth still belongs
to God, and He is all knowing and all wise [170]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 170)**

After Allah *Glorified is He* succinctly has given us an account of the series of battles that ensued between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Jews on the one hand and the polytheists on the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all mankind to accentuate the place of the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* on earth. In this manner, Allah *Glorified is He* alerts all people that the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the synopsis of all the messages that preceded it. All mankind must, therefore, discern the value and merit of this new Faith since Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has indeed been sent with the Light and Guidance from Allah *Glorified is He*. Further, he has enough proof to demonstrate that he is the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and that he can guide people to the righteous Path instead of that which they are.

Before the arrival of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* people used to follow disparate doctrines, dogmas and creeds. However, since Islam came about, it proved to everyone that it supersedes all religions.

The proof furnished by Islam in support of its correctness and truth consists in its own teachings and the evidence of their validity. This proof leaves no excuse for anyone to stick to his past creed. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought forth the light that guides man to the righteous path. The arrival of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* was thus like a comprehensive process of purifying the creeds of mankind. It gave every human the chance to rid themselves of any impurities in their creed and belief, and to start a new phase of faith.

Allah *Glorified is He* admonishes and encourages people to follow Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with whom the truth was revealed.

The truth in this context refers to the absolute truisms that never change no matter how conditions or circumstances may change. The reason is that truth cannot assume different forms or colours. For instance, if a group of people witnessed an accident and then another person came along and attested to what they all saw, no one among them would disagree with him. However, if each one in this group followed their interests, they may be inclined to add things to what they witnessed and may thus give contending testimonies. Indeed, some of them may follow their wildest imagination and fabricate a set of lies that does not have anything to do with what happened.

Thus, this is the truth which never changes and to which any group of honest people, no matter how big it is, would attest. However, people are sometimes tempted to change the truth and twist it so their testimonies differ; this is how groundless lies and delusions are propagated. Allah *Glorified is He* explains to us that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought forth the truth that never changes no matter how circumstances or conditions may alter irrespective of whether it is of creed, worshipping, moral or ethical side. You will find that whatever he says is consistently the same and never changes because it is true.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of this truth that He sends water from the sky that fills riverbeds to overflow, each per its measure. The stream carries on its surface a growing layer of froth, like the froth that appears when people melt metals in the fire to make ornaments and tools: in this way Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates truth and falsehood. Every valley receives an amount of water proportionate to its size. But, in time water coming down from the mountains carries along with it dust or straw or other needless objects; these things are what we call scum on the surface. The same holds for the process of melting metals like iron, copper or gold of which we make jewelry or other useful tools. When we melt these metals in the fire, some impurities are bound to float up to the surface of these melted metals; these impurities are called scum. Allah *Glorified is He* and then shows us how He lets truth overcome and prevail over falsehood saying that the froth disappears, but what is the benefit if man stays behind.

No matter how many impurities may smear or mix with the truth, the truth ultimately repels the scum and pushes it aside. Thus, if falsehood ever prevails

over the truth, we ought to know that this is the scum that sometimes rises to the surface and then gets pushed away. However, the truth will continue to be what it is no matter how things change. Allah *Glorified is He* says that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come to the people with the Truth from Him and He advises them to believe in Him as it is better for them. Believing in this context means to embrace faith in the existence of Allah *Glorified is He* in the fact that His Messages were delivered by His messengers, in the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* has angels and that resurrection and reckoning will follow after death. Such faith, in turn, requires us to act and behave per certain principles and maxims it sets; accordingly, having faith involves the recognition that our beliefs cannot be severed from our actions.

But, what would happen if people did not believe? Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that if the people deny the truth. behold, to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth, and Allah *Glorified is He* is indeed All Knowing, All-Wise; He is Self-Sufficient. He never changes and He constantly governs His universe which, in turn, is completely subservient to Him. Thus, nothing in the universe will change due to the disbelief of any disbeliever except for its discontentment with the latter. The entire universe belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* and neither the heavens, stars, moon and nor rain will ever change due to any disbeliever.

Consider this. Look around you in this world; if you find any disturbances in it, you should know that what man did is at odds with the Path that Allah *Glorified is He* has prescribed for man to follow. By contrast, everything that was not susceptible to tampering by man has remained sound and intact. For instance, the sun never failed to rise or set. The same applies to the moon whose motion was never disrupted. Similarly, the stars never deviate from their celestial orbits and the wind blows according to the command of its Creator. Accordingly, the motion of every being in the universe is perfectly organized except for the things with which man interferes and tampers. Indeed, whenever man approaches nature and the beings around him per the Path set for him by Allah *Glorified is He* things continue to be in harmony. By contrast, whenever man approaches them in a manner out of the Path that Allah *Glorified is He* has set, they will become disrupted and corrupted. For this

reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 11).

Corruption often results from the works and whims of the human soul when it deviates from the Path of Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, we wonder whether people ever complain about the unavailability of light! No; the reason is that the sun is not under our control. Similarly, people never complained about the unavailability of air. People do complain about the unavailability of food because food grows out of the land which requires labour. Man, thus has the choice between sitting lazily and not working or working and growing fruits. However, even though man may labour and work, some people tend to appropriate the yield of the land and deprive others of it. This is a reason underlying the corruption spread in the universe.

