

vol. [6]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [6]



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

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The Chapter of

al-Ma'ida

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

We now begin the chapter titled *al-Ma'ida* which comes after *an-Nisa'* in the arrangement of the Quran. We know that the Quran has two arrangements; the arrangement of the chronological order of its revelation, and the arrangement of the entire text in its written form. Those people who wish to criticise Islam might like to say, 'Why is the Quran not arranged in accordance with its chronological order of revelation so that it starts with the first verse that was revealed and ends with the last one revealed'? We say that the Quran was not only revealed as a book of divine guidance, but as both a methodology and a miracle. Prophet Muhammad's message is all-inclusive for every nation and every age until the Last Hour because no other messenger will ever come after him. Hence, the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is unique in that it will remain as long as his message remains until the Last Hour, with a way of guidance which will cover all walks of life until the end of time.

Prophets used to be sent to specific nations in specific locations and for specific times because the world was like a series of disconnected peoples due to the absence of any means of communication that could make it easy for people to come together. Allah *Glorified is He* willed to complete the series of messages with the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that it would complement the progress of the human conscience through uniting the whole world. This means that if an ailment breaks out in the East, it will be immediately transferred to the West; calling for a single cure and a single curer.

As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he was uniquely given a persisting miracle which will last side by side with the methodology so that everyone who follows Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

can say, 'The methodology of Islam is in the Quran, and the miracle of the Prophet of Islam is the Quran'. Had the miracle been of the same nature, mode and form of the previous miracles which were given to his fellow messengers, it would have ended the moment its time ended; just a piece of information and an event in history. We know that the sea was parted for *Musa* (Moses) *peace be upon him* as a piece of information, but we did not see it for ourselves, and we know that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* healed the blind, the leper and raised the dead by Allah's will, but we are only aware of this now as a piece of information. Were it not for the fact that we believe in the Quran which has told us the stories of such events, we would have had our reservations about them.

There are those who say that the miraculous nature of the Quran lies in its rhetoric, eloquence, manner of discourse and its unmatched articulacy, since the Arabs were a people of rhetoric. But we say that not only did this miraculous Quran outdo all the articulacy and eloquence of the Arabs and utterly incapacitate them, but even when we conveyed its teachings to the English, French, Germans, Italians or any other people in the world, the teachings remained miraculous.

Thus, we see that Allah *Glorified is He* wanted an aspect of the Quran to remain miraculous for all peoples, namely those miracles upon which the languages would not differ, nor the nations. So, we are talking about intellectual miracles which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would tell about to his unlettered community (he himself being unlettered and without any tuition in science or culture); and these things would come true centuries later, and they would even be acknowledged by those who do not believe that such things were revealed by a deity.

Some people tried to raise Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the level of divinity because he said things, fourteen centuries ago, which are coming true only now, and no one could say such things except someone with an unparalleled knowledge. But they knew that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had affirmed that he is human, and that he was sent with a method which is in line with the path of ongoing events. The Quran reveals universal miracles that fall within a common ground with all other nations, and are not limited to one culture at the expense of others.

This method was sent down so that the world would be ruled by an unlettered nation which had never advanced far enough to establish laws or constitutions, and which had no experience of any sophisticated knowledge. It was a nation of nomads and desert-dwellers who had never agreed on a single law; each tribe, clan, kinfolk and family had its very own law. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by Allah to this unlettered nation to establish in their midst a methodology which would cover all of life's issues until the Last Hour. And when people get impacted by a certain issue in their society, they will not find a solution for it except a one which, by considering our own teachings, either agrees with what Islam revealed, or does not deviate from the bounds of Islam's teachings and guidelines.

The Quran's rulings were revealed per the events and circumstances of the times because it is the True Lord's will to do what is best for those who lived at the time and place of the Quran's revelation. We find that The Quran makes mention of questions which would be posed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; and these many questions he would be asked indicate that people's state of faith was fit. Those who asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give them rulings on certain issues thereby wanted – as we said before – to live their lives in view of the method they loved. They were not like the Israelites about whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said,

‘They were commanded to sacrifice the most common type of cows; but when they made things difficult, Allah made it difficult for them. By Allah, had they not restricted their guidance to the will of Allah, this issue would never have been made clear to them until the end of times.’⁽¹⁾ This means that, had they not said ‘...if Allah so wills, we shall truly be guided aright,’ (*al-Baqara*: 70) they would not have been guided to the right cow to sacrifice.

There are things that Islam accepted just as they were in the time of pre-Islamic ignorance because they were rational and logical; Islam did not come to get rid of any regimes contemporary to its revelation, but it came to get rid of the corruption of these regimes. So anything that was sound by nature was left as it is. Whatever it is they were not guided to naturally; Islam

(1) Narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir*

would explain it for them. So a Quranic text had to be revealed for every significant matter in their lives. In the instances when verses were revealed after particular events necessitated them, this made them stick fast in people's hearts. We gave an example of this before by saying, 'Suppose a man has a medicine cabinet in his house and a member of his family is ill, and needs a particular medicine. Since the man does not know where this medicine is, he needs to search through all the contents of the cabinet in order to find the medicine he needs, and a lot of time might pass before he can find what he wants. But if this man does not have any medicine in the cabinet, and his son gets a headache he will go directly to the pharmacy to buy him some aspirin: this tablet of aspirin will treat that headache...a specific cure for a specific ailment'.

When the solution comes after the event occurs, this bolsters one's certitude. And the solution might have been present in the Quran, yet they were unable to discern it. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* let things happen to them first which made them turn to the Heavens for a solution, and the solution was given right after the event to avoid any misguidance or difficulty. Hence, the Quran had to be revealed according to events; and once the events occurred and the entire methodology had been revealed twenty-three years after the advent of the Quran's revelation, Allah *Glorified is He* willed that it be arranged in a particular order in its written form.

Both the written and the revealed orders constitute miracles for the Quran and for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Quran contains long chapters with many verses, and Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* taught Prophet Muhammad to place certain verses in certain spots, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would recite these verses in the communal prayer along with the new verses, which were attached to them by revelation. The greatness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be clearly shown when he prayed with these verses and then added the new ones which had been revealed to him, and this was all done on purpose. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would stand in prayer fully confident in the fact that the One Who revealed the Quran had said to him: 'We will make you recite, (O Muhammad), and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6)

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited, he would recite what had been revealed to him that very day alongside that which had been revealed to him a year before. This was a miracle by all standards because when an ordinary person speaks about something for ten minutes and then an hour later someone asks him to repeat what he said, he would not be able to remember the exact expressions and ideas he spoke. But here we are faced with a messenger who instructed his companions to write, and instructed those who could memorise the Quran to do so, and then stood in prayer and recited the verses which had been revealed to him a year before, alongside verses which had been revealed six months later, alongside verses which had been revealed a month later, alongside verses which had been revealed only a day before which proves that none of this was within the control of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but it was rather, under the full command of the Lord of Muhammad, who arranged the letters of the Quran so that Prophet Muhammad would recite it without forgetting a single letter from it: 'We will make you recite, (O Muhammad), and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6)

Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* would come every year in the month of Ramadan to arrange the Quran with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and verify his memorization of it. In *Ramadan* of the final year of Prophet Muhammad's life Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* verified the Quran with him twice.

So we are not just talking about the revelation of the Quran, but there is also the arrangement of the Quran in a way which differed from the original way as it was revealed. Had the Quran been arranged in the same order as it was revealed in, some people would have said that it was only a verbal reaction to specific situations; but the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to rearrange the Quran so that it would be an everlasting miracle. The Quran was not revealed at the behest of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and every letter of it was revealed in this order intentionally to affirm that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly sent to convey the Quran, and that it was not within the capacity of any human mind to arrange it as thus, but rather, it was arranged by the One Who revealed it to Prophet Muhammad, namely Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*.

So, the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* ⁽¹⁾ comes after *an-Nisa'* in the written arrangement of the Quran. When we consider *al-Ma'ida*, we must first ask, what does *Ma'ida* mean? It means a table laden with food and drink, or a feast; and the chapter was given this name because it contains mention of how 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* asked his Lord to send a table laden with food down from Heaven after the Apostles urged him to ask Allah to do so. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Isa (Jesus) the son of Maryam (Mary) said, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table spread with food from Heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and you are the best of providers.'" (*al-Ma'ida*: 114)

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*, chooses a beautiful cause as a prelude for this chapter, saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١﴾

You who believe, fulfil your obligations. Livestock animals are lawful as food for you, with the exception of what is about to be announced to you. You are forbidden to kill game while you are on pilgrimage – God commands what He will [1] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 1)

It begins, then, with the importance of fulfilling obligations and vows, and the lawfulness of consuming livestock as food. As we know, *al-Ma'ida* comes in the written Quran after *an-Nisa'* which comprised various vows and obligations intrinsic to faith like; marriage, dowries, bequests, debts and inheritance, all of which are rulings related to agreements and contracts. It is as though after *an-Nisa'*, the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*, were saying to us, 'You are aware of all the pledges which were mentioned in *an-Nisa'*, so honour them and be true to them'.

We also observe that *al-Baqara* comes before *Al-'Imran*, both of which speak about the materialistic Jews. So, *an-Nisa'* and *al-Ma'ida* both address the civil society of Medina, after the Quranic verses revealed in Mecca had dealt with educating the society and instilling the doctrines of Divinity

(1) The story of the table of 'Isa *peace be upon him*

(monotheism) and Prophethood. The chapters of *al-Baqara* and *Al-Imran* dealt with the matter of practical doctrine and the prophets; and the chapter of *an-Nisa* was concerned with the decisive doctrines of Sacred Law.

Now we come to *al-Ma'ida* in which the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe, fulfil your obligations...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). The True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the believers with a relative pronoun, and does not say, 'O believers'! This shows that faith is not a temporary state through which a man passes occasionally, but that it is renewed through renewing our actions every time we obey the laws which our covenant of faith compels us to do. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* directs His discourse to those who have attained to faith, this emphasises that He does not invade anyone's life to command them, even though, as Lord of the worlds, He created man and brought all things into existence and subdued them to serve man.

Yet Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* did not use this to compel all mankind into believing, He rather invited all people to faith first, and those who believed He honoured them with moral responsibility. Hence, they would rightfully deserve to be addressed as, 'O you who believe...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1), i.e. 'O you who believe in Allah as the One Deity'; and the Deity must have attributes which reflect His Divinity; such as Omnipotent Power, Glory, Wisdom and Might. Allah does not issue commands to those who do not believe in Him, He rather invites those who do not believe first. Hence, we find that all the verses which reveal rulings start with the words 'O you who believe, (such-and-such) has been ordained for you' because with belief, comes responsibility.

'O you, who believe, fulfil your obligations...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). We know that Arabic is a root-based language, meaning that each root has a 'family' of words derived from it. Hence, the word *awfa* (to be true) for example, is derived from the root verb *wafa/yafi*, and there is also *awfa* and *waffa*, all of which mean 'to be true', but each expresses a different level of strength and weakness, or abundance and scarcity. For example, the True Lord *Glorified is He* used the word *waffa* to describe Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'And Abraham, who fulfilled his obligations.' (*an-Najm*: 37)

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did much to show his loyalty when Allah tried him and fulfilled his trial to the level of excellence. 'Allah says:

And (mention, O Muhammad), when Ibrahim (Abraham) was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 124).

So, the True Lord used the word *waffa* as an explanation of what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did in the face of the trials he underwent; and to ‘be true’ is to ‘fulfil’. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘O you who believe, fulfil your obligations...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 1). That is, you must, if you believe in Allah, fulfil your covenants. Fulfilment either addresses individuals, meaning that no one must be neglected, or it refers to the approach itself, meaning that the approach must not be defective. A person might read every chapter of a book which means he has been true in reading every section, but The True Lord wants us to put every detail of the Book within the practise of moral responsibility.

Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to testify that there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the prayer, to pay the *zakat* (mandatory almsgiving), to fast *Ramadan* and to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca if we are able. A person might do all these things and thereby perform his moral responsibilities; but there are others who fulfil them while being dutiful to every detail in its entirety without neglecting any, and they stay true to them without any negligence.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* addresses the believers here: ‘O you, who believe, fulfil your obligations...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 1). So, we are faced here with the concepts of ‘belief’ and ‘fulfilling obligations’. We have explained the meaning of belief; as for obligations they are a binding connection between two parties, and each party must adhere to their responsibility and take their due. An obligation is called in Arabic ‘*aqd*’ because the word ‘*aqd*’ means a ‘knot’, i.e. something which does not become unfastened. Therefore, we call the convictions which take firm root in people’s hearts and minds ‘*aqida*’ (creed) because they are tied as a knot; they are not temporary fantasies which are here today and gone tomorrow. From the perspective of jurisprudence, creed is something instilled in the heart and does not resurface in the mind to be reassessed thereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to be true to our ‘*uqud*’ (obligations (singular ‘*aqd*’)), and as we know there are many obligations in Islam, starting with the first vow, which we made when we were mere

seeds in which case, Allah tells us how He took the seeds of the children of Adam from their loins and made them bear witness that He is their Sustainer. Allah says: 'And mention when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, saying to them, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." This - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were unaware of this."' (al-A'raf: 172)

Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to be true to this primordial obligation so that no man tries to evade it when the time comes to fulfil it. Next, we come to the obligation of being a vicegerent on earth which was assigned to Adam *peace be upon him* and all his offspring after him. Never assume that you are the original element in this universe simply because material means are subdued to your service and are allotted to you for a specific span of time. Never think that these things have been allotted to you because of your skills alone. When you plant seeds in the earth and water them, know that the crops grow only because Allah has subdued the earth for you.

Never imagine, when you mount a horse, that you are the skilled equestrian who has broken it in; no, it was the True Lord *Glorified is He* who subdued the horses for you. Do you not see that sometimes horses buck and throw skilled riders off their backs? This should keep us conscious of an inescapable fact; had Allah not subdued horses for us, we would have never been able to ride them.

Allah also tells us, in the Quran, how He created for us even the things our hands have wrought and the domestic animals which we own; and how He subdued them to our will so that some of them may be used for riding and others for our food. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do they not see that We have created for them from what Our hands have made, grazing livestock, and then they are their owners? And We have tamed them for them, so some of them they ride, and some of them they eat.' (Ya Sin: 71-72) The believer must also bear in mind that the True Lord *Glorified is He* subdued the camel for its owner and made it so that even a small child can command it to sit on the ground to be loaded with heavy cargo, and then he orders it to stand up again, and all through the way the camel obeys. But when we come across a serpent or a

snake, naturally we would not want to domesticate it. This is how the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds mankind of His Omnipotent Power. He subdued large creatures for them, and at the same time instilled much fear in them from smaller creatures like snakes. He subdued them to our will so that some of them may be used for riding and others for our food.

This subduing made it possible for man to domesticate many creatures. The farmer's donkey carries fertilizer made of waste, and it does not object to this; and then the farmer advances in life and becomes the leader of his tribe, and he has the donkey washed and buys it a saddle so he can ride it to go and meet the local commissioner. The donkey does not object to any of these things because Allah has subdued it.

Never assume that it was your skills alone, as a man, which have subjected these creatures to your will. Were it a matter of skill alone, man would have subdued the tiny flea which may attack him any time; bugging him the whole night, that a whole family might stay up all night to kill a single flea. Allah says: 'O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create as much as a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a tiny thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.' (*al-Hajj*: 73)

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to say 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' before partaking to any action. Beware of embarking on anything using your power alone because your task will only take effect when Allah *Glorified is He* subdues it for you. You start an action in Allah's Name because He is The One Who made you His vicegerent and subdued all creatures to your will.

Then we have the obligation about which the True Lord *Glorified is He* said to Adam *peace be upon him* that whoever follows Allah's guidance will not go astray, and nor will he be unhappy. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...then whoever follows My guidance, he shall not go astray nor be unhappy.' (*Ta Ha*: 123) He also says: '...then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 38) This is an obligation made to all mankind. And the Muslims had an obligation towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when they partook to the covenant of Al-'Aqaba, pledging to

aid and protect him from all that they would protect themselves from, and they also had a similar covenant with him, at Al-Hudaybiyya.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* commands the believers to be true to all vows intrinsic to the supreme dogma, namely belief in Allah; everything that comes from The Lord in whom you believe is considered a pledge of honour; for a pledge is always made between two parties. Allah did not force anyone to believe in Him, but man believes in Allah by free will; and as long as the believer has attained to faith in Allah by free will, he must follow Allah's way of guidance.

The one who believes thereby goes to the True Lord *Glorified is He* saying, 'Lord, I shall do whatever You command'; and this is an acknowledgement of the pledge he has made. And whenever any religious pledge is made, this is part of honouring our primal testimony of faith which we made to Allah; making it a 'shared' pledge with Allah, since the servant's faith in Allah makes him a party in this pledge. Allah legislates for man, and the servant obeys this legislation so that he may receive the amplest reward. So, an obligation might be 'a contract' between the servant and his Lord or between the servant and another of Allah's creatures who is equal to him, or between the servant and himself. In the case of obligations made between man and himself, we call them 'vows', like when a servant vows to perform a certain amount of fasting or praying; and he is obliged to fulfil what he has vowed, since he vowed it to Allah. As for the 'contract' between the servant and his fellow man, and the vows he makes with himself, they both hinge on the founding and primal testimony of faith to Allah.

So, the True Lord's words: '...fulfil your obligations...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1), mean: do what Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained to be lawful, and keep away from what He has made unlawful. Do not debate or differ about what 'an obligation' means. Do not ask whether it is between the servants and his Lord, between the servant and his fellow man, or between the servant and himself; for everything which stems from the supreme pledge constitutes an obligation for the believer to which he must be true.

'O you who believe, fulfil your obligations. Livestock animals are lawful as food for you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). He begins the chapter by commanding us to fulfil our obligations, and then by announcing that livestock animals are

lawful to eat. We know that man was brought into the universe, and that Allah *Glorified is He* first created the universe and then created man and descended him on it. This was a mercy from Allah to man in that He did not create man first, but rather, He first created the sun for him, and prepared the whole universe before creating man; and when man was brought into the universe, he found all the constituents of life; minerals, plants and animals.

The highest level of subdual to mankind comes in the form of animals because minerals and plants serve the animals, and animals and mankind are alike in that they each comprise life, blood, and organs. The True Lord *Glorified is He* here gives an announcement about the highest level of servitude to man, namely livestock animals, saying: '...Livestock animals are lawful as food for you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). And He commands us to fulfil our obligation; and He has every right to do so since He has already given us the value of this by creating the universe and subduing it for us; and the epitome of subdual comes in the form of livestock. It is as though '...Livestock animals are lawful as food for you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) is a prior justification for the command that Allah *Glorified is He* issued before it. We notice here that the word *uhillat* (has been made lawful) is a verb in the passive voice. This is because faith has qualified us as partners deserving the lawfulness of eating livestock animals. The scholars have spoken much about the words *bahimat al-an'am* (livestock animals). In Arabic, the noun form *fa'il* can either have the meaning of an active participle or a passive participle. For example, when we say that Allah is *Rahim*, this means He is 'merciful', so this is an active participle; and when we say that a person is *qatil*, this means he has been 'murdered', so this is a passive participle. So, what does the word *bahima* (beast) mean here? Is it active, or passive? If we take the word *bahima* to mean the same as *mubhama* which means 'vague' or 'unintelligible' because its affairs are unknown to us and difficult to understand, and we do not know what its motions or gestures mean, nor do we understand the language by which it communicates with its own kind, then in this case, the word is passive in meaning. It might also be active in meaning because the beast does not understand and we are unintelligible to it.

We say that cattle are governed and subdued by their instincts, and that man did not invent their fodder until he first saw them freely going to eat it,

which means that they were the ones that taught man what they eat. No one should therefore say that these are mere beasts with no understanding since we should know that cattle were not created to understand human affairs, and that they were subdued and subjected to man's will, and still man might learn from them.

Our proof for this is that Allah blessed some of His creatures, whom He selected, and educated them about the speech of birds; for it perturbed the hoopoe to see the Queen of Sheba and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah. Although a mere bird, it knew that prostration must only be offered to Allah, the Invincible One, not to the sun. Thus, we see how man can learn many things from the traits and habits of animals; and thus, we see that those who love to breed animals learn about their diets by following them and observing what they eat and what they set aside. Farmers give clover to buffalos rather than mint because they observed that buffalos, when let loose, do not eat mint but rather, clover. The True Lord *Glorified is He* also tells us: 'Until when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not."' (*an-Naml*: 18)

So, it is we who do not understand the language of the ants; we see the beasts being governed by their instincts, whilst man possesses intelligence – yet his passion overrules his intelligence.

Allah's words '...are lawful as food for you...' indicate that the One Who made this food lawful connected its lawfulness to the subdual of animals. Our proof for this is that when we place a rope around the neck of a buffalo or a sheep, and the rope tightens we find it stretching out its neck as if seeking to answer its calling as being 'lawful food', and the people say, 'It wants to be made lawful!' which means a butcher should be brought. Even though it is an animal, yet it seems to seek its very own slaughtering to benefit man. As though it were conscious of the loss which will be incurred if its meat got wasted for nothing; and this is proof that it was subjugated to man's will. As for animals which are unlawful to eat, it is amazing that when this rope-procedure is done to them, they do not stretch out their necks.

The *an'am* or livestock animals which Allah mentions in the Quran are four kinds of cattle of either sex: sheep, goats and both sexes of camels and cattle. This makes eight pairs; and then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him added to this the gazelles and zebras, and he only prohibited the canines which have fangs like lions, and birds of prey which have talons. Had Allah not specified this lawfulness, there would have been no limits and we would have found ourselves eating carrion, butted animals or animals which died from falling off high places, etc., but the True Lord *Glorified is He* saved us from this ill fate and made these harmful things unlawful to us.

‘O, you who believe, fulfil your obligations...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 1)! So, it is Allah’s right upon us, as believers, to stay true to our vows because He offered the universe to us, with all its flora and fauna to be at our service. He also made lawful to man the species which are closest to his type because of the life form they possess. He then says: ‘...with the exception of what is about to be announced to you. You are forbidden to kill game while you are on pilgrimage - Allah commands what He wills.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 1) Had the True Lord *Glorified is He* not made this law, people would have eaten cattle, whilst they were in the state of pilgrimage; but Allah *Glorified is He* forbade hunting during the pilgrimage and within the Sanctuary of Mecca or while in the state of consecration for pilgrimage (*ihram*). The Sanctuary, as we know, is centred around the *Ka’ba* which is enclosed by the Sacred Mosque.

The land-zone wherein one enters the state of consecration for the pilgrimage is set by landmarks that differ according to the direction from which one approaches. Those coming from Medina enter consecration at Dhul-Hulayfa or Abar ‘Ali; those coming from Egypt, the Levant or the Islamic West enter consecration at Al-Juhfa (now known as Rabigh); those coming from Tuhama enter consecration at Yalamlam; those coming from the plains of Yemen or Hijaz enter consecration at Qarn Al-Manazil; and those coming from Iraq and other eastern places enter consecration at Dhat ‘Irq.

As for those who live in Mecca, they enter consecration for the pilgrimage simply by being in Mecca itself. As for *‘umra* (the lesser pilgrimage) for those who live within the Sanctuary, they enter consecration when they go outside to the first point out of the Sanctuary; namely Al-Ju’rana, then At-Tan`im then Al-Hudaybiyya.

As for the time zone of the pilgrimage, it is within the months of *Shawal*, *Dhul-Qa`da*, and the first ten nights of *Dhul-Hijja*. As for the time zone of the

lesser pilgrimage, it is the whole year, unless one is already performing the greater pilgrimage or making another lesser pilgrimage, or if it is before he finishes the greater pilgrimage in case he is still stoning the pillars or spending the night at Muzdalifa, wherein he cannot begin another consecration. Al-Ju`rana, At-Tan`im and Al-Hudaybiyya are the limits of the Sanctuary, and to engage in hunting within the Sanctuary is forbidden at all times for all people. As for hunting outside the Sanctuary, it is only forbidden to those in a state of consecration for the pilgrimage. All others have the right to hunt.

This way the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* teaches His creatures to be always vigilant about His method of guidance. In one place, He tells them, 'Hunting is forbidden here, and food and drink are forbidden during this time', such as during the fasting of *Ramadan*. We Muslims have twelve months, four of which are sacred: *Dhul-Qa`da*, *Dhul-Hijja*, *Muharram* and *Rajab*.

At the points of consecration hunting is forbidden only to the pilgrims, and this is just a disciplinary commandment of faith. When one arrives at the consecration landmark he enters consecration, i.e. he changes his attire and wears the special attire prescribed for pilgrimage which everyone wears so that all are equal. People are only distinct from one another because of their outward attire, so Allah *Glorified is He* commands man to abandon this distinction as soon as he enters consecration. The things which a Muslim can do before entering consecration become forbidden to him after he enters consecration at the appointed landmark.

Before entering consecration, a Muslim can have a haircut, wear perfume, hunt and pick vegetation; but once he consecrates himself, he must abstain from all this so that he can prepare to refuel the depths of his soul with the presence of the Giver of blessings rather than the blessings themselves. This is the proper state in which one must be to enter the House of the Giver of blessings. Hence, Muslims lay aside the blessings to remain in the presence of Him who provides them. It is also forbidden for anyone to hunt in the Sanctuary whether he is in a state of consecration or not, so that all become conscious that the Sanctuary is for Allah alone, and to prepare for answering the calling of Allah with awe. From the moment of consecration, one is forbidden from many things, starting with hunting and marital relations; and then he enters the land-zone where hunting is forbidden to all people as a symbol of awe.

Muslims are to perform pilgrimage once in a lifetime as a religious obligation; and every time we make pilgrimage heading to our Lord's House, He tells us, 'Do not distract yourself with the blessings, for you are heading to the Giver of blessings; and He will expiate all sins by means of the pilgrimage' '...With the exception of what is about to be announced to you. You are forbidden to kill game while you are on pilgrimage...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). If we take this to mean the state of consecration, it is correct; and if we take it to mean one's presence in the Sanctuary, it is also correct; for hunting is forbidden in the Sanctuary for pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the verse saying: '...Allah commands what He wills' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) after having started it with: 'O You who believes...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). Thus, we see that the end of the verse logically matches the rest of it, for when Allah addresses the believers who believe in Him, one of the necessary ramifications of this belief is to obey the decrees of The Lord in whom they believe. As long as the believer believes in Allah, he must turn to the rulings which Allah has ordained and adhere to them. But the general meaning of the verse might urge some to separate its rear from its main body, giving way to one of the allegations directed at Islam. These people claim that if Allah says that He commands what He wills, and some people believe while others do not, so how come Allah '...commands what He wills' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) when He does not simply command all to believe?

We say, 'Do not separate the rear of the verse from its main body because Allah is only addressing here those who believe in Him as their Lord'. Those who believe in Allah, as their Deity endeavour to adhere to the rulings that He ordains, to apply them. Yet, no one should think that the disbelievers are beyond Allah's will when He says, '...Allah commands what He wills' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) because those who disobey the ordinance of Allah are logically bound to persist on their disobedience to whatever He ordains. But the one who rebels against the legal obligations which Allah ordains is not reasonable, and he refuses the fact that he is weak. The Angel of Death may take the rebel's soul when he is not even sick; so, what will he do to ward off death?

Therefore, there are matters in which all people must submit to Allah's Ordinance; and the disbeliever submits to Allah's Ordinance in certain matters

more coercively than the believer because, for example, the believer accepts death as Allah's Ordinance but the rebel, who does not pray or perform any religious obligation, faces all vicissitudes of life including death with great suffering that exceeds the hardship experienced by the believer while facing the vicissitudes of life including death.

Hence, Allah's saying: '...Allah ordains what He intends.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) refers to a general issue because the one who rebels against Allah's Ordinance in matters in which he has free will thinks logically and rebels against the ordinance which Allah forces him to do. This is in contrast with many man-made laws which are not strong enough to resist this rebellion, but Allah's Ordinance is more coercive, as the rebel cannot ward it off. No one should think that Allah has made His servant's free will absolute. He as a person who can rebel against faith, but there are many things that he cannot rebel against; so Allah ordains whatever He intends. Then, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحْلُوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا
ءَامِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامَ يَنْبَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ
شَتَانُ قَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُوا وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ
وَالنَّفَقَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾

So, you who believe, do not violate the sanctity of God's rites, the Sacred Month, the offerings, their garlands, nor those going to the Sacred House to seek the bounty and pleasure of their Lord — but when you have completed the rites of pilgrimage you may hunt. Do not let your hatred for the people who barred you from the Sacred Mosque induce you to break the law: help one another to do what is right and good; do not help one another towards sin and hostility. Be mindful of God, for His punishment is severe [2] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 2)

The verse starts with, 'O you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah...' which comes after the verse in which Allah has declared certain things lawful. This indicates that Allah clarifies to His servants that He gives them certain things and withholds other things, and He does the same with his others. Therefore, a person should not only consider what is withdrawn from him; rather, he should consider things withdrawn from others for his sake.

For example, when Allah commands a person not to steal, He restricts his freedom with this commandment, and at the same time, He restricts the freedom of all other people in this regard for his sake. When this person judges the matter according to how it affects him, he will find that he is the main beneficiary because everyone else will obey Allah's law by refraining from stealing from him. Accordingly, everyone will benefit from this command, and even if a person steals something, he cannot steal from everyone; but if a thousand people steal from one person, what will be left with him?

When Allah commands His servant not to look at the kinswomen of others, this seems to restrict his freedom, but in fact He also restricts the freedom of everyone else for the sake of this person, commanding them all not to look at the kinswomen of others.

Therefore, when a Muslim knows that Allah has prohibited a certain matter, he should not consider this prohibition only on his part, but he should also consider that the same matter is prohibited for all people in his favour. Allah says, '...do not violate the rites of Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) which means that the believers should not profane the inviolability of the rites set up by Allah. The word *sha'a'ir* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means all the rituals of the religion. If we say that a country's symbol is the eagle, this means that whenever we see the symbol we recognise the country. The same applies to the different flags of nations and even governorates as in Egypt, for example, every governorate has its own symbol and flag. Therefore, the symbol is a marker that identifies something, and Allah's rites are the rules of His religion that are commandments, prohibitions, creed and rulings.

But the word *sha'a'ir* commonly refers to the rites of *Hajj*, the first of which is to enter a state of *ihram* (ritual state for *Hajj* or 'Umra) that should not be neglected. Other rites of *Hajj* are *tawaf* (circumambulation of the *Ka'ba*), *sa'y* (going between Safa and Marwah during *Hajj* and 'Umra), standing on Mount 'Arafat and the stoning of the pillars marking the pebble-throwing area. They are Allah's rites which He has commanded the believers not to violate or neglect because they provide religious regulations. Allah's Command to all those who perform *Hajj* or 'Umra to enter a state of *ihram* (ritual state for *Hajj* or 'Umra) should be considered as a command to separate themselves

for a period of time from the bounties they usually enjoy, as the journey of *Hajj* is considered as a journey towards the Giver of all bounties. Allah orders the believers who perform *Hajj* or *'Umra* to wear unified clothing, so that no one is better than another; in everyday life, people's clothing highlight the difference between them and indicate their social status. Therefore, when they remove their ordinary clothes and wear unified clothing, the distinctive mark they have in common is their profession of allegiance to Allah.

Likewise, when the pilgrims or the people who perform *'Umra* are commanded not to cut a single hair, no matter if they are rich or poor, they find that they are equal despite their different social positions and status, and that they equally submit to Allah's Command. This self-discipline caused by belief is not related to people only, but the self-discipline appears in the way a person deals with all creatures. The trees around the Sanctuary are inviolable, and no person is permitted to cut them down or cut anything of them, so the plants inside the Sanctuary are protected and safe. Likewise, the pigeons, and other animals and people are safe inside the Sanctuary; for they are all inside the Sanctuary of the Lord of all creatures. This status instils awe in the human soul caused by faith. Therefore, the period of *Hajj* is a time of spiritual regulation and self-discipline in which all types of existence live in harmony. All people become equal and animals and plants are safe. Inanimate objects serve all other types of existence; animals serve man, plants serve animals and inanimate objects serve them all but is not served. In addition, Allah protects an inanimate object in the *Ka'ba*, commanding people to greet the Black Stone, kiss it if they are able or at least point to it.

The master of creatures honours and lauds an inanimate object, as the one that is unable to kiss the Black Stone must at least greet it by pointing to it, for his *Hajj* to be accepted. Therefore, crowds of people struggle to reach the Black Stone, and even the inanimate objects within Allah's Sacred House of Worship are protected, as Allah has made it one of the rituals of *Hajj* and has commanded the people to kiss this inanimate thing - the lowest genus of beings - although they do not kiss animals or plants. Therefore, this is the ultimate balance in the universe. Man, who is superior to all creatures, goes humbly to kiss or greet the Black Stone, in submission to Allah's Command.

People also throw pebbles at another stone that symbolises Satan for them to know that stones are not inherently objects of value; rather, the matter depends on the commandments of the Supreme Commander, so that they do not think that stones in general are to be honoured. Hence, the pilgrim kisses one stone, and throws pebbles at another stone.

‘O you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 2), Allah has made these rites in order to achieve spiritual regulation, and to keep in mind the commands of Allah so that no one would claim that he is an integral and essential part of the universe; rather, all the creatures are Allah’s Servant. All of existence shows a chain of servitude; man serves man, animals serve man, plants serve man and animals and inanimate objects serve all creatures. However, no one is better than another; even inanimate objects declare Allah’s Glory with His Praise, whilst man might not do that.

‘Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man, undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

This commandment not to violate the rites of Allah means that every rite takes its share of esteem and respect; and no one should imagine that any of these rites may have any kind of intrinsic holiness; rather, Allah gives them this holiness and can remove it if He wishes.

‘O you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah or the sanctity of the sacred month...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 2). It means that people should not violate the inviolability of the sacred month, as Allah has commanded them to do so for their own good. Allah *Glorified is He* protects man’s dignity from humiliation before his enemy, and protects the weak from yielding to the strong. In addition, even the strong person who can fight may wish to cease fighting for a period of time to rest, but if he declares so publicly, he will appear to be publicly yielding to his enemy. Therefore, Allah specifies a period of time in which He forbids fighting; the sacred months. Accordingly, a warrior realises that Allah has forbidden fighting during the sacred months to protect man, and give him an opportunity to experience the pleasure of safety, peace and tranquillity so that the strong might yearn for peace thereafter.

Why has Allah mentioned the sacred month (in the singular form) though we know there are four sacred months? If we consider the sacred months as a category, then this term can apply to all the sacred months. In addition, if we consider the sacred months as the months of the pilgrimage, which are *Shawwal*, *Dhul-Qa'dah* and the first ten nights of *Dhul-Hijjah*, the meaning will be also correct. We know that there are four sacred months, three of which are consecutive, namely *Dhul-Qa'dah*, *Dhul-Hijjah* and *Muharram*, and one is separate, namely *Rajab*. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that every action must have a time and a place; if there is no action, time or place will be considered, as they did not come into existence until Allah created His universe. No one should ask, 'Where was Allah, and when did Allah exist?' because these questions refer to time and place which are created by Allah Who has given every action a time and a place. Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*, protects people's pride and His merciful legislation act as a shield that protects the weak among them. In addition, Allah's legislation helps the strong among His servants to refrain from transgression and oppression. Therefore, He has made certain places and times sacred; the sacred places are those at the Sanctuary: '...And whoever enters it shall be safe...' (*Al-'Imran*: 97) Therefore, one must ensure safety for people when he enters the Sanctuary. As for the times that Allah has made Sacred, they are the sacred months.

Allah deals with events from the perspectives of both time and place. In ancient times, the stronger party would fight and come close to victory, and once the sacred month began, he would continue to fight and claim that the sacred month would come after the end of the war. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* prohibits changing the time of the sacred months because He wants to offend the war.

Then Allah says: '... or (neglect the marking of) the sacrificial animals...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). The word *al-hady* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the sacrificial animals which are offered to the Sanctuary; this word also is the plural of the word *hadiyyah* (offering or gift). Some people would offer sacrificial animals to the *Ka'ba* which are called in Arabic *hady*. Allah has decreed that these sacrificial animals should be offered to the Sanctuary only, as in the past, the Sanctuary was a barren valley that did not

contain many animals. People would bring sacrificial animals with them when they came to perform *Hajj*, so Allah has forbidden approaching these sacrificial animals because they are intended to be offered to the Sanctuary. The pilgrims come in great throngs, and when many people assemble in such a barren valley, they need food. Therefore, it is not permissible for a believer to use the sacrificial animals for anything other than for the purpose for which they should be offered. Therefore, it is not permissible for the one who takes a sacrificial animal with him to be offered to the Sanctuary to slaughter and eat it while travelling. One should ensure that the other pilgrims' offerings are protected and secured for the Sanctuary, '...and garlanding (them)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). The word *qala'id* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means a garland. In the past, the pilgrims feared that their sacrificial animals would stray, so they put garlands around the animals' necks so that those who saw them would know that they were offered to the Sanctuary. The Arabic word *al-hady* refers to sacrificial animals in general which wear no garlands around their necks, and the word *al-qala'id* means the sacrificial animals which had garlands around their necks to mark them as offerings for the Sanctuary. The prohibition here may even include taking the garlands that mark the sacrificial animals so that they would not be lost. Allah *Glorified is He* expresses meanings in an eloquent way.