Allah *Glorified is He* brought forth to them an illumination that can lead them to having faith in the Path preached by the seal of all messengers, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Further, Allah *Glorified is He* gave them a chance to atone for the mistakes they committed against their prophets and against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ وَلَا تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ إِلَّا الْحَقَّ إِنَّمَا الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَكَلِمَتُهُ أَلْقَاهَا إِلَى مَرْيَمَ وَرُوحٌ مِنْهُ فَتَأْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَلَا تَقُولُوا ثَلَاثَةٌ ۚ أَنْتَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنَّمَا اللَّهُ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ سُبْحَانَهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿١٧١﴾

People of the Book, do not go to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about God except the truth: the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than a messenger of God, His word, directed to Mary, a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not speak of a ‘Trinity’— stop [this], that is better for you – God is only one God, He is far above having a son, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him and He is the best one to trust [171] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 171)

Allah *Glorified is He* starts the verse with a command directed to the People of the Book not to commit excess concerning their religion. Exceeding the bounds means crossing and trespassing the limits of justice. As a logical base,

everything has a middle and two extremes; we always require people not to incline towards any of the extremes by way of being overly strict or excessively loose. The people of the Book slipped into this dilemma. They failed to be moderate and fair in their judgments. For instance, the Jews abjured 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and accused *Maryam* (Mary) of fornication; this was an excess of hatred on their part. By contrast, Christians excessively loved 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*; they thus said that he is a God or the son of God or a third of three (Trinity doctrine). This was also a form of exceeding the bounds of truth. Allah *Glorified is He* thus asks them to take a moderate and fair stance on issues pertaining to religious faith.

Following the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* does not require exceeding the bound of truth. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by Allah *Glorified is He* to preach a moderate religion that puts everything in its proper order. In this manner, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* foretold us about what will happen to 'Ali, *Allah be pleased with him*. What Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* predicted ultimately happened. The *Khawarij* ultimately declared that 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was a disbeliever; further, the extreme *Shi'ites* claimed that he was a prophet and some of them went as far as claiming that he is God. In this respect, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to 'Ali, 'You are like 'Isa (Jesus). The Jews hated him to the extent that they falsely accused his mother of fornication and the Christians loved him to the extent that they attributed to him a status that is not his.' 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Two groups of people will be doomed because of their relation to me. The first is the group of those whose love to me would make them excessively praise and attribute to me what is not actually for me and the second group is the group of those whose hatred of me would drive them to falsely accuse me of things I did not do. Let everyone be advised that I am not a prophet and that I do not receive revelation. Rather, I follow The Book of Allah *Glorified is He* and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* as much as I can. Thereby you are only bound to obey me in things that you love or hate in so far as I order you to obey Allah *Glorified is He*.' ⁽¹⁾

(1) [Ahmad]

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had informed `Ali that those who excessively love him and those who excessively hate him would not be gathered with him in paradise. Those who would excessively love him would allege that he was a messenger or even a God and those who would excessively hate him would allege that he was a disbeliever. Similarly, the Christians did this with `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*; they overstepped the bounds of truth in their love for him, made him a God, or a son of God, or a third of three (Trinity doctrine). Allah *Glorified is He* thus tells them not to have excess in religion since `Isa (Jesus) is nothing but a messenger of Him. Allah's saying that `Isa (Jesus) is a Messenger of Him is a response to the Jews whose excessive hatred for `Isa (Jesus) made them refuse to believe in him and even drove them to falsely accuse him and his mother in an egregious way.

The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* that `Isa (Jesus) is nothing but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to *Maryam* (Mary) and a soul created by Him, is a response to the fact that the Christians exceeded the bounds of truth because they attributed divinity to `Isa (Jesus). They claimed that he is the son of God and espoused the doctrine of trinity. But he was the son of *Maryam* (Mary) whom Allah *Glorified is He* foretold that she would give birth to him: 'She said, "My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me? " The angel said, "Such is Allah; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is."' (Al-*Imran*: 47)

Maryam (Mary) said so with the intelligence of a woman who has absolute faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. He knows that no man touched her and as long as He has attributed the boy to her this indicates that the boy will be born fatherless. `Isa (Jesus) will be born even though no man has touched *Maryam* (Mary). Then Allah *Glorified is He* explains this point when He said that The Messiah is a soul created by Him. In another verse, He indicated to this reality that `Isa (Jesus) is indeed a soul created by Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah says: 'And mention the one who guarded her chastity, so We blew into her [garment] through Our angel [Gabriel], and We made her and her son a sign for the worlds.' (al-*Anbiya'*: 91)

What is the meaning of `Isa (Jesus) being Allah's Word? This statement indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* has breathed of His spirit into *Maryam*

(Mary) and then His order 'Be!' for `Isa (Jesus) to grow in her womb followed. Allah *Glorified is He* mentions this kind of order in another verse; when He decrees a matter, He only says: '... "Be," and it is...' (*Al-`Imran*: 47).

The coming of `Isa (Jesus) required two prerequisites, a spirit or soul and the Word of Allah *Glorified is He* which underlies all creation. The Christians' misunderstanding is that `Isa (Jesus) is the son of God since *Maryam* (Mary) never got married. They, thus, said as long as Allah *Glorified is He* said that `Isa (Jesus) has been created of His spirit then he may be a part of Allah *Glorified is He*. However, in saying so, they overlooked the simple fact that all things come from Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, He says: 'And He has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all, from Himself; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.' (*al-Jathiya*: 13)

Does this mean that the earth and the sun are actual parts of Allah? The simple answer is no. If they have suspected that `Isa (Jesus) is the son of Allah *Glorified is He* only because his mother *Maryam* (Mary) was not touched by any human male and he was born fatherless, they should have also had suspicions about the divinity of Adam. No male or female copulated to bring about Adam. He was born fatherless and motherless. Allah says: 'Indeed, the example of `Isa (Jesus) to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was.' (*Al-`Imran*: 59)

No one has then the right to restrict or impose constraints on the Grace of Allah *Glorified is He* and His Capability. Indeed, the creation of Adam was much more sophisticated. But, Allah *Glorified is He* gracefully likened the creation of Adam to that of `Isa (Jesus). Further, Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us that Adam, like `Isa (Jesus), came into being due to a command of His Will. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...I have made him complete and breathed into him of My spirit...' (*al-Hijr*: 29)

Thus, to come to being, Adam needed two prerequisites just like `Isa (Jesus); the order to 'Be!' and the breathing by Allah *Glorified is He* of His Spirit into him. We need to focus a little bit on the creation of Adam to understand the chain of creation ensued whether this was the creation of Adam or the creation of Eve or the creation of the angels or any other creature

including `Isa (Jesus). Adam did not know how he was created; neither Adam nor anyone after him has the right to question the way he was created. This is a matter that which no one has anything to do with. Allah *Glorified is He* thus, warns us against listening to those who make groundless and vacuous claims about creations. He says: 'I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken those who lead others astray as assistants.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

Therefore, we must not listen to those who claimed that man was originally an ape or anything of this sort. The reason is that those who talk about the first creation of man groundlessly lay claims about something they did not witness. The first creation is something that cannot be examined or investigated using the tools of empirical science because experimental labs only investigate things and objects that already exist. Thus, passing verdicts on such matters at odds with what Allah *Glorified is He* tells us is false. No one was there with Allah *Glorified is He* when He created the creation to tell us how such a creation took place. We only learned about these matters through what Allah *Glorified is He* told us about them. The Creator told us that we were created from water, dust, mud, altered black mud and from clay like that of pottery; He told us about this in several verses. Those who want to falsify or cast doubts on what the Quran says in this regard claim that the Quran makes contradictory statements about the process of creations: in one instance, it claims that man was created from water, in another from earth, in a third instance from mud and in a fourth instance from pottery clay.

We simply ask those who make such claims whether there any contradictions entailed in the fact that the Quran talks about the phases of creation? The primal matter of creation was water; Allah *Glorified is He* then mixed water with dust. When the two elements were blended together the resultant mixture was mud. Then the mud was then left to ferment which in turn became transmuted dark slime. After this, it turned into clay which was subsequently used to create Adam. Thus, everything that Allah *Glorified is He* said in all the verses that addressed the creation of Adam is consistent and in harmony with each other. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...I have made him complete and breathed into him of my spirit...' (*al-Hijr*: 29).

After Allah *Glorified is He* has created a soulless, motionless mold of clay, He breathed into it of His own spirit through the command *kun* (Be). Our being required two main elements: a soul and a Word of Allah. The soul is what gives existence. Life comes about through the unity of soul and body. Afterward, the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* to bring His creature into being is manifested and executed through the command *kun* (Be). Indeed, even though man can prepare the same chemical mixture, but he is never capable of creating a new human being because the order to bring about a new human being is missing.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about the creation of Adam, which we did not see, He shows His Mercy to us. Allah *Glorified is He* then has left on earth an evidence of truth concerning the creation of Adam. Though we have not witnessed the creation of life, we witness the reverse process, i.e. death. In death, the soul is first severed from the body; after this, the body expands like transmuted dark slime then the water inside the body evaporates and the body starts to decompose back into the earth. These are the stages of death that begin with the separation of the soul from the body, the petrifying of the body leads to its rotting, then the water of the body begins to evaporate and the body begins to decay back into the earth.

Even though we do not know how life started we eye witness how it ends in our day to day experiences. Allah *Glorified is He* has intended that we concretely experience the end of life to demonstrate for us the verity of His Statements about the beginning of life and creation because death or the termination of life is the opposite of life and the opposite of anything is its own negation. The last component required for bringing the body of man into life is the soul which is alternatively the first thing that left the body. After the soul is severed from the body it petrifies, starts to rot and become like transmuted dark slime. Subsequently, the water evaporates and the entire body decays back into dust.

Human body has recently been analysed and then they discovered that it is composed of several elements. Upon analyzing the soil of fertile land that yields to man the food that sustains him they discovered that it is composed of the same elements. It is quite peculiar that the elements of which man is

composed are identical to the elements of which the soil of fertile land is composed. This indicates the verity of the statement that Allah *Glorified is He* has created man from clay. Further, it demonstrates why the sustenance of life depends on the yield of land so that each component element of clay may support the corresponding element in the human body. When they analysed the human body in comparison with the analysis of the soil, they discovered that it is mainly composed of oxygen and that it constitutes around 67% of the human body, followed by carbon which constitutes around 19% of the body. In addition, they found that magnesium constitutes less than 1% of both the human body and the soil.

Further, scientists discovered that the most important elements constitutive of the human body are oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, chloride, sulfur, calcium, phosphor, potassium, sodium, iron, iodine, cellulose and magnesium. These are the most important constitutive elements of the human body. Some of these elements form organic compounds whose function is constant and well known and some do not. However, whoever wants to expand his knowledge on these matters should ask experts in these fields.

Those who analysed the components of the soil and the human body were not scholars of religion. Thus, they were not intent on establishing evidence in support of the verity of the statements Allah *Glorified is He* makes in the Quran. Rather, some of them do not know anything about the Quran or the scientific facts it mentions. But Allah *Glorified is He* has made Prophet Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* explain for us evidence that proves the correctness of these facts. In this manner, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah may support this religion (i.e. Islam) even with a disobedient man.’ ⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* sometimes wills to support His religion through the statements or deeds of the disbelievers. He has made them discover facts and reach conclusions that if they knew could guide people to the righteous Path, they would not proclaim it. It is indeed due to Allah's Wisdom that He has made the disbelievers incapable of escaping the advocacy of religion, i.e.,

(1) [Al-Bukhari & Muslim]

Islam. Allah *Glorified is He* made some of them serve His religion against their will. We must try to understand this matter in a profound, tolerant and subtle manner. Allah *Glorified is He* has created the first human being from clay. There is another verse wherein Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has formed Adam fully and breathed into him of His Spirit (*al-Hijr*: 29). Further, a third verse, He says that Creating Adam was through ordering him to 'Be!' and He is (*Al- 'Imran*: 47).