In the past, when the pilgrims did not have any collars, they would cut pieces of the bark from trees and hang them around the necks of their sacrificial animals, so that people would know they were intended to be offered for the Sanctuary. Accordingly, Allah provides sustenance that includes meat for the pilgrims coming to the Sanctuary and He ordains that the provision of *hady* (sacrificial animals) becomes one of the rites of *Hajj*. Allah is the One Who calls the people to perform *Hajj*, and they are the guests of the Most Merciful.

A person may slaughter a sacrificial animal to feed his guests, so what about Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*? Therefore, He has intended that the *hady* (sacrificial animals) to be food for His guests. People gather at Mina and *Arafat* in countless numbers, so Allah honours them with the finest and most delicious foods. The poor go to the slaughterhouse in Mecca and take the finest of meat and then may dry it in the open air and the sun and store it for them to eat it

over a long period of time; this type of meat is called 'jerked meat'. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* expresses the commandment in a highly eloquent way.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...(the sanctity of) the sacred month or (neglect the marking of) the sacrificial animals and garlanding (them) or (violate the safety of) those coming to the Sacred House seeking bounty from their Lord and (His) approval....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) This means that people should not be prevented from going to Allah's Sacred House, or diverted from the way to it, as they are the guests of Allah. These words were revealed before Allah's saying: '...indeed the polytheists are unclean...' (*at-Tawba*: 28).

Before this verse was revealed, the disbelievers used to perform *Hajj* to Allah's Sacred House. We may ask: Do the disbelievers seek favour from Allah? Yes, as Allah bestows His bounties upon all people even the disbeliever, but His Great Pleasure is not attained by the disbeliever. The bounties which Allah bestowed on the disbelievers are represented in their prosperous. Now, Allah also bestows His bounties upon the disbelievers.

But how could the disbelievers attain Allah's Great Pleasure? The disbelievers imagine that all that they do is intended to please Allah. The precision of the Quran is manifested in Allah's saying, '...seeking bounty from their Lord and (His) approval...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2), and does not say, 'seeking bounty from Allah and (His) approval', as the believer is the one who carries out the religious obligations.

Allah has two types of bestowals; Lordly bestowal and divine bestowal. Lordly bestowal refers to that which He gives to the believers and disbelievers as Lord and Sustainer; He subdues the means of living for them all. For example, the sun rises and benefits the believer and disbeliever and the means of living are given to both the believer and the disbeliever. As for divine bestowal, it is represented in Allah's Commands and Prohibitions. In this verse, Allah says: '...seeking bounty from their Lord and (His) approval...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). This means that they did not pay heed to the basic two elements of religion: commands and prohibitions. Then Allah says, '...But when you come out of *ihram*, then (you may) hunt...' (*al-Ma'ida*: . 2). This means that when the pilgrim removes the ritual state for *Hajj* and comes out of the Sanctuary, he may hunt.

‘... And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 2). Before the idolaters had been banned from entering the Sacred House of Allah, the believers were commanded not to attack the disbelievers who visited the Sacred House of Allah in revenge for the suffering which they experienced at the hands of the disbelievers. Therefore, Allah has commanded the believers not to take revenge from the disbelievers, as they prevented them from entering the Sacred House of Allah at the time of the Truce of Al-Hudaybiyya. Rather, the believers have been given the responsibility of upholding Allah’s legislation on earth, so they should abstain from selfishness or tribal and familial prejudices because Allah’s legislation has been revealed to lead the whole world, and it is not suitable for the believer to take revenge on the disbeliever when he comes to the House of Allah, and this is not consistent with the duty of upholding Allah’s legislation.

Therefore, Allah said to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Indeed, We have revealed to you, (O Muhammad), the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be an advocate for the deceitful.’ (*an-Nisa’*: 105). When Allah commanded the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to judge between people, this judgement must not discriminate between the believers and disbelievers because the Muslims are the upholders of Allah’s legislation and are the best nation which Allah has raised up for the benefit of all mankind. If people understood that Islam was for their own good, they would not wage war against them.

Muslims are not only good for themselves; rather, they bring goodness to all mankind. Therefore, Allah says, ‘... And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* lead you to transgress...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 2). This means that Muslims should not allow the anger they feel towards certain people to make them transgress because they prevented the Muslims from entering the Sacred House of Allah in the year of Al-Hudaybiyya. When the disbelievers know that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* commands the believers to treat them properly, they will be aware of the Lord’s Mercy and will feel ashamed for not believing; but if the believer transgressed

against the disbeliever in revenge for the past aggression, the disbeliever would realise that the believer took revenge for the aggression.

However, if the disbeliever sees that the believer does not transgress in obedience to Allah's Commands, he will see that Islam reforms its followers in a way which gives them psychological loftiness rising above spite, hatred, and blind support. The Quran expresses this meaning in an accurate manner, as the religion did not come to suppress emotions or instinct, or to make people 'platonic', as they claim. It does not ask the people to suppress their hatred, but it instructs them not to let their hatred make them transgress against the people they hate. Allah does not forbid hatred, for it is relevant to emotions.

When 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* saw the killer of his brother, Zayd ibn Al-Khattab, passing by him, someone said, 'This is Zayd's killer! 'Umar replied, 'What should I do with him, when Allah has guided him to Islam? If Islam expiates disbelief, shall it not also expiate the killing of 'Umar's brother?' However, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said to his brother's killer, 'When you see me, turn your face away from me.' He said this because he knew the effect of emotion and that he did not love his brother's killer. So, the killer of Umar's brother said to him, 'Will your hatred for me lead you to deny me one of my rights? 'Umar said, 'No, rather you will get all your rights.' His brother's killer replied, 'No matter, then. Only women cry over love.' Therefore, it was faith that prevented Umar from avenging his brother's death.

'... And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* lead you to transgress...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). Allah *Glorified is He* does not prohibit the feelings of hatred and aversion because He knows that this is beyond man's capacity, as it is a matter of emotion. Emotion cannot be governed by law, but it should not give you the right to transgress.

Islam intervenes in human actions, urging a person to do something and abstain from another; Islam does not intervene in human craving which is an expression of a phase that succeeds the initial perception which causes a person to love or hate. Then, he expresses this feeling by displaying a certain tendency. There are three aspects of sensation; perception, sentiment and

tendency.⁽¹⁾ When a person walks in a garden full of flowers and sees a flower, this is called perception, and Islam does not forbid this perception. Then the person has the free will to admire and like the flower, but he should not pick this flower.

Islamic legislation only intervenes in the human tendency in matters relevant to women. In this case, Islam intervenes from the first stage of perception: when a man sees a beautiful woman, this refers to perception; when his heart loves her, this refers to sentiment, but approaching her refers to tendency.

Allah is merciful with men as He commands them to lower their gazes from the beginning because they are completely unable to make a clear distinction between perception, sentiment, and tendency. Both perception and sentiment interact in man's mind, and he takes the decision either to keep himself chaste and repress his feelings, or not to do so and spoil people's honour. Therefore, Islamic Law serves men from the very beginning when it commands them to lower their gaze: 'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their private parts...' (*an-Nur*: 30-31).

In this case, Islamic Law intervenes from the first phase of perception because tendency cannot be separated from sentiments in this case; seeing a woman causes chemical reactions in a man's soul and seeing a man causes chemical reactions in a woman's soul. However, when one sees a flower, this does not lead to any chemical reaction, and one can have a vase of flowers. The verse means that Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* does not prevent the believer from feeling the human emotions of hatred and detestation because faith requires feelings. Some of the enemies of Islam say that the verses of the Quran contradict one another because Allah says, 'You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers...' (*al-Mujadala*: 22). And the criterion of faith does not allow this,

(1) From Proofreader: This information is per the knowledge and belief of Sheikh As-Sha'rawy *may Allah rest his soul*, and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily confirm to the scientific facts and information proven true.

and the Quran says in another verse, ‘...but if they endeavour to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them...’ (*Luqman*: 15).

The one who reflects deeply on this will recognise that a person may be kind to those he loves and to those he does not love. As for the intimate feeling which is relevant to the heart, Allah forbids the believers to direct them towards the idolaters.’... And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). Allah does not forbid hatred, but He forbids the reactions which spring from hatred even if they are justified, as was the case with the Treaty of Al-Hudaybiyya. Then, Allah says, ‘... And cooperate in righteousness and piety...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). This verse turns the issue of faith into a global issue. The word *ta'awanu* (cooperate) which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse has the morphological form *tafa'al*, which implies the notion of reciprocity between two parties, like the Arabic word *tasharak* (share) which implies the participation of two parties on equal basis. For example, ‘*Tasharak 'Amr wa Zayd*’, ‘*Sharak Zayd 'Amr*’ or ‘*Sharak 'Amr Zayd*’ mean that ‘Amr and Zayd participated with each other on equal basis, the only difference in the second and third examples is that ‘Zayd’ is the subject in the second example and the object in the third example, and ‘‘Amr’ is the object in the second example and the subject in the third example.

For example, ‘*Qatal fulan fulanan*’ means that someone fought another. When two people are involved in the same verb, there is a subject and an object. There is a difference between this, the previous examples and the following example ‘*A'en fulanan*’ (help someone), which is an order to only one person to help another person. This example is different from ‘*Ta'awan ma'a fulan*’ which is an instruction to one person to help another.

Life’s undertakings are varied to the extent that they cannot be covered by a single talent. When you build a house, you need someone to dig the ground for setting the foundations and build the walls, someone to make the bricks, someone to make the cement, and someone to make the iron. One person cannot learn all these talents and build a house by himself, but cooperation involves assigning a particular task to each person. There is a specialist in every field which man requires such as; sewing, medicine, pharmaceuticals and other life

needs. Allah commands the believers to cooperate so that life goes on, and each person will benefit from the skills of another exchange for him doing his own work diligently. The word *ta`awanu* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means cooperating and helping one another. This word involves the existence of the person who helps and the person who is helped. However, the helper does not always give help, but one day he will be helped; and the one who is helped will not always be helped, but one day he will give help. This is the cooperation required for the life affairs which Allah has willed for His vicegerents on earth who are required to worship Allah alone without partners. It cannot be done by the efforts of only one person, but it needs different efforts and talents that must complement one another in order to be done.

When we build a single apartment building, we use many instruments which require much energy, starting with the architect who draws up plans for the plot of land. Then, he may produce a three-dimensional model of the building he wishes to construct if he wants to be more skilful in his craft. Then the piece of land will be dug by the person responsible for this task who will be followed by the person who also sets the foundation of the building and places the iron rods. This is followed by the persons who make the reinforced concrete, the persons who construct the building, the persons who install the sanitation and water supply systems and the persons who make the electrical connections. This involves the cooperation of different capabilities in order to construct a single building, and one person cannot do all these tasks.

Therefore, cooperation is essential for man in order to be a vicegerent. Being a vicegerent requires that he should reconstruct the earth, a task which requires him to avoid spoiling good elements, rather he should improve them, Allah says, '...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) This means that He wants the world to be reconstructed, not ruined, and He wants what is intrinsically sound to remain sound. Therefore, in order to reconstruct the earth, we must cooperate in good, not in evil.

The word *bir* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the matters towards which the soul feels comfortable, while the word *al-ithm* means the matters which trouble the soul and what a person fears that it may be discovered by others. If you proceed to do something but fear that people will

see you doing it, this is considered a sin because if it was not a sin, you will like people to see you doing it. Therefore, Allah's saying, '... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) is a commandment for every group of people to cooperate in doing good, and it is appropriate to say to every group: Cooperate with one another, as long as you do not allow your organisation to engage in any activities which contradict your religion, such as the Rotary Club and the Masons, whose activities are said to be benevolent. Any charitable organisation is welcome, but it should not imitate the West; rather, it should do benevolent activities in the name of Islam so that the world will know that these benevolent activities are done in a Muslim country. It is most preferable not to give Islamic organisations foreign names so that no one thinks that the benevolent activities are done by non-Muslims. If any Muslim can do benevolent activities, he should do them in the name of Islam. Every person should know Islam instructs the Muslims to devote their lives to benevolence and goodness. Accordingly, the beneficiaries of charitable organisations should not imagine, mistakenly, that benevolent and good activities are done apart from Islam. We are instructed to ascribe the benevolent deeds we do for our religion because our religion commanded and encouraged us to do them. Every Muslim must know that his religion is not devoid of values so that he needs to acquire them from non-Muslim countries, but Islam makes the Muslims free of any need for anything other than it. If we do benevolent deeds and offer social services to the people, we should not ascribe these deeds to other than Muslims. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And who is better in speech than one who invites to Allah and does righteousness and says, "Indeed, I am of the Muslims."' (*Fussilat*: 33)

Therefore, each Muslim should do good deeds while declaring that Islam commands them to do so, and should not ascribe these good deeds to any other organisation. It is forbidden for the Muslim to ascribe his good deeds to non-Muslim organisations because this cooperation would not be for the sake of Allah. Allah says: '... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) He wants us to do good and prevent it from being demolished; and everyone must be aware that he cannot do all forms of goodness alone.

If a poor man who has only one garment is asked from where he got his loaf of bread, he may say that the grocer gave him this loaf of bread. This indicates that Allah willed that this grocer to sell bread for people and to give away some bread as charity. As for the bakery, the flour came to the baker from the mill where dozens of workers and engineers work to grind the flour for them to deliver it to the bakery where someone makes dough from it, someone bakes it and someone sells it.

We must realise Allah's Omnipotence which allowed investors, who were thinking of their own benefit, to buy these huge machines for grinding and baking. It is difficult for a single person to buy such machines because of their high price. In addition, these machines must be imported from foreign nations which have laboratories and scientists that study motion and energy in order to design these machines so that a man can eat bread.

This is how the will of Allah causes all actions of life to be organised. The grocer sells the bread which the baker makes, and the grinder, kneader, machine importer, and designer participate in making bread. In addition, the school which teaches the engineer who designs the machine also participate in making the bread. Many people cooperate to make a loaf of bread even though most of them only think about bread when we are hungry.

Accordingly, all the actions of life rely on cooperation, but if people cooperate in doing evil, they will destroy good deeds because cooperation in evil begins with assisting in an action which contradicts Allah's instructions that consist of commands and prohibitions, while the matters which are not regulated by commands and prohibitions are permissible; one may do them or not as he wishes.

The one who commits himself to Allah's Commands and prohibitions cooperates in righteousness and piety, while the one who does the opposite cooperates in evil and aggression. This is because he turns the commands into prohibitions and vice versa.

Allah's saying: '... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2), ensures the reconstruction of the earth and prevention of corruption. The one who takes bribes, and the one who facilitates bribery by acting as a mediator between the briber and the bribe, the one who delivers intoxicants, and the one who cheats are considered

as cooperating in evil and aggression. Even the doorman of an apartment building who knows that suspicious activities take place in one of the apartments and takes a compensation for this, cooperates in sin.

All these people should beware of being tempted by the benefit which these sinful acts yield because Allah will cause these people to have a tragic end. In addition, the woman who tempts people with her beauty, her life will end with suffering and with no aid except from those kind people who were not seduced by her beauty and did not enjoy it unlawfully. This is because when a man sees a woman with whom he engaged in sinful acts, he will remember all the calamities which befall him because of her and will hate her for it.

Allah wants justice to prevail in the world for it to be balanced, and so anyone who gains something through sin will suffer due to this sin in his life. A person may count all the money which he has earned lawfully by hard work and the money he has earned by unlawful means, and then consider the calamities which have befallen him and the costs they have incurred upon him. This person will find that the calamities have taken all the money he earned by unlawful means and even the money he earned lawfully. This matter always occurs in this way; Allah does not postpone it to the Hereafter, as He wants to establish justice in this world, otherwise, how could those who do not believe in the Day of Reckoning witness Allah's Ability to maintain the balance of His universe? Allah has willed that there should be reckoning in this world so that those who do not believe in the Day of Reckoning do not cause corruption in the universe. Everyone who causes corruption will realise the bad destiny of another one who also caused corruption. Therefore, those who enjoy the yields of sinful acts in this worldly life should beware of their deeds before it is too late. The only people who are excused are children who are immature and unable to perceive the fact that they live on ill-gotten money. However, once the boy or girl grows up and realises that the money is earned from unlawful sources, she must be ashamed to buy a dress with this money, or even eat a single piece of bread earned by unlawful money. A person must be aware that Allah has allowed him to ask about the source of the money he receives, so that he does not use this ill-gotten money. A person may pay this ill-gotten money for charity rather than spending it on himself, and Allah will never leave such a person in need of money.

Everyone must consider deeply Allah's saying: '...And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2), and make it a criterion by which he judges the people he sees in the world. The same also applies to the taxi driver who puts a veil over a man and woman committing unlawful acts in the taxi and takes an extra charge for that. This man should consider the money which he gains in this way and the money he spends on treating his illness, or that of the children he supports.

'... And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2). There are different forms of aggression from which society suffers. Aggression against time takes place when a person takes compensation for work which he does not carry out, aggression against people by usurping their rights or taking bribes from them. In order to maintain faith in society, being a vicegerent on earth must be preserved. This necessitates reconstruction of the earth and prevention of corruption in it.

'...but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) This means that these transgressions result from the lack of cooperation in righteousness and from cooperation in sin and aggression, and there will be severe retribution for these transgressions. Piety means to follow Allah's Commands and to refrain from His prohibitions so that we do not turn the commands into prohibitions or vice versa. Accordingly, we will be protected from the punishment of the Compeller.

Some shallow-minded people might say that there is contradiction in some of the verses of the Quran, as some of the verses state, '...fear the Fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 24), while others state '... And fear Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 194). They wonder if it is possible for a person to protect himself from the fire and from Allah. These people do not understand the meaning of the Arabic word *ittaqu* (place a protective shield between someone and that which may harm him). Therefore, *ittaqu* Allah means (protect yourself from Allah's punishment by following His commands and avoiding His prohibitions).

When a person places a protective shield between himself and Allah, he places a protective shield between himself and Allah's Wrath. Therefore, to protect oneself from Allah's Wrath means protecting oneself from fire.