Accordingly, the creation of Adam required two prerequisites: the first, the breathing of the Spirit of Allah *Glorified is He* into the body of clay, and the second, the command *kun* (Be)! These are the two factors that were required for the creation of 'Isa (Jesus), a Spirit from Allah *Glorified is He* and a Word that He addressed to *Maryam* (Mary). This is clear evidence in support of the verity of the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* concerning the likeness of the creation of 'Isa (Jesus) to that of Adam (*Al- 'Imran*: 59).

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the story of creating Adam from clay, moulding and fashioning him with His hands. Allah says: 'Allah said, "O Iblis (Satan), what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands? Were you arrogant then, or were you already among the haughty?" He said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay."' (*Sad*: 75-76)

Allah *Glorified is He* has created a body from clay and breathed into it of His Spirit; since He did so, a man came into being and started to reproduce and will continue to do so until the Day of Judgment. Should we then wonder about the way in which 'Isa (Jesus) was created? No. When Adam begot his first offspring through the regular reproduction process; a sperm of his fertilized an ovum in the womb of Eve. Thus, the first human offspring was born. The sperm of Adam was a living part of him; its motion, in turn, allowed it to fertilize the ovum of Eve. Thus, the sperm is created from Adam and the life it has is inspired by the soul of Adam, but Adam is originally created by Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, this is evidence that the sperm has been created by Allah *Glorified is He* because He has created Adam. The sperm is alive because Allah *Glorified is He* breathed into it of His Spirit. It then moved to the womb of Eve and fertilized an ovum which then turned into a

baby which she delivered. The reproduction of living sperm capable of fertilizing then continued so that more generations would evolve.

The offspring and descendants of Adam, until the Day of Judgment, will continue to bear characteristics of the original mold of Adam that Allah *Glorified is He* initially had created. Further, the Spirit that Allah *Glorified is He* breathed into this mould never dies. Indeed, if the soul died or perished, reproduction would not have continued. We thus learn that each one of us bears some of the characteristics of the physical mould Allah *Glorified is He* had fashioned with His own hands as well as part of the Spirit He had breathed into this mould.

Let me repeat the example I always give in the wake of discussing this matter so that the facts about it would be anchored in the minds of the youth. If we add a cubic centimetre of a concentrated coloured liquid to a litre of water and then take a drop of this water, we will discover that this drop of water contains only very little of this coloured cubic centimetre. If we then put this drop of water in a big container of water, the entire container will only contain a small portion of the cubic centimetre of this coloured solution. If we then pour the water in this container into the sea, the entire sea will contain the same small portion of a cubic centimetre of this coloured solution. Similarly, the posterity of Adam, until the Day of Judgment, will continue to bear a constantly diminishing portion of the physical constitution of Adam.

We notice that a lot of thinkers and intellectuals in the West avoid any discussions about the idea that 'Isa (Jesus) is a son of God. When they are forced into discussions about this matter they say, 'Allah was only father to 'Isa (Jesus) through His Love for him.' But, if this were the case, one may well argue that Allah *Glorified is He* loves all His Servants and that all of them, by the same token, share the same status with the Messiah. For Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'All of the creation is Allah's dependants, and those who are most beloved to Him are those who are the most beneficial towards their own dependants.'⁽¹⁾

If we understand this statement in a rigorous, empirical and experimental sense we will find that it is both right and true. All of us came to being due to

(1) [Muslim]

the capability of Allah *Glorified is He* and His will; further, all of us have been fashioned by Allah *Glorified is He* since the time Adam had been created. The only difference between us and Adam is that the Heavens selected him to become a Messenger. However, some still believe in the doctrine of the trinity. In this respect, some argue that the trinity is only a trinity of attributes. But could there be a trinity of divine attributes that is composed of secondary qualities? For instance, they maintain the divinity of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit (trinity). In this vein, they maintain that there would not be a father unless there is a son and there would not be a son unless there is a father.

We know that there are primary and secondary facts. A person may be both a father and a son; he is son relative to his father and a father relative to his son. These are secondary qualities. However, the Attributes of Allah *Glorified is He* must be essential and not secondary qualities. Their belief in the divinity of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit (trinity) refers to secondary and not primary or essential qualities that befit Allah's Majesty. Some Christian scholars argued that *al-Fatiha* in the Quran refers to Allah *Glorified is He* through a trinity of attributes since it starts with saying 'Allah, the Most Merciful, and the Most Gracious.' They took this verse as a clue to claim that the Quran starts by referring to Allah *Glorified is He* in terms of three attributes. In response to those who make such groundless arguments, I say that we recite it as such, 'In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, and the Most Gracious' without using the conjunction particle 'and.'

Further, why did Allah *Glorified is He* choose to beget a son more than one thousand and nine hundred years ago, although He has deprived the generations prior to the birth of the Messiah of the honour of receiving a son of His? Why did Allah *Glorified is He* not beget a son throughout the ages and only chose to beget one around twenty centuries ago? Further, what is the time that Allah *Glorified is He* has honoured with the presence of His son?

Would thirty-three years, which is the life of the Messiah, suffice to honour mankind with the presence of the son of Allah? Further, why has Allah *Glorified is He* deprive all generations of the beginning of creation until the Day of Judgment of such an honour?