Allah ends the verse by saying: ‘... indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) People neglect cooperating in righteousness and commit sins because they do not find any deterrent in their societies; otherwise, society would protect its members from committing sins. If there was faith-based awareness in society, it would ostracise the transgressors and make them feel that they were abandoned. Accordingly, they would come back to the right path.

People are only tempted to commit serious crimes because society does not show enough concern for small crimes. Therefore, Allah draws our attention to the fact that He will not ignore the matter as some of His slaves do, as people may be complementary and may not try to prevent the sins which some of them commit. However, Allah is severe in retribution that will take place at a time when the individual has no influence, wealth, position, or lineage to protect him from Allah. If the weakness of society encourages you to cooperate in sin, you must fear Allah, for He is severe in retribution.

How will the sinner be punished? We do not know because we are not Allah. We may find that the retribution creeps into the sinner in the form of a painful illness that not only compels him to spend all the money he has, but also to ask others to help with his treatment or the treatment of someone he loves. The means of Allah’s retribution may not wait until the Hereafter, but may befall the sinner without him realising that; and this is known as severe retribution.

Allah declares certain things to be unlawful after having made other things lawful by saying, ‘...Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 1). Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*, gives further specification for the cattle which are made lawful. He has made lawful each pair of sheep, goat, camel, and cow, to which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* added gazelles and wild cattle, and every sea creature. Allah’s saying, ‘...except for that which is recited to you (in this Quran)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) indicates that there will be a prohibition; Allah states in the Quran the cattle He forbids:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالْدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْفُوذَةُ
وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبْعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ
تَسْتَفْسِمُوا بِأَلْسِنِكُمْ ذَلِكُمْ فَنْسَقُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْبَيْسِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَحْشَوْهُمْ
وَأَخْشَوْا الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا
فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخِصَّةٍ غَيْرِ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾

You are forbidden to eat carrion; blood; pig's meat; any animal over which any name other than God's has been invoked; any animal strangled, or victim of a violent blow or a fall, or gored or savaged by a beast of prey, unless you still slaughter it [in the correct manner]; or anything sacrificed on idolatrous altars. You are also forbidden to allot shares [of meat] by drawing marked arrows — a heinous practice – today the disbelievers have lost all hope that you will give up your religion. Do not fear them: fear Me. Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen as your religion *islam*: [total devotion to God]; but if any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food, with no intention of doing wrong, then God is most forgiving and merciful [3] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 3)

The verse begins with His words, 'Prohibited to you are dead animals...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). We may observe that the first word of the verse is a passive verb, despite the one who forbids is obviously known: Allah. He does not force this upon anyone, for the addressee here participated in the covenant of faith with their Lord, so He Commands them and they have agreed to adhere to His commands. Therefore, Allah says, 'Prohibited'. Allah forbids and the faithful believer submits to this prohibition.

The word *al-maytah* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the dead animal whose spirit left the body without the body being damaged, i.e., the animal died of natural causes. Life ends in one of two ways: either by natural death that occurs without the body being damaged, or by the body being damaged beyond repair. When a man strangles another living being and prevents it from breathing, the spirit leaves the body because a part of the body is irreparably damaged, as breathing is essential. A person may

also kill another by shooting him with bullets because the spirit can only remain within a body that has certain attributes.

But there are certain body parts in whose absence the soul can remain in the body, such as the hand; severing it does not entail death. If a person's heart stops, it may be massaged so that it beats again, as long as the brain is still alive; and the longest time the brain can remain alive without oxygen is seven minutes only in rare instances. ⁽¹⁾ If the brain ceases to function, the person dies, so doctors have defined clinical death as the moment in which the brain ceases to function. Accordingly, there are two cases in which the soul leaves the body: natural death and killing.

In case of death, the spirit leaves the body without the body being damaged; as for killing, the spirit leaves the body because the body is damaged. It is out of Allah's Mercy that He forbade the eating of dead animals because it has died for a reason that cannot be recognized, lest the people eat it along with its disease.

Likewise, He forbade the consumption of blood, which is the liquid which flows in veins and arteries, gives the body heat and warmth, and transports nutrients. Blood has two different roles as it flows: it carries waste from the kidneys and lungs, and there is also oxygenated blood which carries nutrients. If people consume this blood, it could be the oxygenated kind or it could also be the kind of blood that has not yet been rid of the impurities of the kidneys and lungs. It is also called 'spilled blood', i.e. flowing blood. In the past, people used to fill the intestines of the slaughtered animal with this blood, cook it and eat it.

There is also blood which is not impure such as the liver, which is a single piece, and the spleen; and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Two kinds of dead meat and two kinds of blood have been permitted to us. The two kinds of dead meat are fish and locusts, and the two kinds of blood are the liver and spleen.'⁽²⁾

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(2) (*Ahmad, Ibn Majah and Daraqatny*)

So, the liver and the spleen are exempted from the general ruling of blood, but the blood which spills upon slaughtering is prohibited. The reason fish and locusts are lawful to eat is that their flesh does not contain flowing blood; and when you cut a large fish, no blood flows from it, but rather, it is only found inside the flaps of the head, and not in the capillaries. Therefore, when a fish dies, there is no harm in eating it, and the same is true for locusts.

Then, Allah states the prohibition of 'the flesh of swine' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). No believer should ask about the reason for the prohibition of the flesh of swine. Scientists has made all kinds of researches to know why Allah has prohibited dead animals and blood, and they have realised that Allah does not want a disease to be conveyed from a dead animal to man, and He has forbidden blood because it contains toxic wastes like urea and other substances.

Every prohibition has a reason, which may be obvious or hidden. The Quran was revealed to an unlettered messenger who did not know about complex scientific matters, and the earlier Muslims implemented the teachings of the Quran because it was revealed by Allah, in Whom they believed as All-Wise. They also knew that Allah wants the best for His Creation. Every handicraft sets rules for protecting his craft. We do not find a furniture maker, for example, smashing up the wardrobe he has made; rather, he does his utmost to beautify the furniture he has made. As long as Allah is the One Who has created us and we believe in Him, we must obey His commands and refrain from all His prohibitions. This does not prevent us from utilising knowledge for the sake of strengthening faith, and to respond to any argumentative, probing person although no one has the right to raise arguments about Allah's religion. If he wants to argue, he must first argue about the existence of Allah and the Revelation Allah imparts to man by means of His messengers; if he is convinced, he must obey Allah's Commands. The religion should be studied from the top. The believers obey Allah's Commands, so when giving the ruling, Allah has not directed His instructions to all people, but He has directed them to the believers saying, 'O you who have believe...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 2) because the believers believe in Allah, so they must obey Him and follow His rulings.

The most valuable thing a man possesses is his health, so when his health declines, he searches for the causes. If food is the problem, he chooses a

doctor who is specialised in the digestive system and who prescribes medicine for him. The sick person does not say to the doctor that he will not take this medicine unless he clarifies the reason for prescribing this medicine and its effect. So, the role of the mind here is to lead the person to a doctor whom he trusts, and he must then obey the instructions which this doctor gives for him. As long as one believes in Allah, he must obey His commands and avoid His prohibitions. The patient does not debate with the doctor, so how could any man argue with his Lord concerning a certain ruling?

A doctor may make a mistake, as any human being does, and he might even cause the death of his patient; when we have doubts about the instructions of a given doctor, we can seek the consultancy of other doctors, and then we obey their instructions. No one should argue concerning Allah's rulings, but we should obey all His commands.

Man puts his trust in human beings who are prone to error, so his trust in Allah should be above his trust in any other person. Therefore, the reasonable person should obey and follow Allah's Commandments and obey them without any debate, as the mind is the means to reflect on the signs of Allah's existence, but it should not lead a person to argue Allah's Commands which he should obey. 'Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). Analyses have confirmed that the flesh of swine contains tapeworm, ringworm and several other worms which cannot be treated.

The next forbidden item is: '... and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). This means uttering a name other than Allah when slaughtering an animal, such as saying, 'In the name of al-Lat and al-'Uzza' and not saying, 'In the Name of Allah, Allah is the Greatest.' This is because man benefits from the genera which existed in this universe when he was created and these genera waiting to serve him because he is Allah's vicegerent on earth. Animals have souls, but they are inferior to man because he has the ability to think; plants are inferior to animals, and inanimate bodies are inferior to plants. Every time man is served by beings, he must remember the Bounteous Creator; when man slaughters an animal; he does so by the leave of the Great Creator Who is greater than man, animals and the universe. Therefore, he must slaughter it in the Name of the Creator.

Some people do not eat meat out of sympathy and compassion towards animals, while they eat plants. However, if they know that plants also have life, will they refuse to eat them, too? It has been confirmed in this age that plants have life, and even inanimate bodies have life; if you split open a piece of stone or any kind of rock, you disturb with every tap of the hammer the cohesion of the particles of the rock which cling together, and you might do this without being aware of the life within it.

‘...And there is not a thing except that it exalts (Allah) by His praise...’ (*al-Isra*: 44). Allah’s righteous servants know this fact and they deal with all the other creatures around them – whether animal or inanimate bodies – keeping in mind that they glorify Allah. Therefore, they do not belittle or despise things no matter how small they are; rather, they treat them gently. Even when they slaughter an animal, they have mercy on it, so they do not sharpen the knife in front of it or slaughter one animal in front of another. Moreover, they give food and water to the animal they wish to slaughter, because they know that it glorifies Allah. They slaughter the animals only because Allah has permitted them to eat it. They are held accountable for their deeds by Allah; as for the other beings around them, they are subdued by Allah.

These words of Allah convey a message: ‘... any animal over which any name other than Allah’s has been invoked...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3). Almighty Allah is the One Who has allowed us to eat living beings which have faculties of sensation and movement. He has created those animals and made them subservient to us so we can slaughter and eat them. Therefore, we must acknowledge the favour of the One Who has bestowed this on us and show gratitude to Him by reciting His Name upon slaughtering, ‘In the Name of Allah, Allah is the Greatest’. This is an acknowledgment that we only slaughter that animal in the Name of Him Who has permitted us to do so.

‘Can they not see how, among the things made by Our Hands, We have created livestock they control? And We have made them obedient, so some can be used for riding, some for food’ (*Ya Sin*: 71-72). Allah has subjected these animals to our will, and being able to slaughter and eat them is a manifestation of this favour. Hence, when we slaughter an animal, we must remember the One Who has subjected it to our will and made it lawful for us

to eat. Also, Almighty Allah forbids eating strangled animals. Strangling entails depriving a living being from one of the three elements Allah has made indispensable for life: food, water, and air. The All-Wise Creator has created these elements and placed them in a particular order of importance. A man can live for thirty days without food, for Allah has allowed for any crisis that may result in food being inaccessible. He has equipped your body with the ability to store nutrients which can be used when no food supply is available. He has created in us the desire for food since we need not just to satisfy hunger, but also to enjoy food, and He has also equipped our bodies with the mechanisms necessary to answer this instinct.

Allah does not command us to combat all desires. He does not command us to shun food and despise lawful needs. Rather, Allah permits us to eat to provide our bodies with the essential strength and energy we need, and also to enjoy the pleasure of eating. Anything more than what is directly consumed to generate energy is stored in the body as fats and flesh; and if a day comes when you cannot find any food, you can derive energy from the stored fat. This is one aspect of the absolute precision of Allah's creation. A car, once it runs out of fuel, immediately stops working. The physical form Allah has created for you, however, does not immediately stop operating when food runs out, but it keeps going for thirty days—a sufficient time to receive help or find a way to provide yourself with food.

Arab women in the past used to describe penury by saying 'One year melted the fat away, another year did away with the flesh, and another year reduced the bones to nothing!' This sums up the different degrees of hunger; at times of hunger, fats are the first to be used up. Then, if hunger persists, it starts to eat into the flesh and bones. As for water, a human being can do without water for three to ten days according to the amount of water stored in his body. Air is the most essential of all. A person cannot do without air for more than the period of a single breath.⁽¹⁾ If air is withheld for a longer time, death is the inevitable outcome. Breathing is the most important of life's

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essential needs. Out of His Wisdom and Mercy, Allah does not allow anyone to control air, unlike food and sometimes water because if anyone can control air, it will be fatal for the life of all living beings.

The Arabic language boasts great vastness and precision that manifests itself in numerous ways, like in the formation of its words. Consider, for example, the three words: *nafs* (soul), *nafas* (breath) and *nafris* (precious) that are all derived from the same root *n-f-s*. The word *nafris* refers to the union of spirit and material which causes life with all its manifestations; motion, thinking, etc. The word *nafas* refers to the air which constitutes one of the most essential requirements of life. Life is a precious gift, and therefore from the name of its basic constituent, *nafris* (soul), a word for 'precious' is derived, namely *nafris*. Consequently, this gift must not be wasted doing nothing or seeking unworthy gains or transient pleasures. Rather, life must be devoted to striving for a goal which is precious; and what is more precious than faith? Living for the cause of your Creator, Almighty Allah is the most sublime goal.

The Arabic language contains many examples of what is called *jinās*, or paronomasia that means the use of homonymous words to create a rhetorical effect. Sometimes the words are not homonymous but share the same root, which suggests that they share a common subtle meaning. A poet said, for example:

I left my lands and came to you *asiru* (walking)!

Love has made my heart to you *asiru* (a captive)!

The word *asiru* in the first line is a verb meaning 'walking', and in the second line it is a noun meaning 'a captive'.

A strangled animal is one that has been choked to death, so why does Allah mention it after already mentioning 'carion' since the latter includes all animals that have been killed or have died by any means? The reason is that a strangled animal should be included in another category, since it may be rescued before breathing its last. If a person catches an animal that has been strangled and slaughters it before it loses its life, and blood flows from it when it is slaughtered and its eye flutters or its tail wags, it is lawful to eat it. However, if a strangled animal, when slaughtered, does not emit any blood, it is unlawful to eat. This is because it means that it had already died before being slaughtered. In the

verse, Allah also forbids eating an animal that has been beaten to death; that is, an animal that has lost its life because of severe damage. It is also forbidden to eat an animal which has fallen from a height and dies as a result, an animal that has been gored to death by another animal, or the animal which has been ‘...savaged by a beast of prey...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3), meaning the flesh left over by a predator from an animal which it has hunted and killed. This part of the verse, ‘...except that which you slaughter (in the correct manner before it dies)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3) refers to animals which have been strangled, beaten severely, thrown or have fallen off a high place, or have been gored by another animal but are caught while they are still alive and slaughtered, so blood flows from them and their bodies twitch. These are lawful to eat.

Such was the opinion of the Companion Ali ibn Abu Taleb as well as the Companion Ibn Abbas, two of the most prominent Islamic scholars and exegetes in the history of Islam. They said this part of the verse, ‘...except that which you slaughter (in the correct manner before it dies)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3) is an exception to all the aforementioned cases (animals which have been strangled, beaten severely, thrown or have fallen off a high place, or have been gored by another animal), excluding carrion, blood and swine-flesh. Some edible animals are too wild to be handled, but the abovementioned exception means one may confine an animal with ropes or strike it with an object to make it lose its balance and weaken for a moment, allowing the butcher to slaughter it in the way Islam has made lawful.

Allah does not specify which part of the animal's body may be beaten, whether it is the belly, the head or the back; an animal may be beaten by stones being flung at it, and these stones might strike it on the head, the belly or the back. This means it is permissible for us to strike a wild animal to be able to control and slaughter it; however, it may not be killed by any other means but the lawful slaughtering Allah has ordained.

The criteria which tell us whether the flesh is lawful or unlawful are ascertained by asking, ‘Does blood flow from the animal when it is slaughtered? Does its body twitch or even just its eye flutter?’ If these criteria are met when an animal is slaughtered, then it is permissible to eat it. Finally, the Name of Allah must be invoked upon slaughtering, otherwise the slaughtering

process is unlawful and the flesh of the slaughtered animal may not be eaten; for even though the animal may be physically sound, the creed based on which it is slaughtered is un-Islamic.

‘...savaged by a beast of prey, except that which you slaughter (in the correct manner before it dies); or anything sacrificed on idolatrous altars...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3). Allah forbids one from eating that which a beast of prey has savaged, unless the prey is still alive and can still be slaughtered according to the way Islamic Law prescribes. He *the Exalted* generally forbids whatever is not slaughtered according to the proper Islamic method. Hence, an animal may not be slaughtered using a bone or a tooth (as a weapon or tool for slaying), or slaughtered on an idolatrous altar, i.e. on stones set up for idols. The latter is prohibited because it bears resemblance to the slaughtering of offerings for idols. Again, even though the animal is physically sound, the manner of slaughtering is un-Islamic.

‘Idolatrous altars’ refers to the stones that used to be placed around the *Ka’ba* upon which the idolaters would slaughter offerings to express devotion to their gods. This manner of slaughtering is at variance with the monotheistic creed and this is why it is forbidden. This is also the reason why it is forbidden to slaughter an animal without invoking the Name of Allah or by mentioning the name of any false god. To invoke a name other than Allah’s on slaughtering an animal is a form of polytheism that is associating partners with Allah. He *the Exalted and Almighty* has made these animals subservient to man’s will and has made them lawful to be eaten even though they are living beings that have faculties of motion and sensation. The so-called gods for which offerings used to be made on altars never had and never will have any power over any creature, or any ability to bestow or withhold anything. We must direct our devotion to the One Who has created all things and the Bestower of all favours on His servants.

‘...You are also forbidden ‘*an tastaqsimu* (to allot shares) (of meat) by *al-azlam* (drawing marked arrows)...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3). The Arabic word *tastaqsimu* means ‘to determine one’s fate/share’. At that time, distributing shares of a slaughtered animal was a troublesome job. As a result, whoever did it sought to release himself from the responsibility by claiming that ‘*al-azlam*

commanded him'. These were wooden arrows with either 'My lord commands me to do it' or 'My lord forbids me to do it' written on them, but some arrows had nothing written on them. If an idolater wanted to travel, he would go to the custodian of the *Ka'ba* or a soothsayer, and either of the latter would take the arrows out of a bag and then move them around. The idolater would choose an arrow; if it said, 'My lord commands me to do it', he would travel for the purpose he wanted, and if there was nothing written on the arrow he would return it and choose another. If the chosen arrow said, 'My lord forbids me to do it', he would not travel.

This poses many questions, 'Who is the lord who commanded or forbade them? Did they mean Allah, the True Lord, or the false gods they worshipped? And if this is the case, then which one of them commanded or forbade them? If they meant Allah, then who told them that He commanded such-and-such a journey or forbade it?' That was nothing but telling lies about Allah regarding things of which no knowledge had been revealed to them. On the other hand, if they meant to refer to the false gods they worshipped, then in such a case the creed and the practice were both totally false at the very roots. Drawing arrows was also employed for making decisions about whether to marry or not. The verse we are dealing with particularly mentions drawing arrows for distributing shares of meat.

In the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, pagans had ten arrows, each of which had a name written on it. The arrow picked up by each person determined his share of the flesh of a slaughtered animal based on that name. The arrow named *al-fadh* corresponded to a single share. The one with *at-taw'am* written on it gave the one who drew it two shares. The one called *ar-raqib* meant that three shares will be given. The one with *al-hels* allotted four shares for whoever picked it. The arrow named *an-nafer* gave five shares. The one with the name *al-musbel* corresponded to six shares and *al-mu'alla* to seven shares. The remaining three arrows were: *al-manih*, *as-safih* and *al-waghd*. A slaughtered animal was divided into twenty-eight portions which were distributed among those who drew one of the first seven of the aforementioned arrows. As for the three arrows mentioned at the end, those who drew them received no share and had to pay for the slaughtered animal.

So, Allah commands us: ‘...You are also forbidden’ *an tastaqsimu* (to allot shares) (of meat) by *al-azlam* (drawing marked arrows)...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3). Distributing shares by drawing marked arrows is forbidden and is a kind of gambling. The outcome results in allotting undeserved shares to some, while wronging others. This is different from casting lots to make random selections; in the latter case, lots are cast to make an unbiased decision where no personal desire or caprice interferes.

Suppose two people owned a house and wanted to share it equally. They divided it into two equal shares, wrote their names on pieces of paper, and let a young child draw one of the two pieces of paper out of a jar. This way, each received a share of the house equal to that of the other based on the lot drawn for him.

Consider this example as well. If a man has more than one wife, he has to cast lots to decide who of them will accompany him on a journey. The purpose of casting lots in this case is to ensure that none of the wives became angry for not being chosen. Since desire of the husband plays no part in making the decision, he is not to blame for whoever of his wife is not chosen for his company in the journey.

This reminds me of Prophet Muhammad’s arrival at Medina. We have an excellent example in him to follow *peace and blessings be upon him*. When he reached Medina, he did not want to offend any of *Al-Ansar* (the Helpers: Medinan Muslims), knowing that each of them was hoping that he would choose to stay in his house. Everyone tried to take hold of the reins of the Prophet’s she-camel to make it stop before his house, but the Prophet said to them, ‘Let her go her way, for she is commanded by Allah (regarding where to stop).’⁽¹⁾

As the choice depended on where the she-camel stopped, there was no room for anyone to say or feel that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* favoured one person over another. The decision was in the Hand of Him Who cannot be contradicted by anyone.

(1) Cited by Ibn Hisham in his *As-Sira An-Nabawiyyah*, Ibn Kathir in his *Al-Bidayah wa An-Nihayah*, and Ibn Sa’d in *At-Tabaqat Al-Kubrah*

It is clear that casting lots in such cases is not any form of gambling, which Islam forbids. Allah has also prescribed for us *istikharah* (a prayer observed to ask Allah for guidance) when we want to make a decision regarding any matter. As for gambling in order to allot shares or determine future actions, this is forbidden by the Sacred Law of Allah because it is improper and unfair.

After stating those unlawful practices and the food which is forbidden to eat, He says that whoever commits any of these has thus done ‘...*fisq* (a heinous practice)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). The word *fisq* means ‘refraining from obedience’. We have previously pointed out that the Quran sometimes uses tangible things to explain abstract notions. We perceive physical things through the senses, and then from such perceptions we infer and comprehend intellectual matters.

The basic sense of the word *fisq* indicates a ripened date breaking free from its skin. When the fresh date softens, it shrinks inside the skin and then breaks out of it. This is the process originally described as *fisq* (coming out/breaking free). When a date leaves its skin, flies swarm around it and dust taints it. Consequently, it becomes unfit for a human being to eat. Likewise, the Law ordained by Allah is a form of protection for people from corruption, and whoever discards it or forsakes it will become a vulnerable prey to evil insinuations and misguidance; hence the correlation between these two denotations of the word *fisq*.

The Law Allah has ordained constitutes religion. It establishes the creed pertaining to divinity and monotheism, the divine Revelations imparted to people through Allah’s Messenger–Prophet Muhammad–and the rulings regulating society, with regards to acts of worship, transactions, relationships, and all aspects of life. All these rulings built the general structure of Islam in two stages: the Meccan stage when the purpose of the revealed verses were to focus on the essence of faith, monotheism, prophethood and divine Revelation, and the Medinan stage when the verses of the Quran started to focus on and outline the rulings regulating life.

By sending down the Book–the Noble Quran–that teaches people the creed and rulings of Islam, the religion was completed, and this is why Allah says: ‘...this day the disbelievers have lost all hope that you will give up your religion...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). The disbelievers had some hope that the Muslims

would distort or abandon their religion. People of the Book wished the Muslims would do to the Quran what they had done to their own books, forgetting, abandoning and falsifying them, as Allah tells us about them: '...They have forgotten some of what they were told to remember...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13).

Their hopes, however, were all destroyed. The Companions learnt every verse of the Quran by heart and wrote it down directly after hearing it from Prophet Muhammad. The previous scriptures were not recorded until three or four centuries after they were revealed. With the Quran, the case was completely different: the verses were immediately recorded and arranged as Prophet Muhammad ordered his Companions.

The people of the Book did not only forget much of what they had been told to remember, but they also distorted much and concealed much: 'As for those who conceal the Scripture that Allah has sent down and sell it for a small price, they only fill their bellies with Fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 174).

Allah sent down certain verses that abrogated other verses which had been sent down before them. Prophet Muhammad could have been reluctant to tell people that a ruling he had told them before had been changed by Allah. Allah knew best what suited the believers at every stage following the advent of His Message, and can anyone deny Him the right to change anything He wills? This was proof that Prophet Muhammad was completely honest in delivering all that Allah had revealed to Him. This, too, stripped the disbelievers of every hope that Islam may ever be forgotten, distorted, or concealed by its adherents.

Some of the disbelievers of Quraysh imagined that the Quran would meet the same destiny as the Torah; for despite the fact that the Jews had a remainder of the Truth in the Torah, they did not follow it. They wished Muslims would likewise ignore what had been revealed to them in the Quran, but Muslims were very steadfast and Allah reassured them: '...This day the disbelievers have lost all hope that you will give up your religion...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3).

The word 'this day' refers to the time which has passed as well as to the future. The Quran is a timeless Message that will continue to be recited and will continue to be evidence for the Truth. The words 'this day' will continue to refer to every time when it is recited until Allah brings time to an end. Allah has completed the religion of Islam and willed it to be the religion of

His servants. He has sent down the Quran and has undertaken to preserve it against distortions or concealment ever since it was revealed over fourteen centuries, and He will continue to do so until the end of time. All this deepens and confirms the disbelievers' despair that the Quran would ever be forgotten or concealed. Prophet Muhammad delivered every word. Even when Allah reproached him, he did not conceal anything and recited every verse to His Companions, who wrote and memorized what they had heard from him. For example, on one occasion the hearts of the Muslims inclined to acquitting a Muslim who had committed theft and condemning an innocent Jew for the crime; hence Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad: 'We have sent down the Scripture to you (Prophet) with the truth so that you can judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray their trust'⁽¹⁾ (*an-Nisa'*: 105).

In this verse, there is a command to Prophet Muhammad to judge justly, even if that judgement was against a Muslim. It also implies a call for repentance and imploring forgiveness for inclining to judge in favour of the guilty Muslim against the innocent Jew. Such is the tolerance of Islam!

People of the Book distorted the truth that was stated in their books by replacing it with other than the words of Allah and alleging they were revealed by Him. This was their crime, and they wished Muslims would do the same, but they lost all hope when they saw that the Muslims did not stray into such deviations as the adherents of the previous Books had.

'...This day the disbelievers have lost all hope that you will give up your religion...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). They hoped Islam would be defeated, but they saw it was triumphant at the hands of the believers. They wanted to extinguish Allah's Light with their mouths, but Allah lets His light be completed even though the disbelievers may hate it.

After thus reassuring Muslims, Allah tells them: '...Do not fear them, but fear Me...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). Allah has decreed that nothing will allow the enemies of Islam to demean or destroy Islam. Consequently, there is no reason for Muslims

(1) 'A man from Medina stole a suit of armour and accused a Jew of stealing it. He brought his family to ask Prophet Muhammad to rule against the Jew and he was about to do this when these verses were revealed (Razi)', Abdel Haleem, *The Quran, A New Translation*.

to fear their enemies so long as they fear Allah and are mindful of their duty to Him. Allah has promised to grant victory to the believers if they remain steadfast in faith and fear none but Him.

Being Muslims, however, is not a guarantee that victory will be their share; Allah does not change the state of a people until they first change what is within themselves. Muslims receive victory only when they abide by the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* (teachings) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When they act at variance with this guidance, Allah will not help them, just as He caused the believers to be defeated at the Battle of Uhud by the idolaters because they disobeyed the commands of Prophet Muhammad. It did not avail them at all that they were Muslims as long as they did not comply with what Islam enjoined on them. To continue, they (the disbelievers) are not enemies that should be feared; a believer should fear none but Allah. It is only Him we should be mindful of and only His guidance to which should be adhered. He has sown despair in the hearts of your enemies, and as a result they have lost all hope that you, the Muslims, will forget what you have been guided to or attempt to distort or conceal it. Allah has guarded His religion against the like of this; the fault its adherents may commit only entails straying from its Straight Path by disobeying or neglecting what Islam prescribes.

‘...This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen for you Islam (total devotion to Allah) as your religion. But if any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food, with no intention of doing wrong, then Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3). When we say that a thing is perfect, it means all its parts are in the correct place and each part does what it is supposed to do. Allah has bestowed His blessings fully on us by sending down to us the perfect religion that fits all times, places, and conditions of life, and prescribes rulings regulating every aspect of life: spiritual, social, economic, etc.

Allah has willed that Islam should be the religion of His servants until the end of time. Therefore, claiming that Islam is no longer fit to be applied here or now is a claim that Allah needs to be corrected! However Allah says: ‘...I have perfected your religion...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3), that is, nothing is defective in it, and He says ‘...I have...completed My blessing...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 3), that is,

nothing is missing. To think that Islam was appropriate only for the past implies a belief that there are matters that escaped the Knowledge of Allah, and hence His ordinance does not include or suit every time or place. Allah says: ‘...I have...chosen for you Islam as your religion...’, so anyone who questions or defies this actually gives preference to his own choice above that of his Lord and Creator.

Knowledge of the Creator encompasses all His creatures. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that people are subject to vicissitudes and that situations may arise which make it difficult or impossible for some to adhere strictly to every ruling. Consequently, He does not leave them to invent their own dispensations, but rather, He makes dispensations for them. No one, therefore, can give an excuse by saying ‘We are unable to act on such-and-such ruling’, for when Allah knows there is a thing that His servants may not be able to do, He already ordains an alternative lenient ruling to make things easier for them. As long as we are subject to variations in circumstances that take one from strength to weakness, from wealth to poverty, or from dignity and domination to humiliation, Allah *the Exalted* has allowed for the fact that some of those who believe in His religion may be prevented by causes out of their control from adhering to any of His commands because of illness or dire necessity; He says: ‘...But if any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food, with no intention of doing wrong, then Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3).

Sustenance is essential to preserve life. Consequently, in case of severe hunger which is likely to cause death, Allah allows a person to eat the flesh of a dead animal or the like of what is normally prohibited—as long as his life depends on it. No one can say, for example, ‘I am driven by necessity to take a usurious loan from a bank because I want to trade with a large capital of a hundred thousand and I have only one thousand’! Many people believe this is what ‘necessity’ means. No, you must invest only the one thousand you possess, and there is no necessity in this case to deal with usury. ‘Necessity’ means a case where one’s life, or the lives of those under his care or guardianship, is at stake. Islam permits a person who has no money at all to take a usurious loan—if he cannot find anyone to give him a fair loan—to buy medicine, food or something he disparately needs to save his life or that of his dependants. In

this case, the usurious creditor is the one who bears the sin of the transaction, not the debtor because he acted in a case of necessity.

The verse we are dealing with refers to a person driven by extreme need to eat what is otherwise unlawful while he hates having to do it, not a person who enjoys doing a sin and indulges himself in it. It is about resorting to unlawful food after all other means have failed and consuming of it only according to the extent of one's need. Scholars of jurisprudence even say that a man in such a situation—lost in a desert, for example—must eat only as much carrion or the like as is necessary to keep himself alive, not until he is full, as long as he cannot find anything else to sustain himself.

A person may resort to this choice only when driven by dire necessity, not by any inclination towards sin. It follows that he must only take as much as is essentially needed to preserve his life. To be in dire necessity means to grow bereft of all means. Allah has created means and causes, dispersed them in the world and commanded them to respond to whoever does the necessary effort to make use of them, be they a believer or a disbeliever. Whoever ploughs a land, sows seeds in it and irrigates it will receive its yield, and a clever trader will make money and prosper, whether he is a believer or not.

'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...' (*ash-Shura*: 20).

People employ all the possible means in order to achieve the outcomes expected of them. Desperate need or dire necessity is when a person has no access to any means; this is why Allah says: 'Who is it that answers *al-mudtarr* (the distressed) when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering?' (*an-Naml*: 62). The word *mudtarr* means someone who is bereft of all possible means, i.e. there is nothing he can do to fulfil his need. Someone might say, 'I pray to Allah, but He does not answer my prayers'. Perhaps you are not in a real need. Maybe you ask Him to give you a palace to live in instead of your apartment, a luxury car instead of the ordinary one you have. Such are not cases of extreme necessity.

Ponder this example—which is only for clarification, for Allah is far Exalted above any comparison. A foreman seeing one of his workers carrying

a large box that is too heavy for him would rise and help the worker with that box. Such is the kind of help to be expected of one another in times of need. Likewise, Allah assists those who do their best. As for those who do not make use of the means Allah grants them and then implore His help, they are not likely to receive it. So long as Allah has made the means available to you, you have to employ them and work while praying to Allah for assistance. Only when you are short of the possible means and are therefore unable to take any action will you be excused. When this is the case, invoke Him and He will relieve your distress and compensate you for your want of means and causes.

After making this dispensation, Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...But if any of you is forced by hunger to eat forbidden food, with no intention of doing wrong, then Allah is most Forgiving and Merciful' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). Allah has made this dispensation for us, but why does He end the verse with a statement confirming His Forgiveness and Mercy? Allah bestows His Forgiveness on His servants in two ways: either by excusing His servant from being punished for a sin, or by guarding him against committing a sin. This explains to us why Allah says to Prophet Muhammad: 'so that Allah may forgive you your past and future sins...' (*al-Fath*: 2). Such is the kind of Forgiveness Allah bestows on His servant to prevent him from committing the sin in the first place. In the following verse, Allah says:

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا أُحِلَّ لَهُمْ قُلْ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَمَا عَلَّمْتُم مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِينَ تُعَلِّمُونَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللَّهُ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا أَمْسَكَنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَانْقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾

They ask you, Prophet, what is lawful for them. Say, 'All good things are lawful for you.' [This includes] what you have taught your birds and beasts of prey to catch, teaching them as God has taught you, so eat what they catch for you, but first pronounce God's name over it. Be mindful of God: He is swift to take account [4] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 4)

After Allah has made clear what He has made lawful and unlawful, we find that lawful things are unlimited, for when Allah mentions ten things that are unlawful, these ten things, needless to say, do not constitute everything in existence. When Allah *Glorified is He* created Adam *peace be upon him* and made

him procreate to fulfil his role as a vicegerent on earth, He placed within this earth enough sustenance to preserve the life of humankind.

Allah has made preservation of human life in two ways: protection of an individual's life and preservation of mankind as a whole. The former is fulfilled through the basic needs of life: air, water and food, and the latter through marriage and procreation. For these two essential goals to be achieved, certain factors must exist to serve humankind and provide them with power.

Accordingly, Allah Almighty reassures us that what we need for life to continue is already guaranteed by Him: 'Say, "How can you disregard the One Who created the earth in two Days? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds!" He placed solid mountains on it, bestowed abundant blessing in it, measured out all its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four Days. Then He turned to the sky, which was smoke—and He said to it and the earth, "Come into being, willingly or not," and they said, "We come willingly"' (*Fussilat*: 9-11).

Allah informs us that He has created on the earth its means of subsistence and made them subservient to humankind for this life to continue. Whoever tries to count the blessings with which Allah has favoured humankind, he would find they are too many to comprehend. Since the dawn of human history, no one has ever tried to count the blessings Allah has created on earth. People have always known that the favours of Allah are beyond calculation. Allah says: '...If you tried to count the blessings of Allah, you could never calculate them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34).

This is why Allah specifies in the Noble Quran the things that are unlawful for humankind, since the lawful things are countless. In the preceding verse, He tells us about ten unlawful things to bear in mind and avoid. (Are they only ten? Yes, just this small number of things compared to the endless number of His blessings. It is also worthy of notice that Allah says in one verse: '...If you tried to count the blessings of Allah, you could never calculate them: man is truly unjust and ungrateful' (*Ibrahim*: 34). And in another verse, He says: 'If you tried to count the blessings of Allah, you could never calculate them: He is truly Most Forgiving and Most Merciful' (*an-Nahl*: 18).

Some may think we have before us a case of redundancy, but let us examine the two verses to see if this is true. We have the Giver of blessings, the recipients

and the blessings themselves. As for the blessings, they are countless. As for the Giver of blessings, He is Forgiving and Merciful, and as for the recipients of blessings, they are unjust and ungrateful. Why does Allah tell us these truths in the Quran?

If Allah treated us in the way we deserve for our ingratitude and wrongdoing, He would withhold His blessings from us, but He continuously bestows His favours on us, all due to His Mercy and Grace. Each of these two verses conveys an important truth; Allah is Forgiving and Merciful, and He showers His countless blessings on humankind even though they are ungrateful and sinful. Thus, when one commits a sin, he should not despair; your Lord is always He Who is Forgiving and Merciful, irrespective of who you are. Do not despair, but keep imploring your Lord's Pardon and blessings despite your sins.