We further wonder why does any creature beget a son? It is because this creature wants to guarantee the survival of its species and the continuity of

life. Every human being knows that he is bound to die. But Allah *Glorified is He* has created life and death and He will eternally continue to be. He is thus in no need of assuring the continuity of His life through any human being. Allah *Glorified is He* asserts this fact in the chapter of *al-Ikhlās* by saying: ‘Say, “He is Allah, who is One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He begets not, nor is He begotten. Nor is there to Him any equivalent.”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4)

Some may argue that Muslims sometimes say that Allah *Glorified is He* is *Wahid* (One) and sometimes say Allah *Glorified is He* is *Ahad* (the One). We know that both statements are not semantically identical. Logicians and linguists distinguish between the whole and its parts; they also differentiate between genre and species on the one hand and the members of genre or species on the other.

The word genus is used to qualify what consists of several members or individuals like the human species. There may be a man named Khalid, another named Mohammad and a third called ‘Ali. By contrast, the whole is composed of parts like a chair which is made of different components like wood, glue, nails and other substances. The chair is, thus, a whole that is composed of several components. But the essence of wood is different from that of nails. Thus, the chair is composed of several components whose essence is completely different. Further, we cannot call any of the components of a chair as a chair. For instance, we cannot call nails a chair or wood alone a chair. The word chair is used in reference to the totality of wood, nails, glue and paint when they are arranged per a specific form and order.

By contrast, the word human is used to qualify a vast sense of beings, namely, mankind because the essence of all these human beings is the same. We say the human designates an entire genre of beings.

We may, thus, describe any being that has the essential qualities of a human being as human. Thus, we can correctly call a man by the name Mohammad a human being as much as we may correctly call another one by the name Zayd a human being and a third of the name ‘Ali also a human being. The whole has parts whereas the generic name refers to class of individuals which share the same essential attributes. Further, the whole may be only one thing that is composed of several parts. Thus, each individual chair is composed of several parts.

Here a question arises: 'Is Allah *Glorified is He* a whole or could He be described as a genus'? Neither of these qualifications can be used to describe Allah *Glorified is He*. It is not a name that is used to qualify a class of individual beings or substances because He is One; further Allah *Glorified is He* is not composed of parts because He is the One. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* can neither be described as a whole part, nor as a genus or member or species belonging to a genus. Indeed, if the word 'Allah' designated a genus this would imply that it is composed of several individual members. Further, if the word Allah had referred to a whole, such a whole would have been composed of parts. But Allah *Glorified is He* is One and no other individuals share with Him the same essence; also, Allah *Glorified is He* is the One and is, thus, not composed of parts.

For this reason, the Quran responds to anyone who may argue otherwise by saying that Allah is the One (*al-Baqara*: 16). Allah also says: 'And your god is one God. There is no deity worthy of worship except Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful.' (*al-Baqara*: 163)

I have adduced all this evidence so that we may properly understand the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* through admonishing the followers of the Gospel not to excess in your religion, and do not say anything about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, 'Isa (Jesus), son of *Maryam* (Mary), was nothing more than a Messenger of Allah, His word, directed to *Maryam* (Mary), a spirit from Him. So, they should believe in Allah and His Messengers and do not speak of a 'Trinity'; stopping that is better for them. The saying of Allah *Glorified is He* to 'desist that it is better for you' means to give up saying these void claims and stick to the orders of the Allah *Glorified is He*.

It is intended to disclaim and denounce all false statements and celebrate and praise the truth and all true statements. We can infer this from the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* previously explained.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says that He is but One. This means that no other individuals participate with Allah *Glorified is He* in His Divine Essence. Once we encounter the word *subhanu Glorified is He*, we need to understand that it is intended to glorify and exalt Allah, the Creator.

For this reason, the word *subhanu Glorified is He* is often used while discussing peculiar matters that tend to confuse and baffle human reason. Further, although there are disbelievers in this world in addition to those who have the audacity to disparage Allah *Glorified is He* and attribute divinity to humans, no human being has previously had the audacity to qualify another human being by the word *subhanak Glorified are you*. For this reason, we praise Allah by saying *Glorified is He* over and above any exaltation and glorification we may attribute to Him. In addition, no one, no matter what his religion, creed or faith is, ever called himself Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* challenges even the disbelievers to have the audacity to call themselves Allah. Indeed, have you ever come across any audacious disbeliever who named his son Allah?

Even such a level of audacity cannot be found among disbelievers. The reason is that the disbeliever can never be sure that he is right. Thus, even if he does so, a disaster may befall him. If there was a single disbeliever who truly believed in his claims that there is no God in this universe they would name his son Allah. But no one has the audacity to do so. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?' (*Maryam*: 65)

This challenge was there long before this verse was revealed. But what happened after it had been revealed? Did anyone have the audacity to name his son with the name of Allah? No one did even though people call their children all sorts of names. In the village where I was born a man called his daughter a long, weird name. He named her 'flowers that flourished in a blooming season and a kingdom whose subjects are all loyal.' Man, is free to do what he wishes. But, no one has ever had the audacity to call a child of his Allah. The fact that this never happened demonstrates that the claims of the atheists and the disbelievers are false because no one among them has the boldness to do so. Allah *Glorified is He* challenges all of them with describing Himself with glorification and also challenges them with Himself. Accordingly, every one of us may comfortably and confidently call Allah *Glorified is He subhanak* because it is used to qualify naught beside Allah. Indeed, if you examine all the poems of praise and adoration that were ever composed in

celebration of other human beings you will find none that qualifies a human being as *subhanak Glorified is He*.

No one has used this qualification to describe a fellow human being. In this manner, Allah *Glorified is He* controls a matter which is essentially up to man. For no human being, would dare call another human being Allah. 'Indeed, Allah is but one God. *the Exalted* above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.' (*an-Nisa'*: 171)

Only beings that live on earth or in the heavens beget children; it does not make sense that Allah *Glorified is He* would follow the model of his creatures. This claim is incoherent and self-contradictory. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.' (*an-Nisa'*: 171)

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ وَمَنْ
يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِي وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيَّ جَمِيعًا

The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, nor would the angels who are close to Him. He will gather before Him all those who disdain His worship and are arrogant [172]
(The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 172)

The source of honour for any human being ought to be his servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*. He has wanted to manifest His Lordship to the seal of all prophets, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and make him fully acknowledge his servitude to Him. He thus took him at night to Al 'Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem by saying: 'The Exalted who took His servant by night from Masjid Al-Haram (the *Ka'ba* in Mecca) to Masjid Al- 'Aqsa (sacred mosque in Jerusalem), whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the seeing.' (*al-Isra'*: 1)

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* did not use 'His messenger', but rather used 'His servant' when He spoke about the event of Prophet Muhammad's

peace and blessings be upon him midnight journey and his ascension to the seventh sky. This is because servitude is a gift and bounty from Allah. It is as if the servitude of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Allah is as infinite as the Goodness of Allah. If this is the case with the best of all humans, i.e. Muhammad, so then how can others be too proud to admit their servitude to Allah? Neither 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* nor the angels were too proud to be servants of Allah. '...nor would the angels who are close to Him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 172). The reference to the angels is intended to exalt and add importance to the negations. For instance, a proud peasant may say, 'The head of the mayor's police force cannot challenge me; not even the mayor himself would dare to do so.'

Since the angels are higher and more exalted than human beings, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels who are close to Him....' (*an-Nisa'*: 172) Some scholars argued that the 'select few' of humans are better than the select few of angels, whereas the 'masses' of the angels are better than the masses of the humans. However, the terms of any language are first assigned to tangible objects, then to the intangible ideas. The reason beyond this is that man starts out his life journey perceiving only the tangible objects. Allah says: 'And Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78)

Since, Allah says that we knew nothing, this means that whatever followed afterwards, followed as a 'means' towards acquiring knowledge; namely our various senses, like hearing, seeing and the capacity to attain experiences. A good example that illustrates this point is the issue of *al-ghashb* in Islamic law. *Al-ghashb* means to appropriate or usurp the right of someone else publicly and by coercion. This is different from stealing secretly; it is also different from mugging. Mugging means snatching something from its owner and running away. By contrast *al-ghashb* means to take something by force.

Al-ghashb, stealing and mugging are all forms of unrightfully appropriating that to which one is not entitled. The word *ghashb* originally refers to a tangible process namely, the skinning of a goat. Coercively appropriating or

usurping someone else's right is thus called *ghasb* because it is like skinning the one whose possessions are appropriated. Thus, a word that originally refers to something concrete and tangible is used to refer to something abstract. In the verse under consideration the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels who are close to Him....' (*an-Nisa'*: 172). The word *yastankif* (feel too proud), like the words *yastafhim* and *yastakhrij*, all originally have tangible connotations and were hence used to refer to abstract ideas.

The root of the word *yastankif* is *nakaf* which refers to a tangible action; which is wiping off tears using one's fingers. Let us assume that the son or the wife of a man of dignity saw him weeping; the latter will immediately try to wipe off their tears with their fingers. *Istankaf* means to remove *an-nakf* which in turn means to wipe off one's tears. Wiping off the tears indicates that one is too proud to be seen weeping and shedding tears due to something that impacted them. This process only happens when one wants to hide their tears away from others.

Accordingly, the reference of the word has been extended beyond the tangible connotation to include a moral one, namely, pride and arrogance. In this manner, it is said that a person is too proud to walk in the way of another person, sit with another person or sit on a lesser seat than another. In this sense, Allah says that the Messiah was never too proud to be a servant of Allah; on the contrary he felt honoured by such servitude. Similarly, the angels near to Allah are honoured by their servitude to Him; indeed, they do not have any knowledge of this world and do not do anything except glorifying and exalting Allah because all they know is that they are His servants. This servitude does not humiliate the one who practises it; but rather honours them. Further, servitude is an honour that only those who are willing to give and sacrifice can merit. Those who are too proud to do so, do not appreciate the value of servitude to Allah. For this reason, neither the Messiah nor the angels near to Allah were ever too proud to be servants of Allah.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then adds: '...He will gather before Him all those who disdain His worship and are arrogant.' (*an-Nisa'*: 172) All those who are too proud to serve Allah in addition to those who abet them to maintain such false course are doomed to hellfire.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فَيُوَفِّيهِمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدُهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ ۚ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ اسْتَنكَفُوا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فَيُعَذِّبُهُمْ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا وَلَا يَجِدُونَ لَهُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٧٣﴾

to those who believe and do good works He will give due rewards and more of His bounty; to those who are disdainful and arrogant He will give an agonizing torment, and they will find no one besides God to protect or help them [173] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 173)

Why did Allah not put forward the part where He talks about those who were too arrogant to serve Him before the first part to make it a continuation of the previous verse? Why did Allah not resume the discourse He started in the previous verse on those who were too arrogant and proud to serve Him and show that they are fated to suffer and that they shall find none to protect them from Allah and none to bring them relief? Afterwards, He could have told us about the rewards that await those who attain to faith and do good!