Allah has created the means of sustenance on earth and created with them the factors that make them fit for the service of humankind. For example, we sift wheat grains to make flour and bake bread. For wheat to grow, other factors are required: regular irrigation, ploughing, etc. Allah has created this for us and guaranteed for us our means of sustenance. He is our Lord and Provider and we must, therefore, obey His ordinance. He has told us what is lawful and what is unlawful for us; not everything He has created is lawful for us. There are things on earth which have been made to perform other functions but are not fit to be consumed by human beings. Some may wonder, 'Since Allah has created these things, why does He forbid them?'

Consider this example. Suppose an inventor made a machine to run on diesel but we used petrol instead, what would happen to it? It would break down. Allah has created humankind, so should we not believe Him when He tells us what is most suitable for us? Allah knows best what is good for our well being, and hence we should abide by what He commands; otherwise, life will become ruined. When electric wires are connected in the right manner, they give us light and power. When they are not, power will be cut off or a fire may even be caused.

What I want to say by these examples is that obedience to the Law set by Allah is the only way to set life right. In the realm of relationships, Allah has prescribed marriage for the preservation of humankind. If men and women

seek any form of relationship other than lawful marriage, the world will be immersed in corruption.

A wedding party is a pleasant scene. The bride's father is seen happily smiling to everyone as he celebrates the unique occasion of his daughter's marriage to her suitor. He welcomes everyone attending the wedding, orders food and desserts to be served to them, and his heart is full of pride and elation on the pleasant occasion. Suppose, on the contrary, the same young man, instead of proposing to her by lawful means, tried to sneak into the house to see the daughter; how would her father feel about that? He would be enraged and would kill that intruder if he could! Such is the great difference between seeking lawful means and daring to slide into unlawful ones. As the saying goes, 'When lawful ways are sought, there will be no room for jealousy (on the part of the woman's family).'

What takes the father from protective jealousy to joyful happiness? It is abidance by the Law of Allah. A daughter's marriage is a source of happiness and satisfaction to both her parents, whereas it enrages them if a stranger seeks to have her by any other means. Consequently, no one should question why Allah has made things lawful or unlawful.

Allah says in reply to the question that the believers asked Prophet Muhammad: 'They ask you, Prophet, what is lawful for them. Say, "All good things are lawful for you."...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4) However, 'all good things are lawful' does not mean it is for us to decide whether a thing is good and useful, and therefore lawful. Rather, we should know that whatever is lawful is therefore good and useful, not vice versa. The Creator of all things is the One Who best knows what is good and what is harmful. Our knowledge cannot encompass all the good or harm hidden in everything. Harmful things may appear good to us, and judging whether things are useful or otherwise cannot be based merely on how we feel about consuming or practicing them, or else drugs and alcohol would be considered good things. A thing may appear good, but we may not know what harm or evil lies in it. Since this is the case, we should listen to the Creator of the heavens and earth when He tells us what to enjoy and what to avoid of the things He has created in the world. Know that whatever Allah makes lawful is good and whatever He forbids is for our

own good. He has created everything in due measure and His Knowledge encompasses all things. He is the All-Wise.

A doctor prescribes medication and the patient just follows his instructions. He tells a diabetic to reduce starchy and sugary foods to a minimum, and the patient listens without questioning anything. We listen to doctors as we know they are experts. We trust them, even though they are subject to error like any human being. Should we not, then, be humble before our Creator? Sometimes we have the audacity to question why Allah has made such-and-such a thing unlawful to us. Allah is our Trusted Lord; whatever He commands is wise and it is our duty to comply. Some try to avoid performing some of their duties to Allah by twisting the meaning of His words: ‘Allah does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear...’ (*al-Baqara*: 286).

One may say that his job takes up so much of his time that he has no time left to observe *salat* (the Daily Prayers). As a result, he abandons this essential worship on the pretext that Allah does not burden anyone with more than he can bear! We say, ‘Are you able to ascertain your capability and assess your moral responsibility based on your own evaluation?’ No. So long as Allah has made *salat* mandatory, then He knows every person is capable of complying. This is the meaning of the aforementioned verse. Since Allah has enjoined something on His servants, then we all have the capacity to perform it, for He does not burden a soul with more than what it can bear. To continue, Allah says: ‘They ask you, Prophet, what is lawful for them. Say, “All good things are lawful for you.”...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 4) Thus, we understand that ‘all good things’ mean whatever Allah has made lawful. Perhaps the believers meant to ask Prophet Muhammad about a particular thing, whether it is lawful or not, but Allah has given this answer to be appropriate for any similar question about what is lawful and what is unlawful.

Then comes the question of hunting with dogs. This was something well known to Arabs during the pre-Islamic era of ignorance, and they used to also hunt with birds of prey. In this respect, Allah says: ‘...Say, “All good things are lawful for you.” (This includes) prey of your hunting birds and beasts you have taught to catch...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). This is the general ruling and it is explicated afterwards.

The verses of the Quran were sent down to Prophet Muhammad on particular occasions to teach the Companions and the entire community of Muslims about the rulings of their religion. Such was the best way for them to comprehend the Message and pass it down to the following generations. Allah revealed this verse to the Prophet when Companion Adi ibn Hatem *may Allah be pleased with him* asked about hunting with dogs and birds. Let us examine the verse. Allah says: '...Say, "All good things are lawful for you." (This includes) prey of *al-jawarih* (your hunting birds and beasts) you have taught to catch' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). Allah makes a general statement that all good things are lawful for us, and then He highlights that what we train animals and birds to hunt is among the good lawful things. The word *jawarih* is the plural of *jarah*, which literally means 'gainer': someone or something that gains. This is why we also use this word to refer to parts of the body, such as hands, eyes, ears, nose, etc. because we gain perception through them: we acquire vision through the eyes, hearing through the ears, smell through the nose and we feel things by touching them with the skin. Also, Allah says: 'It is He who calls your souls back by night, knowing what you have *jarahtum* (done) by day...' (*al-An'am*: 60).

The verb *jaraha* is another derivative of the same root and it denotes 'acquire', 'gain' or 'do'. This verb also means 'to wound'. Hence, the word *jawarih* in the verse we are dealing with may either mean 'gainers/acquirers' since the trained hunting birds and beasts are a means of gaining preys through hunting, or it may denote 'wounding' since when these animals hunt preys, they injure them in order to catch them; both of these meanings are sound and appropriate.

Dogs are mainly used for hunting, and leopards, cheetahs or hawks may be used as well. Allah says: '...(This includes) prey of your hunting birds and beasts you have taught to catch, teaching them as Allah has taught you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). That is, it is lawful for us to eat the catches we gain by the effort we expend in training these animals to hunt. One does not simply release the dog or the hawk to hunt, but rather, he first must train the animal to do this.

A monkey can be trained to perform amazing tricks. A circus performer can train a huge elephant to stand on all fours on a platform whose diameter does not exceed one metre. All this is possible because of the training imparted to them by human beings whom Allah has endowed with this skill and intelligence.

A person can train an animal to do various tricks and tasks, but that animal cannot train its own offspring to do the same tricks. This is a difference between humankind and animals: a human child learns and acquires skills from his parent, but animal training can only be given to the individual animal, which cannot pass on its acquired skills to other animals of its kind or to its offspring.

The original Arabic verse makes a particular mention of the word *mukallibin* (plural), which is a person who trains dogs to hunt. Some say that *mukalleib* (singular) means a dog breeder; however, a man may breed dogs but not train them to do any special skills. Hence, the word means someone who trains dogs professionally. He is like a stableman who trains horses, since a horse must be trained before it can be ridden or used to pull coaches. Allah mentions dog trainers in particular since hunting with dogs is more common, perhaps because some species are less fierce and easier to tame compared to other beasts of prey. A trained dog is tempted when its attention is called to a target prey. It obeys its master when he sends it to catch the animal, stops and turn backs when he calls it, and brings the quarry to its master unspoiled, without eating any of it. If a dog eats part of the quarry, then it is not well trained yet; in such a case it has caught it for itself, not for its master. This is why Allah defines the activity of hunting by saying about the hunting animals: ‘...so eat what they catch for you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 4).

Part of the process of hunting is also connected with faith: it involves mentioning the Name of Allah over the quarry: ‘...but first pronounce Allah’s name over it...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). This is what makes the hunted animal lawful to eat, and also makes it not belong to the category of ‘...any animal over which any name other than Allah’s has been invoked...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). If a dog attacks the quarry and kills it, the quarry is lawful to eat as long as the dog’s master said, ‘In the Name of Allah, Allah is the Greatest’ before he unleashed the dog against the prey. If he does not mention Allah’s Name at this point but the hunted animal is still alive, he must slaughter it and mention Allah’s Name over it. However, if it dies before he can do this, it is unlawful for him to eat it. The same applies when one hunts with a gun: the hunter has to mention the Name of Allah before he fires the bullet, and only then may he eat the hunted prey.

Mentioning the Name of Allah is a prerequisite for making the hunted animal permissible to eat. It is a form of acknowledgement of the favour of Him Who has made that animal subservient to our will. It is ingratitude to enjoy a blessing without acknowledging the favour of Him Who has bestowed it.⁽¹⁾

Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...And be mindful of Allah: He is swift to take account' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). A believer must be mindful of Allah by obeying His commands sincerely and thoroughly because He is swift in reckoning, in many ways. However long your worldly life may last, it will inevitably end indicating that it is but a short life. No one knows when death will come to him; it may be sooner than one expects. As long as this is the case, every believer must bear in mind what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'When one of you dies, this is his day of reckoning.'⁽²⁾ This is one way to interpret the verse '...He is swift to take account' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4). Death is also like sleep; no one can tell how many hours he has slept unless he is told the time. The Quran tells us that the People of the Cave asked one another: 'In time We woke them, and they began to question one another. One of them asked, "How long have you been here?" and (some) answered, "A day or part of a day", but then (others) said, "Your Lord knows best how long you have been here..."' (*al-Kahf*: 19). They had no idea they had slept for three hundred and nine years. Likewise, when we are resurrected, no one will have an idea how long he had been dead. Since no one feels the passage of time after death, when Judgment Day comes, we will feel we had been dead for but a little time. Another way to interpret: '...He is swift to take account' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4) is that Allah also recompenses His servants for their deeds in this worldly life before the reckoning in the Hereafter. When we commit sins, Allah may punish us in this life through afflictions: illness, gloom, etc. Thus, the verse may refer to reckoning in this worldly life.

(1) Some scholars of jurisprudence say it is permissible to eat the slaughtered or hunted animal over which the Name of Allah was not mentioned on condition that we mention His Name before we eat it, as long as no name other than Allah's was mentioned on slaughtering or hunting it.

(2) Narrated by Ibn Abu Ad-Dunya in *Al-Mawt*, *Al-Hindi* in *Kanzul-'Ummal* and *Az-Zubaydi* in *It-haf As-Sada Al-Muttaqin*

It may also refer to the reckoning in the Afterlife. Allah is swift in reckoning in that He can reckon all mankind in the blink of an eye. When Companion ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb was asked how humankind can all be called to account at one time, he replied, ‘Just as He provides for them all at one time, He can call them all to account at one time’.

People stand up in a queue to be given sustenance! We are all provided with air to breathe, food to eat, and means to work and seek through our efforts the endless bounties and blessings Allah has created in the world; however, Allah Almighty is not subject to the boundaries of time. We need time to perform actions since our abilities are limited; but He is *the Almighty* and All-Powerful Who, when He wills anything, only says to it, ‘Be’, and it is.

When we move a medium-sized stone from its place, this requires a strong man to use only part of his strength, but for a little child, it takes a long time; so what should we think about the Creator of man and the universe, the One Who has Absolute and Ultimate Power? Indeed, the laws of time do not apply to Him *Glorified is He*. Thus He *the Almighty* is swift in reckoning, in the broadest sense of the word. He *Glorified is He* and then says:

أَلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبَاتُ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حِلٌّ لَكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَهُمْ
وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْمُحْصَنَاتُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَا
ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أَجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسْفَحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِي أَخْدَانٍ وَمَنْ
يَكْفُرْ بِالْإِيمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُ ۖ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٥﴾

Today all good things have been made lawful for you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful for you as your food is lawful for them. So are chaste, believing women as well as chaste women of the people who were given the Scripture before you, as long as you have given them their bride-gifts and married them, not taking them as lovers or secret mistresses. The deeds of anyone who rejects faith will come to nothing, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers [5] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 5)

Allah *the Almighty* begins this verse by repeating what He says before in the previous verse, that is: ‘All the good things of life have been lawful

to you (O mankind!)'. In fact, He *the Almighty* does this in order to direct the attention of people to the fact that one may only deem something to be good if it has been made lawful by Him *the Almighty*.

After He *Glorified is He* sheds light on the way how lawful foods are to be procured and how hunting is to be conducted, we come now to another important point which is that He *the Almighty* says: '...The food of the people of the Book is lawful for you...', but there is a very important question to be asked in this respect, that is, does this saying of Allah really mean that all the food of the people of the Book is lawful for us, even if this food contains something unlawful like pork?! The answer is definitely 'No'. In fact, this verse makes it lawful for Muslims to eat only the lawful food of the people of the Book which is of the same kind as that which Allah has made lawful for them, i.e. Muslims. In this regard, it is important to know that it is not right for one to disdain from eating such a food of the people of the Book because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to establish connections between the followers of the heavenly revealed religions, irrespective of the fact that they may have different conceptions about Him *the Almighty*. In other words, He *the Almighty* wants them, i.e. followers of the heavenly revealed religions, to interact with each other in such a way which reflects their belief. As a result, you (O Muslims!) are by no means supposed to shun the people of the Book; rather, you are allowed to eat their food if it belongs to the same kind of lawful food Islam allows you to consume. In this vein, it is not right for you to refuse to give any of the people of the Book your food because Allah *the Almighty* wants to make amity among the followers of the heavenly revealed religions who believe in Him *the Almighty* even if, as we said before, they have different conceptions about Him *Glorified is He*.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* gives us a striking example to illustrate this point for us. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to people, Islam was faced and challenged by two Empires; one of them was atheistic as they worshipped fire and did not believe in Allah, namely the Persian Empire; while the second was the Roman Empire which, contrary to the first, believed in Him *the Almighty*. These two Empires represented the only two powers in the world, east and west, at that time. So, when Prophet

Muhammad came to guide people to the Way of Allah, his heart and the hearts of the believers inclined to the Empire that believed in Allah and the heavenly revealed religion, and not to those atheists who worshipped fire.

We can fully realise the greatness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as he preferred for those who believed in Allah, i.e. the Romans, to be granted victory over those who did not, i.e. the Persians, even though the former did not believe in him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Consequently, when the war broke out between the Persians and the Byzantines and the first victory went to the Persians, the sympathies of Prophet Muhammad and the believers were with the Byzantines because they were closer to the new religion. Even though they did not believe in him *peace and blessings be upon him*, they believed in Allah, their heavenly revealed religion and the Day of Resurrection. As such, it is now clear to us that Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that Muslims must incline to those who have some kind of faith, even if only a little. This incident is manifestly clear in the chapter of *ar-Rum* in which Allah *the Almighty* says that the believers, i.e. Prophet Muhammad and his followers, will rejoice over the succour Allah *the Almighty* grants to the Byzantines over the Persians (*ar-Rum*: 1-5).

These aforementioned verses of *ar-Rum* begin by recounting news on the Byzantines' defeat, and they then tell us about a prophecy made by Allah *the Almighty* that they, i.e. the Byzantines would be victorious within a few years. They furthermore state clearly that on that particular day when the Byzantines gain victory over the Persians, the believers will rejoice in Allah's Succour. If we reflect carefully on the position of the Muslims regarding that war between these two most advanced powers at that time, we will realise that the sympathy of the Muslims was with the Romans to the extent that they grieved over their defeat. At that point, Allah *the Almighty* announces the sure news that the Byzantines would be victorious over the Persians.

Can anyone, by any means, predict the final outcome of a battle between two great powers? As a matter of fact, such a prediction could not be confirmed within just a single day, even if the one who made it knew that reinforcements were on their way to aid and support the side which would gain victory according to his/her expectation. As for the prediction made regarding the

victory of the Byzantines, these verses of *ar-Rum* clearly say that it will be fulfilled within a few years. Who can predict the outcome of a battle which will take place after the passing of several years?! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself could not possibly have dared to make this prediction, especially if we take into account the fact that he did not know how well each side was equipped or what the size of their forces was. All of this tells us undoubtedly that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who made and confirmed this prediction about the defeat of the Persians at the hands of the Romans.

It goes without saying that this prediction in question will actually take place because it was recorded in the Quran whose recitation is an act of worship. That is why when Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* heard this verse, he said, 'I lay a wager that the Byzantines shall be victorious in three years', yet Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told him to extend the period mentioned in the wager because Allah *the Almighty* says that they will be victorious within a few years. In fact, he *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered Abu-Bakr to do so because the word *Bida'* (few) in Arabic refers to the period of time from three to nine years. As a result, Abu-Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* firmly believing in what Prophet Muhammad told him, increased the wager to one hundred she-camels and the time limit to nine years. Actually, this clearly means that the believers were completely certain of the fulfilment of this divine prophecy made by Allah *Glorified is He*.

We have mentioned the interpretation of these verses here to show that the sympathies of Prophet Muhammad were with those who believed in a heavenly revealed Scripture and in a Messenger. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* makes lawful for us the food of the people of the Book in order that there will be a connection between us and those who believe Allah *the Almighty*, and in a heavenly revealed religion. This is proved by the saying of Allah: 'The food of the People of the Book is lawful for you as your food is lawful for them'.

In the same vein, Allah *Glorified is He* instructs Muslims how to deal with the people of the Book. In the chapter of *al-Mumtahana*, He *the Almighty* tells us that believers are allowed to show kindness and to behave with full equity with the people of the Book as long as they do not fight against the Muslims or drive them out of their houses. Yet, if they, i.e. the people of the Book, do

any of this, Muslims are then not allowed to deal with them or even show them kindness (*al-Mumtahana*: 8-9). As such, Allah *the Almighty* wants us to establish balanced relationships with non-Muslims in our daily life. Furthermore, we, Muslims, should not deal with the atheistic polytheist in the same way we deal with those who believe in Allah even if these believers in Allah deny the Message of Prophet Muhammad. In other words, He *Glorified is He* wants a connection to be established between Muslims and the people of the Book. Thus, Muslims are allowed to eat the lawful food of the people of the Book as long as it is judged lawful in Islam. In this respect, Muslims must be fully aware of the fact that some of the food of the people of the Book contains alcohol, and that they must refrain from everything that is forbidden in Islam; they, i.e. Muslims, are not allowed to drink alcohol or eat pork.