The reason is that the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about a group of people that deviated from the righteous path and to whom He will never extend the reward of those who adhered to the righteous path. Allah thus chose to talk first about the reward that awaits the obedient so that the disobedient would know what they will miss. Allah will then, if they insist on their disobedience, deprive them of this reward so they would lament on their loss. For, as people say, the opposite of the good, best manifests its goodness.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘To those who believe and do good works He will give due rewards and more of His bounty...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 173). We know that the reward is proportionate to the deeds for which it is granted. So why did Allah *Glorified is He* mention His bounty? Let us recall what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about the value of one’s deeds and actions in this life. ‘No one will be admitted into heaven due to their deeds or actions.’ The Companions then wondered, ‘Not even you, messenger of Allah?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Not even me, unless

Allah confers His bounty and mercy upon me. I thereby advise you to always aim at doing what is good and to always try to be closer to good through good deeds. Further, none of you should ever demand dying; for if he is obedient and good he may do more good deeds and if he is sinful and bad he may repent.’⁽¹⁾

‘Say: “In the grace of Allah and in His mercy, in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather.”’ (*Yunus*: 58) People recognized this truth and they started to supplicate to Allah by saying, ‘Allah treat us with Your grace and mercy and not Your justice.’ For only His grace and mercy can aid us to a better status, whereas His justice may send us to oblivion.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says the following about those who are too arrogant and proud to serve Him: ‘...to those who are disdainful and arrogant He will give an agonizing torment, and they will find no one besides Allah to protect or help them.’ (*an-Nisa*’: 173) This means that they will not find anyone to appeal to Allah on their behalf; further no one will either advocate them or protect them from their deserved torment. Afterward, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بُرْهَانٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ نُورًا مُّبِينًا ﴿١٧٤﴾

**People, convincing proof has come to you from
your Lord and We have sent a clear light down to
you [174] (The Quran, *an-Nisa*’: 174)**

Al-burhan (a manifestation of the truth) is the miracle that proves the truth of the seal of prophets, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; it also means a stark compelling proof. But someone may wonder, what is the difference between the manifestation of the truth and the clear light? We know that every messenger is supported by a miracle that vindicates the truth of the message he conveys from His Lord. Miracles can be different from the teachings the messengers were sent to deliver, then Allah would reveal to them His books and teachings so they can convey them to their people. For instance, the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was his staff, but the teachings he was commanded to deliver to his people were in the

(1) [*Al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah*]

Torah. Hence, miracles were the 'manifestation of the truth' to what the messengers of Allah conveyed from their Lord. As we said, miracles might have little to do with the teachings revealed to the messenger; like the miracle of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* for instance. His miracle was to heal the blind, the leper and bring the dead back to life by Allah's will, but the teachings he was commanded to deliver to his people were in the Bible.

By contrast to all the messengers prior to him, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the seal of all prophets was, in itself, the very Book that contained the teachings he was commanded to deliver to mankind. His miracle and Book are one and the same; the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* intended this because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a messenger to all mankind and no messenger would follow him until the Day of Judgment. This is *al-burhan* or the manifestation of truth that Allah *Glorified is He* sent to Muhammad. The clear light here is a metaphor taken from the material world; light keeps one from stumbling in the dark, taking wrong turns or bumping into harmful objects. Similarly, the light of the Quran refers to the values it propounds. As for the material light that Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon us, it is well known to everyone.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللّٰهِ وَاعْتَصَمُوا بِهِۦ فَسَيُدْخِلُهُمْ فِي
رَحْمَةٍ مِّنْهُ وَفَضْلٍ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ اِلَيْهِ صِرَاطًا مُّسْتَقِيمًا ﴿١٧٥﴾

**God will admit those who believe in Him and hold fast to Him
into His mercy and favour; He will guide them towards Him
on a straight path [175] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 175)**

Here Allah *Glorified is He* talks about those who have attained faith in Him and held fast unto Him, but what is the meaning of holding fast unto Allah? In the past when a man fell in a pit he used to shout till someone would come to pull him out of it. This is the original meaning of the word *i'tisam* (holding fast unto; i.e. clinging to the one who rescues and saves you from a disaster or an abyss). The True Lord *Glorified is He* provides us with the needed 'means.' So, when the sun shines above our heads and we walk under its blazing heat,

Allah provides us with trees so we can protect ourselves from the heat under their shade. When it rains, He provides us with umbrellas to protect ourselves from being drenched and when we get thirsty he provides us with a 'means' so we could drink a cup of water. However, only the wise remember, at the time of every cause, the real One who provided such causes and means in the first place.

So, as being a believer you must never think that these material means are the ultimate causes of your sustenance. If you always keep in mind that Allah is the cause of all these causes you will never be too proud to serve Him. Even when your experience seems apparently evil, so long as you keep in mind that Allah is the One Who caused you to go through it, you will know that it is intended for your ultimate good.

Man's knowledge often misleads him in so many ways; he may think that something is good for him and it turns out to be bad or the opposite. Indeed, every one of us, at least once in a lifetime, must have thought that a certain thing was good and then realized that it was evil and likewise thought that another was bad but then it turned out to be good. Evil is only what is brought upon man due to his own actions. As for the things that befall us despite our actions or planning, they are all based on Allah's will and His knowledge; not on our own will or knowledge.

Someone might say, 'I pray to Allah to give me such and such and He does not answer my prayers.' We say, 'You ask Allah for things that you think may be good; but Allah's knowledge is different from yours.' For this reason, Allah does not answer your every beck and call. If you truly believe in Allah and hold fast unto Him you will need to ask yourself a simple question, 'Do my actions underlie the fact that I did not get what I asked for'? If yes, then only blame yourself. If not, then this is just what Allah willed for you, so rest assured it is ultimately good for you and that a divine wisdom underlies what happened.

My fortune in this life is always good to me,
 Because I am content with Allah's decree be it good or bad,
 If it turns out to be good I feel redeemed and rewarded,
 And if it turns out not, then I know my reward will be for my patience

‘And as for those who have attained to faith in Allah and hold fast unto Him – He will enfold them within His grace and bounty, and guide them unto Himself by a straight way.’ (*an-Nisa'*: 175) So long as they attain to faith in Allah and hold fast unto Him, Allah will guide them unto Himself by a straight way. The fruit of being righteously guided is explained and pointed out in another verse where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and those who are guided; He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness’ (*Muhammad*: 17). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also tells us, ‘Whoever acts upon what he knows, Allah will cause him to learn more than he had previously known.’⁽¹⁾

This means that Allah will entrust whoever acts upon what he knows with more knowledge because he availed himself of the knowledge he had in serving others and did not suspend or keep it. The True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* closes the chapter of *an-Nisa'* with His saying:

يَسْتَفْتُونَكَ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِيكُمْ فِي الْكَلَالَةِ إِنْ أَمْرُؤُا هَلَكَ لَيْسَ لَهُ وَلَدٌ وَلَهُ أُخْتٌ فَلَهَا نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ وَهُوَ يَرِثُهَا إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهَا وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَتَا أَثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُمَا الثُّلَثَانِ مِمَّا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا إِخْوَةً رِجَالًا وَنِسَاءً فَلِلَّذَكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثَيْنِ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧٦﴾

They ask you [Prophet] for a ruling. Say, ‘God gives you a ruling about inheritance from someone who dies childless with no surviving parents. If a man leaves a sister, she is entitled to half of the inheritance; if she has no child her brother is her sole heir; if there are two sisters, they are entitled to two-thirds of the inheritance between them, but if there are surviving brothers and sisters, the male is entitled to twice the share of the female. God makes this clear to you so that you do not make mistakes: He has full knowledge of everything’ [176] (The Quran, *an-Nisa'*: 176)

Al-istifta'—the root of the Arabic word *yastaftunak*, means they ask for a ruling seeking the legal opinion on a particular issue or question about

(1) Related by Abu An-Na`im in (*Al-Hilya*), Az-Zubaydi in (*Ithaf As-Sada Al-Mutaqini*), As-Suyuti in (*Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*), Al-Qurtubi in (*At-Tafsir*) and Ash-Shawkani in (*Al-Fawa'id Al-Majmu'a*).

which the inquirer has no knowledge. The Companions used to ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to enlighten them even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told them, 'Do not ask me about the matters on which I have not enlightened you. People before you were doomed to perdition due to their excessive inquiries and their disagreement with their prophets. Accordingly, if I command you to do something then follow my command as much as you can and if I forbid you from doing something then make sure to consistently abstain from doing it.'⁽¹⁾

The Quran used the word *yas'alunak* (they ask you) in several verses. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to teach us that the companions wanted to prove that their love for the path of Allah by basing all their lives and actions on it. Indeed, had they disliked the path of Allah they would not have asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to enlighten them. They realized that upon its advent, Islam acknowledged and let certain practises continue but abolished others. The Companions did not want to just go on doing whatever they have been doing from their days of pre-Islamic ignorance as if in continuity with it (namely, the practises which were not admonished by the Quran). They rather wanted to do any practises in continuity with their new point of reference; the Quran. So, they used to excessively ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about everything. A legal opinion is sought in a ruling, but a question can be sought in a ruling and or in a matter not related to any ruling. In the verse under consideration the Companions wanted the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to enlighten them on a ruling about inheritance from those who leave no heirs in their direct kin. However, the Quran was quite eloquent since it succinctly phrased their question: 'They request from you a legal ruling. Say, "Allah gives you a ruling concerning one having neither descendants nor ascendants as heirs..."' (*an-Nisa'*: 176). In an earlier part of this same chapter, Allah says: 'And you shall have half of what your wives leave if they have no child...' (*an-Nisa'*: 12).

This verse however, addresses the maternal kin, but Jabir ibn `Abdullah's inquiry *Allah be pleased with him* was about the paternal kin. Jabir ibn `Abdullah

(1) [Muslim, Ahmad, Ibn Maja and An-Nasa'i]

Allah be pleased with him related that, 'I once became quite sick and lost my consciousness in the middle of the road. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* who were walking around, saw me. So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* performed ablution and then poured on me the water he used for ablution. I then awoke and asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* "What should I do with my wealth? How should I distribute it?" But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not answer me until the verse concerning inheritance was revealed.'⁽¹⁾

In another version of the above Hadith related by Imam Ahmad *Allah rest his soul*, Jabir *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'No heir in direct kin will inherit me, so how will my wealth be distributed upon my death?' So, Allah revealed the verse at hand. Some scholars said that the word *kalala* (those who have no heirs in their direct line) is derived from *kilal at-ta`ab* (exhaustion) because *kalala* in Islamic law means the one who has neither a child nor a father. But any human being goes through two main phases throughout his life. In the first phase, he is supported by his father. When one grows up and his strength fades away, his son then starts to support him. Thus, the one has neither a father nor a son lives in toil and labour, with neither a father nor a son to care for him when he grows old. For this reason, such a person is described as *kalala*.

Some people say that the word *kalala* is derived from *iklil* which is a sheath of flowers worn on the head. In this sense *kalala* would refer to the relatives who surround one but are not related to him as fathers or sons.

'If a man dies, leaving no child but only a sister, she will have half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she dies and has no child.' (*an-Nisa'*: 176) *Al-Kalala* thus refers to the case when one dies and has a sister (or a half-sister from his father's side); in such a case his sister is entitled to inherit half of his wealth. If this sister dies, her brother can inherit her whether he is her brother or half-brother from her father's side. If a man, who does not have an heir in the direct line, has two sisters, they are entitled to two thirds of his wealth. But if such a man has brothers and sisters, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) [*Al-Bukhari*]

‘If there are both brothers and sisters, the male will have the share of two females.’ (*an-Nisa*’: 176) This means that every brother is entitled to double the share of every sister.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* seals the verse with His saying: ‘Allah makes clear to you His law, lest you go astray. And Allah knows of all things.’ (*an-Nisa*’: 176) This means that the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains His rulings lest people should go astray. Allah *Glorified is He* pre-eternally knows every deed every man will commit and any secret he will try to conceal. Further, Allah knows what is best for people. We hereby conclude our reflection on the chapter of *an-Nisa*’.

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