We know for certain that food is a means for preserving and maintaining life. Having shed light on the permissibility of eating the lawful food of the people of the Book as long as it is judged lawful in Islam, He *Glorified is He* directs our attention to another lawful act that we are allowed to do with the people of the Book, that is, marrying their women. He *the Almighty* says: 'Moreover (lawful for you in matrimony) are chaste, believing women as well as chaste women of the people who were given the Scripture before you, as long as you have given them their bridal gifts and married them, not taking them as lovers or secret mistresses' (*al-Ma'ida*: 5).

The word *Muhsana* (translated here as 'chaste') have two other meanings: it may refer to a free woman, i.e. not slave-women, or it may refer to 'a woman who is married.' The Arabic word *Ihsan* means 'protecting oneself from unlawful relationships'. It is historically recorded that free women shunned committing unlawful relationships to the effect that it is said that prostitution was only committed by slave-women because they had no father and no brother to protect them. In addition, people believed that they, i.e. slave-women, were not as honourable as free women. Hence, when *Hind bint 'Utbah*, wife of *Abu Sufyan*, heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* telling people about the impermissibility of adultery, she said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, would free women commit adultery?!' This statement of *Hind* tells us clearly that free women in the pre-Islamic period did not commit

adultery because they were able to restrain themselves from committing such a crime, unlike others.

The word *Muhsana*, as we previously explained, also refers to 'a woman who is married'. It is of great importance here to know that Allah *the Almighty* declares the free, chaste women from among the believers and their counterparts from among the women of the people of the Book to be on equal footing with each other with regards to marriage to Muslim men. If a chaste Muslim man wants to marry any of these free, chaste women, be they Muslim or from the people of the Book, he is obliged to pay the dowry for her. Some scholars even opine that when one wants to marry a Muslim woman, it is sufficient for the husband to specify the dowry for the wife, that is, he does not have to pay it at the time of the marriage due to the close connections between the followers of the one religion, but the case is different when one wants to marry a woman from the people of the Book. In this regard, Islam sets conditions that the Muslim man must specify the dowry and have a witness present when it is given. He is not allowed to betray the trust at all. This is actually the true meaning to be understood from the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...give them their dowers....'

Allah *the Almighty* then tells Muslim men that they are not allowed to marry any but chaste women from the people of the Book; those who are not taken as mistresses.

The word *Safh* literally means ('pouring' or 'passion'); the prostitute woman is the one who allows any man to have sex with her. As for the word *Khadn* or (secret love-companion), it means a girlfriend or lover to whom one is not married, and it can be used to refer to a man as well as a woman. Furthermore, Muslims must pay attention to the ruling that they are not allowed to engage in a 'temporary marriage'; rather, when one decides to marry, his intention should be to remain married forever, and not only to remain married long enough to take his pleasure.

Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying: 'The deeds of anyone who rejects faith will come to nothing, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers'. This is because the believer fully realises that the essence of faith is to accept the Laws enacted by Allah *the Almighty* and to carry them out. Thus, whoever denies any of these divine laws will be denying faith. People

must remember the fact that Allah *the Almighty* will not be afflicted with any harm if all the people turn disbelievers. This is because He *Glorified is He* is the One Who created man. In addition, He *the Almighty* possesses all Attributes of Power and Perfection.

Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* does not need any help from any being. In this regard, we must know that He *the Almighty* possesses all the Attributes of Perfection and Power—even before He has created mankind and the whole world. Thus, it becomes clear that man is the only one who enjoys all the fruits of his/her obedience, worship, and faith. However, if a man denies any of the Laws laid down by Allah *the Almighty* it is as though s/he has rejected all aspects of faith; but if man denies any aspect of faith, s/he is viewed as committing a kind of unbelief. I wish a person who does this would simply say, ‘This aspect of faith is correct, but I cannot control myself’.

In fact, concerning this particular case in which the person confesses his/her mistake, s/he would be judged a sinful believer who may seek Allah’s Forgiveness or even show repentance; two results that do not take place with disbelief. Disbelief undoubtedly causes all one’s works and deeds to be in vain. This plainly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* in this verse addresses those who obey Him in some matters but not in others. As such, He *Glorified is He* clarifies and illustrates the situation to people as follows, ‘The reward of the good deeds you do in this worldly life will be in vain and come to nothing as a result of your refusal to carry out and obey the Laws of Allah *the Almighty*’. As a matter of fact, the word *Habita* (the Arabic word translated here as ‘come to nothing’) used in this verse indicates that the reward of the act is nullified and comes to nothing. This meaning may yet be examined in the light of the fact that when grazing animals eat food which is not ripe, even if it is the same kind of food it normally eats, such as unripe clover, the bellies of the animals swell to the extent that they die. Arabs call this malady *al-Hubat*, which means the swelling of the belly of the animal when it eats something that is not good for it to the extent that its owner mistakenly thinks it has become fat when really it is dying.

The same ruling of frustrating the reward of the good deeds applies to those actions that are not in accordance with divine ordinance. Directing the

attention of the believers to the great importance of faith, He *the Almighty* starts this chapter by His saying: 'O you, who believe, be true to your covenants!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1) Actually, this clearly tells us that all the obligations under Islam have to do with the Oneness of Allah *the Almighty* and with conveying His Message. This applies to all the covenants made between the believers themselves, and even between man and himself. All of these covenants must be honoured and fulfilled. Whoever denies these obligations and ordinances, his/her works and deeds will all be in vain. In fact, the reward of man's deeds comes to nothing if s/he ends her/his life with this kind of unbelief, even if she believes s/he has done good. The reward of the deeds of such a person will surely come to nothing, just like when the animal grazes on something that is not good for it; its belly swells to the extent that the one who sees it imagines that it is full of food and healthy, yet it is really dying. This is the same for the deeds of those who reject faith; such people think they have done something good, while, in fact, their deeds are entirely wasted. This ruling under discussion has been mentioned very many times in the Quran. In the chapter of *an-Nur*, He *the Almighty* tells us that the good deeds of the disbeliever are like a mirage in the desert which the thirsty person supposes to be water, but when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing (*an-Nur*: 39).

We know that 'mirage' is an effect caused by hot air in the desert which makes the traveller think that s/he can see water, yet on reaching it, s/he finds nothing. The same is true of the deeds of those who disbelieve in Allah's Revelations; they mistakenly think their deeds will benefit them. The saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *an-Nur* that this thirsty person, upon reaching the place where he expected to find water, will find nothing but Allah *Glorified is He* points out that this man is astonished at finding Allah there, as though he never before imagined that Allah really exists. It is taken for granted that a man only takes his reward from the one for whom he works. Hence, the question to be asked here is, 'Did any of these people work for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* in order to receive a reward from Him?' No, they did not. At this point, we should correct a common misconception aroused by some orientalist who do not understand Islam properly. They say, 'Why would Allah not generously reward those scientists who discovered cures for diseases, and those scientists who invented things which benefit mankind?

Why would He not fully reward them in the Hereafter?' We say, 'Those scientists did all of this seeking the pleasure of the people and not the Pleasure of Allah *the Almighty*. In addition, people praised them highly for this, to an extent that they immortalised their memories, built statues for them, gave them medals and wrote books in praise of their efforts.' In this way, such scientists sought the pleasure of the people and they received it. Ironically, Allah *the Almighty* enables the believers to benefit from all the inventions and discoveries made by the disbelievers. For example, Muslims make use of electricity to read the Quran, acquire knowledge, etc. In the same connection, planes, which were invented by non-Muslims, carry Muslims to Mecca to perform pilgrimage and to Medina to visit Prophet Muhammad's grave. In addition, Muslims achieve considerable benefit from planes with regards to worldly affairs. However, the believers should utilise the means at their disposal in order not to become meek and dependant on others. To continue, it becomes clear that Allah *Glorified is He* allows the believers to benefit from the disbelievers' advancement and progress, yet Allah *Glorified is He* will not reward them (the disbelievers) for these deeds and acts. This fact is clearly explained in a number of positions in the Quran. For example, He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *an-Nur* that the good deeds of the disbeliever are like a mirage in the desert which the thirsty person supposes to be water—but when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing (*an-Nur*: 39).

In the chapter of *Ibrahim*, He *Glorified is He* clearly tells us that the actions of the disbelievers are like ashes on which the wind blows hard on a stormy day; they shall not have power over anything of what they have earned (*Ibrahim*: 18). In the chapter of *Al-Kahf*, He *the Almighty* tells us about the characteristics of the great losers with regards to their deeds. Then He *Glorified is He* counts these characteristics as follows: the labour of such people is lost in this worldly life although they think that they are doing commendable work; they disbelieve in the communications of their Lord and His Meeting; their deeds are rendered null; and no balance will be set up for them on the Day of Resurrection. (*al-Kahf*: 103-105)

From the above it becomes clear that the deeds of such a person who denies part of the faith or any of it will come to nothing. As well, such a person will be one of the losers in the Hereafter. Success in the Hereafter is

mainly based on a person's deeds in this life. Thus, as long as a person's deeds in this life do not have the intention to seek the Pleasure of Allah, s/he will inevitably lose in the Hereafter.

In the same vein, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers' explains to us how important it is that we do not allow ourselves to be deceived and deluded by the fame, wealth and glory of those disbelieving scientists; for the pleasures of this life will not last forever. The final Reckoning will surely take place in the Hereafter, and hence it is important here to stress a very important fact; that is, even though the disbeliever may have gained some benefit in this worldly life, s/he will certainly lose in the Hereafter.

Allah *the Almighty* then sheds light on the importance of establishing a close connection between all the worldly affairs. Thus, having told us about the essential constituents of life and how to maintain the human race by showing the importance of lawful marriage, He *the Almighty* clarifies that He bestows all these blessings upon us so that we will become close to Him *the Almighty*. For this reason, He *the Almighty* wants us not to be distracted by the pleasures of this worldly life. Hence, we must not occupy our minds with anything that may prevent us from meeting Him *the Almighty*. Such a meeting is, in fact, not a spontaneous matter but rather something which requires spiritual, physical, spatial, and temporal preparation. It is important to realise that this special meeting between Allah *the Almighty* and the slave is nothing but 'Prayer'. Islam tells us that Muslims must meet a number of conditions and requirements for their Prayer, i.e. their meeting with Allah, to be valid. First of all, they must be physically pure. Second, they must perform the obligatory Prayers in their due time. Third, prayer must be performed in a clean and purified place. They, furthermore, must direct their faces to the *Ka'ba* in Mecca. All of these requirements undoubtedly serve to prepare the human soul to stand before Allah *the Almighty* Who bestows all these blessings upon man. That is why we all the time state clearly that 'prayer is a declaration of one's constant full allegiance and absolute loyalty to the Bounteous Creator, Who creates out of nothing and provides out of nothing'. Muslims under Islam are obliged to offer five daily prayers; He *the Almighty* wants them not to be fully distracted

by the pleasures of this life. Yet, for man to 'meet with' (be close to) Allah in the times between the prescribed prayers and to exhibit constant faith, s/he must remember Him *Glorified is He*. This is actually based on the *Sharia* maxim stating 'That which is essential for the fulfilling of an obligation is itself obligatory'.

Let us illustrate this aforementioned maxim by offering the following example: man needs energy to perform prayers and fulfil the other acts of worship. But it is taken for granted that food is the main source of man's energy and power; thus, Islam views the process of manufacturing food, during all its different stages, as an obligation. Consequently, when someone says, 'I want to devote myself solely to worship and to live in isolation', we say to him, 'You may do this on condition that you do not benefit from the work of a single person who is involved in the motions of life and thus you should not eat any food, for the bread you eat, for example, is the outcome of a lot of people's efforts'. Similarly, we say to such a person, 'You should also not wear garments which are the result of many people's labour: someone grew the cotton; another ginned it while a third spun it; a fourth stitched it while a fifth tailored it, not to mention all the machines which were used to do this. Consequently, you must not benefit from the work of a single person who is involved with the means of life as long as you have decided to withdraw from life's motions and live in isolation'.

As a matter of fact, utilising the means is an act of worship because worship cannot be fulfilled and perfected without it. We have just explained, 'That which is essential for the fulfilling of an obligation is itself obligatory'. Hence, Muslim scholars opine that learning such skills which benefit man's life is a communal obligation. In Islam, there are two kinds of obligations: the first is the individual obligation which every individual is responsible for fulfilling and no one else can do it on his behalf, such as prayer; the second is the communal obligation which is what is needed in order to fulfil an obligation and is therefore itself obligatory.

Undoubtedly, each one of us needs food. The work must be divided among people: one person should learn how to farm, while another should learn how to manufacture goods and products. Wheat must be farmed and thus, mills

must be established to grind it. In addition, ovens must be made to bake bread. Furthermore, there must be engineers to make these machines. All of these actions make it possible for a man to have the necessary energy to pray and to stand before Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, all these actions fall under the category of communal obligations. That is, they are obligations that, if fulfilled by some, the rest will not be asked to perform them. Yet, if none fulfils them, we are all sinful.

Another example of a communal obligation is the Funeral Prayer; the person who prays over the dead man fulfils this obligation for the rest of us, but if no one prays over the dead person, every single Muslim is guilty of sin. Once again, every action that is essential for the fulfilment of an obligation is itself obligatory. And scholars believe that offering the Funeral Prayer is a communal obligation; if fulfilled by some, the rest will not be blamed for not performing it, but if no one fulfils it, everyone sins.

But what is the position of the ruler or those in authority regarding communal obligations? They must ensure that someone fulfils each communal obligation; otherwise a number of religious obligations will go unfulfilled. In fact, when the Muslim goes to the market and finds no bread to eat, s/he becomes weak and unable to satisfy her/his hunger. As a result, s/he will be unable to pray, work or even save money to perform pilgrimage. That is why we find Allah *the Almighty* in the Quran calling upon the believers to leave all worldly commerce for the sake of performing the Friday Prayer (*al-Jumu'a*: 9). In this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Jumu'a*, He *Glorified is He* orders us to leave all worldly commerce for the sake of performing the Friday Prayer; He does not order us to move from inactivity to prayer. If we carefully reflect upon the meaning of this verse, we will fully realise the accuracy of the style used in the Quran. He *the Almighty* orders Muslims to forsake all practises of selling; an order that clearly also implies forsaking the process of buying. As a matter of fact, buying and selling are two sides of the same transaction; the only difference is that the buyer might be reluctant to buy the item because s/he has to spend her/his money to buy it, whereas the seller always wants to receive the price for her/his commodities immediately. The seller usually makes profit from this, and this is actually the best way to earn

money. That is because the earnings of the farmer, for example, only come after several months of farming. This is also the case for the employee who receives his/her salary at the end of every month. As for the case under discussion, the seller receives his/her earning straight away. That is why He *the Almighty* orders us to leave all worldly commerce once we hear the call for the Friday Prayer. But what shall Muslims do after performing the prayer? He *the Almighty* tells us that the believers, having finished their Friday Prayer, must disperse freely on the earth and seek some of Allah's Bounties. As well, they must remember Allah much (*al-Jumu'a*: 10).

From the above, it is now clear that no one should say, 'I will devote every moment of my life to prayer', for no one can pray unless s/he possesses her/his life's basic needs; and it goes without saying that man must disperse in the earth to attain her/his life's basic needs. In addition, s/he must seek the Bounties of Allah. Consequently, dispersing in the earth to gain livelihood is itself an act of worship because that which is essential for the fulfilment of an obligation is itself obligatory. In this vein, He *the Almighty* does not want to separate the essential constituents of life, like food and marriage, from the topic of prayer, and hence He casts light on the conditions of ablution which must be fulfilled before the performance of prayer directly after clarifying the rulings on eating the food of the people of the Book and marriage to the women from the people of the Book. This is for us to know that all the topics and articles of faith are closely correlated to each other and thus, it is not right to divide acts into acts of worship and others that have nothing to do with worship.

Yet, when scholars write books of jurisprudence, we see them dividing the sections of their books into 'Acts of Worship' and 'Transactions'. This is, in fact, only a literary classification concerned with the arrangement of the material in the book. But I reiterate that every action which is required for the good of the world is judged as an act of worship to the Creator of this world. This is borne out by the two consecutive divine orders in the chapter of *al-Jumu'a* in which Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to hasten to the Remembrance of Allah, i.e. prayer, and to leave all worldly commerce, and then to disperse in the earth to seek out the Bounties of Allah after prayer has ended (*al-Jumu'a*: 9-10)

In Islam, one cannot obey one divine command and ignore another, but rather, people, out of faith, are obliged to carry them both out; if a person is remiss in either one of them, s/he is at fault. That is why, having told us about the Blessings He bestows upon us which include making cattle lawful to us and after informing us of our right to marry chaste women from the people of the Book, He *the Almighty* welcomes us into His Presence by telling us how to prepare to offer prayer to Him. He commands us all to prepare for prayer. As a matter of fact, this preparation makes man fully qualified to meet Him *the Almighty*. But how shall man prepare himself for such a meeting with Allah? He *the Almighty* says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ
وَأَمْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى الْكَعْبَيْنِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ
مَرْضَىٰ أَوْ عَلَىٰ سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَاءَ أَحَدٌ مِنْكُمْ مِنَ الْغَائِطِ أَوْ لَمَسْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا مَاءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا
صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُمْ مِنْهُ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ
حَرَجٍ وَلَٰكِنْ يُرِيدُ لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

You who believe, when you are about to pray, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, wash your feet up to the ankles and, if required, wash your whole body. If any of you is sick or on a journey, or has just relieved himself, or had intimate contact with a woman, and can find no water, then take some clean sand and wipe your face and hands with it. God does not wish to place any burden on you: He only wishes to cleanse you and perfect His blessing on you, so that you may be thankful [6] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 6)

This verse indicates clearly that if Muslims are about to perform prayer, they must make ablution. The verse sheds light on the main pillars of the ritual act of ablution. In reality, some people may be unable to distinguish between the pillars and the recommended acts of ablution. The list of the recommended acts of ablution includes, but is not limited to washing one's hands, mouth and nose, etc. These are recommended acts which complement the essential pillars of ablution. Allah *Glorified is He* starts counting the essential pillars of ablution in the following order: 1) Wash the face; 'wash' means to make the water flow over the body part so that it then drips from it, while 'wipe' means

to touch the body part with wet hands so that water touches it but does not drip from it because it is only slightly dampened. At this point, it is of great importance to know that Allah *the Almighty* differentiates between two particular acts in ablution, namely, washing and wiping. That is, there are certain body parts that must be washed and there others that must be wiped. The list of the body parts that must be washed includes the face, the arms up to the elbows and the feet up to the ankles. As for the list of the body parts that must be wiped, it is restricted to some part of the head. The washing may be repeated twice or thrice to ensure that it has been done properly, but if one has only a little amount of water, it is enough for him/her to wash the required parts once and to make sure that one has washed the required area properly. To wash more than once, up to three times, is a recommended *Sunna* act and not an obligation.

Washing the face is something known to everyone. The face is that part of the head by means of which we directly confront objects. Boundaries of the face start from the hairline to the chin, that is, the lower side of the edge of the jawbone—the bone from which the lower teeth grow. This is regarding the length of the face. As for the breadth, it extends from ear to ear. No one differs about the definition of the face, and therefore He *the Almighty* simply says: ‘wash your face’ without specifying its limits. He does not say, ‘wash your face from here to here’, but simply commands us to wash the face since no one differs about the meaning of the word ‘face’; people unanimously agree on this point. This is the first of the obligatory actions of ablution, but if we begin with the *Sunna* (recommended actions), we will first wash the hands up to the wrists, and then rinse the mouth and nose.

Commenting on these recommended acts of ablution, one of the most pious Muslims opine that they were not enacted haphazardly. He said that ‘water’ is defined as the liquid which has no colour, taste, or smell. In fact, if any of these attributes change, the liquid is no longer considered pure water. And when you take water in your hands, you can see for yourself that it has no colour. Also, when you put it into your mouth, you can be sure that it has no taste. Furthermore, when you rinse your nose with it, you can be sure that it has no smell. In this way, you can be sure that the water you are using for ablution meets all the necessary criteria before you begin performing the pillars of ablution Allah ordains. As such, it is of great importance here to

know that the *Sunnah* (recommended acts) of ablution is performed before the pillars in order for man to be able to recognise the eligibility of the water to be used in ablution.

Having washed their faces in ablution, Muslims are then asked by Allah *the Almighty* to 'wash your hands to the elbows'. Clarifying the matter on this particular pillar of 'washing the hands', He *Glorified is He* specifies the area of the arms which must be washed stating that they must be washed up to the elbows; He thereby provides details which He does not make while speaking about the face. As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* defines that the arms must be washed up to the elbows because the Arabic word *Yadd* may be understood as the word 'hand'; a point which is proved by the Quran, particularly in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* where Allah *the Almighty* orders the hands of the thief to be cut off. (*al-Ma'ida*: 38)

In the same connection, the word *Yadd* can also be used to give the meaning of the hand and the arm up to the elbow. It can furthermore be used to refer to the entire arm up to the shoulder. Consequently, it is clear that the word *Yadd* may indicate three different meanings. Had Allah *the Almighty* simply commanded that the *Yadd* be washed without providing any further details, some people would have only washed their hands while others would have washed their arms up to the elbows; and still a third group would have washed their entire arms up to the shoulders. Due to the fact that He *the Almighty* wants all people to do the same act, Allah *Glorified is He* specifies the washing of the hands to be up to the elbows.

Actually, when Allah *the Almighty* wills to ordain a particular command with specific features, Allah *Glorified is He* puts it forward in such a way which eliminates the need for further personal reasoning. As for the proposition *Ila* (to) used in this context, it indicates the end of something. This is actually opposite to the preposition *Min* (from) which indicates the beginning of an activity. The question that can be asked here is: 'Should elbows be included in the washing of the hands or not?' Here it is of great importance to know that *Ila* can sometimes be used to indicate the inclusion of something within the activity, while other times it does not.

These two cases have already been mentioned in the Quran. Concerning the first case, i.e. the use of *Ila* to indicate the inclusion of something within

the activity, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been transported by night from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. (*al-Isra'*: 1) The question to be asked here is, 'Did Allah *the Almighty* transport His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem but he (Prophet Muhammad) did not enter it?' The answer is definitely 'No', for no one could seriously suggest this. This example indicates clearly how *Ila* is used to indicate the inclusion of something within the activity. In fact, Prophet Muhammad was taken to *Al-Aqsa* Mosque which he entered and wherein he prayed.

As for the second case where *Ila* indicates until the beginning of an activity, Allah *the Almighty* orders us in the Quran to complete fasting until night (*al-Baqara*: 187)

Does this truly mean that we must continue fasting through the night?! No, because if the fast continued through the night, this would mean that we do not break our fast, i.e. we would have to fast day and night. This means the action of fasting through the night is not implied in this divine order. As a result, it is now clear that *Ila* can be used to indicate either of the two cases. Based on the above, some scholars differ as to whether the elbows are included in the order of 'washing the hands' or not. There is a general agreement among them all that the elbows should be included as a way of avoiding doubt because no one can be certain whether the elbow is included in this divine order or not. We know for certain that we must be cautious while deciding on *Sharia* matters, either by widening the scope of the order or by restricting its sphere.

An example of this concerns praying in the Sacred Mosque. We all know very well that the *Ka'ba* is a building whose walls are clearly visible. Next to one of the walls of the *Ka'ba* lies a semi-circular wall which marks the spot called Hija Isma'il which is considered to be an original part of the *Ka'ba*. But when a person prays near the *Ka'ba*, should s/he direct her/his face to Hija Isma'il or to the building of the *Ka'ba* itself? Muslim scholars opine that one must intend to direct his/her face to the tall building of the *Ka'ba* and not to Hija Isma'il, even though circumambulation around the *Ka'ba* while performing pilgrimage or even minor pilgrimage, i.e. 'Umra, is not valid if the Hija is not included in it. This shows how Muslim scholars widen the scope of the divine order and command as a way of avoiding doubt.

It is now clear that avoiding doubt may be fulfilled by either widening the scope of the divine command or by restricting its scope. As for washing the elbows in ablution, it is viewed as a way of avoiding doubt by widening the scope of the divine order. He *Glorified is He* then orders us to wipe our heads. The divine command here is different, for He *the Almighty* does not order us to wash the heads, but rather to wipe them. In the very beginning of ablution, He *the Almighty* orders us to wash the face and He *Glorified is He* does not specify which part of the face has to be washed because there is no difference over the definition of the face. Then came the washing of the hands and arms up to the elbows; we explained that Muslim scholars have agreed that the elbows must be included in the order to wash the hands and the arms, and thus there is no room for personal reasoning or even controversy. As a matter of fact, if He *Glorified is He* orders us to wipe our heads in the same way He orders us to wash our faces, then, there will be no difference at all. Yet, had He *the Almighty* said, 'Wipe part of your heads', would there have been any difference or disagreement among scholars in this regard? Yes, scholars would have differed concerning specifying what particular part of the head is to be wiped. Similarly, they would have differed if He *the Almighty* had ordered us to wipe a quarter of the head because accurately and exactly defining this quarter is exceedingly difficult.

We may ask here, 'What is the divine wisdom behind using this particular style in this verse' even though several different word patterns are used in the verse, some of which do not specify the exact area to be washed since there is no difference whatsoever concerning its definition, while others do? That is why we are supposed to search for the wisdom behind using the particle *Bi* in this particular pattern.

As a matter of fact, the particle *Bi* has many different meanings in Arabic. The great grammarian *Ibn Malik* said in his *Al-Fiyya*: *Bi* can be used to mean aiding, or to designate a direct object, or to mean compensation, adjoining, and to mean the same as with, of and about.

In this way, the use of this particle *Bi* here in this verse under discussion plainly indicates that the Lawgiver *Glorified is He* wants to widen the area and the scope of permissibility with regards to this particular divine command of

‘wiping the head’. As a matter of fact, the particle *bi* can indicate various meanings, as follows: aiding, for example, ‘I wrote with (*bi*) a pen’; to designate a direct object, for example, ‘I took the patient to the hospital’ (where the particle *bi* appears before the patient—this cannot be rendered into English); compensation, for example, ‘I bought the pen for (*bi*) twenty pounds’; adjoining, for example, ‘I passed by (*bi*) Khalid’; with, for example, ‘I sold you the house with (*bi*) its furniture’; of, for example, ‘I drank the water of (*bi*) the Nile’; about, for example, when Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran: ‘A questioner asked (mockingly) about (*bi*) the suffering which (in the hereafter) is bound to befall’; (*al-Ma'arij*: 1) during, for example, ‘I visited so-and-so during (*bi*) the night’; because of, for example, ‘Mohamed won the prize because of (*bi*) his hard work’; and accompanying something/body, for example, when it is said, ‘Glorify your Lord and (*bi*) celebrate His Praises’, this means that glorifying Him *the Almighty* must be accompanied by celebrating His Praise.

Thus, if a group of scholar opine that wiping a single hair will fulfil the divine command in this verse under discussion, their opinion, based on the various meanings indicated by the particle *Bi*, is judged valid and true. In fact, to wipe means to adjoin and the hand is the organ that will be used in fulfilling this divine command. Yet, if another group hold the position that wiping the head should be done with the palm of the hand and not less than this, their opinion will also be judged valid and correct.

Consequently, it becomes clear that each of these scholarly opinions may be eligible in order to properly carry out this divine command of ‘wiping the head’ in ablution. In truth, had He *the Almighty* willed it, i.e. washing of the head to be done in one specific way, He would have specified it to us. Had He *Glorified is He* meant wiping of the entire head, He would have said explicitly ‘Wipe your head’ without using the particle *Bi*, in the same way He orders us to wash our faces without specifying the definition of the face. In addition, had He *the Almighty* wanted a specific area of the head to be wiped, He would have specified it just as He specified that the hands and arms have to be washed up to the elbows. Yet, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* uses the particle *Bi* in this context, which has many different meanings, it is enough for anyone

to understand it according to one of these meanings as any one of the possible meanings in the light of the presence of the particle *Bi* must be correct.

In fact, the most important and essential point to be deduced from this topic is that we must accept other's opinions which may be different from ours; that is, if one understands something in a certain way, s/he must not think that all those who understand it differently are wrong—rather, s/he should admit, 'This is my personal reasoning with regards to Allah's Ruling'. This is logically deduced from the fact that He *the Almighty* uses the particle *Bi* in this context even though it indicates different valid meanings. As a matter of fact, man has no choice with regard to the movements of her/his body parts. This is to mean that a person does not have the authority to ask the heart to stop pumping the blood for a while, nor can s/he choose the place in which to die.

However, a person still has the free will to do certain acts and practices. It is because of this free will that He *the Almighty* legally charges man with divine commands and legislations. That is why Muslim scholars believe that all the legal obligations and ordinances are viewed in the light of the two commands: 'Do's' and 'Don'ts'; yet, they also believe that there are other acts which man is allowed to deal with based on his/her free will. For this reason, *At-Taklif*, i.e. legal obligation, is in line with human nature. The conduct of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whom Allah has commissioned to explain the religious obligations to us, offers us the best and most striking example in this regard. He *the Almighty* tells him *peace and blessings be upon him* that He has revealed the Quran to him so that he will clarify it to people (*an-Nahl*: 44).

To continue, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was with the believers in the battle of *al-Ahzab*, referring to which Allah *the Almighty* describes the believers as being shaken with a severe shock (*al-Ahzab*: 11). This battle was so fierce that the believers thought they would be defeated, yet Allah *the Almighty* has granted them victory by sending a strong wind that caused the enemies of Islam to flee. Upon the end of the battle, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to Medina along with his Companions. The believers were now supposed to relax, yet the Archangel Gabriel went down to Prophet Muhammad and ordered him not to sheathe his sword because Allah wants him to head for the Jews of Banu Qurayzah to

take revenge from them as a result of their betrayal of Prophet Muhammad and the group of believers. Gabriel also told Prophet Muhammad that he will go to them to cast fear into their hearts. That is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered someone to call to the people, 'Whoever believes in Allah and His Messenger, let him not offer the Afternoon Prayer, i.e. *A'sr*, except in the territory of the Jews of Banu Qurayzhah'. Yet, when it was the time of the Afternoon Prayer, some of the Companions, thinking that he *peace and blessings be upon him* just wanted to urge them to hasten to Banu Qurayzhah, performed the '*Asr* Prayer before they reached their destination. However, the other group thought that they had to literally carry out the order of Prophet Muhammad and thus they did not pray '*Asr* until they reached the territory of Banu Qurayzhah. When he *peace and blessings be upon him* was later informed of what had happened, he accepted both views and did not censure any of them.⁽¹⁾

This incident is very important in the history of Islamic Legislation. In fulfilment of Prophet Muhammad's command, the Companions went out to fight against the Jews of Banu Qurayzhah, but the sun drew close to setting, while they were still on the way. The Companions divided into two groups: one saying, 'The sun will soon set and we have not prayed the Afternoon Prayer yet, and therefore we must pray it now before the sun sets'; the other group saying, 'Prophet Muhammad commanded us not to pray the Afternoon Prayer until we reach the territory of Banu Qurayzhah, and therefore we will not pray it until we get there, even if the sun sets.' Consequently, the first group prayed, while the second did not.

When they went to their legislator Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him what had happened, he did not censure either side and declared that both were correct. This situation obviously indicates his sagacity and intelligence, for he *peace and blessings be upon him* knew perfectly well that every event requires a due time and a due place. Those who performed the '*Asr* before their arrival at Banu Qurayzhah took into account the importance of the time and feared that the sun would set before they offered the Prayer. However, those who did not pray until they had already arrived in Banu Qurayzhah took into consideration the importance of performing the prayer in

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

the place defined to them by Prophet Muhammad, and therefore they did not offer their Prayer until they reached the territory of Banu Qurayzhah. But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* approved both positions.

This clearly shows us that there are some divine commands which Allah *the Almighty* deliberately leaves without any definitive specification, i.e. He leaves them up to man's personal reasoning, because He *Glorified is He* is pleased when they are carried out any way. For example, scholars view that wiping a quarter of one's head in ablution is correct, and also wiping the entire head. This is indicated by the fact that He *the Almighty* uses the particle *Bi* that could suggest any of these forms of wiping the head.

This rule applies to all topics and matters subject to reasoning. As for the legal principle stating 'No reasoning can be applied to a text', this only applies to those texts which are so clear and decisive that they cannot possibly be subjected to reasoning.

In reality, it is of great importance to realise that not every matter in the Islamic *Shari'a* is subject to personal reasoning, for Allah *the Almighty*; makes clear those things which cannot be subjected to personal reasoning and those which can. In the same vein, when He *the Almighty* assigns legal obligations and ordinances to man, He *Glorified is He* takes into consideration his/her nature. In the light of the fact that man has the free will to do certain acts, while other times s/he is compelled to do other acts, different opinions deduced from personal reasoning are to be judged true and valid. As such, the scholar has to view the conclusion of his reasoning as being true and correct with the possibility that it may be wrong. In addition, he has to view the conclusion of his counterpart as being wrong with the possibility that it may be correct. As a matter of fact, if the process of personal reasoning is conducted properly in the light of its due conditions and requirements, then all the opinions inferred from this process will be valid. This is mainly based on his *peace and blessings be upon him* approval of both actions of the Companions in the incident of Banu Qurayzhah.

Having ordered us to wipe the head, He *Glorified is He* commands us to wash our feet. The order of the wording of the text might cause one to assume that the feet are connected to the head and hence should be wiped, but the fact

that the word 'feet', syntactically is in the accusative case and not the genitive, tells us that it is essentially connected to the face and hands, and not to the words 'your head' (which are in the genitive case because of the preposition *Bi*); this clearly means that the feet are not meant to be wiped, but rather washed.

In this regard, there is a very important point that we must take into consideration, that is, He *the Almighty* does not mention the body parts to be washed consecutively under a particular list, nor does He *the Almighty* mentions the parts to be wiped in a similar manner; this is to tell us that ablution is an act of worship that must be performed as ordained by Allah. In the same connection, He *the Almighty* specifies and ordains that the feet must be washed up to the ankles; He *the Almighty* says: '...and (wash) your feet up to the ankles....' This is because the word *Rijl* in Arabic can mean either the foot by itself or the foot and the shin up to the thigh. Thus, He *Glorified is He* wants us to wash our feet up to the ankles.

Once again, we assure you that ablution is a pure act of worship. It is not subject to any kind of reasoning or analogy. This is based on the fact that Allah *the Almighty* ordains and specifies that hands must be washed up to the elbows even though one's hand starts from the fingertips and continues to the shoulder. In the same connection, He *Glorified is He* ordains that feet must be washed up to the ankles even though one's feet (*Rijl*) includes the shin and the thigh.

He *the Almighty* makes clear to us here that if He wants something in a precise way, He specifies it for us in order for there to be no different opinions about it. On the other hand, if He *the Almighty* gives us the order in a general way, this means that He gives us permission to apply our own personal reasoning to that order, in order for us to feel that we have some kind of choice in defining some of the acts of worship we offer Him *the Almighty*. All of this is undoubtedly part of Allah's Will because He *the Almighty* is the One Who carefully phrases the structure of this order in such a way which makes it indicate these various meanings.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Wash your face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass your (wet) hands lightly over your head, and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if you are in a state of sexual impurity, purify yourselves...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6) plainly indicates that ablution is not sufficient in the state of sexual impurity. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He*

legislates ablution to purify oneself from minor impurity. In fact, there is a difference between this bodily emission that causes one to be in a state of minor ritual impurity and thus nullifies his/her ablution, and that emission which is discharged due to pleasure. Ejaculation or sexual intercourse requires total ablution (*Ghusl*). We know that when one enjoys food or perfume and the like, the process of enjoyment itself is limited to the organ which experiences pleasure. However, for the enjoyment attained from sexual intercourse, no one knows for certain which specific part of the body experiences pleasure, to the extent that today's scholars are unable to provide further details about this point; a matter that obviously indicates that every cell of the human body participates in enjoying this pleasure. As a result, if a person wants to purify him/herself from sexual impurity, s/he must wash every part of his body.

Concerning the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...And if you are in a state of sexual impurity, purify yourselves. But if you are ill or are travelling, or have just satisfied a want of nature or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water—then take resort to pure dust, lightly passing over your face and your hands with it...', someone might say, 'Does the saying of Allah: '...or have cohabited with a woman...' not simply repeat what was just said about being in a state sexual impurity?'

We say that He *the Almighty* refers in this context to another ruling which tells us how to purify ourselves in preparation for the prayer in the absence of water. This is viewed in the light of the fact that He *the Almighty* teaches Muslims how to prepare themselves for such an act of worship that is never waived and thus He *the Almighty* will not hold a person responsible for something that s/he might not find. So, when one is unable to find any water, a person is allowed to perform dry ablution (*Tayammum*) because prayer is an act of worship, as we have just explained, which is never waived for those who are legally charged to perform it, even when the person is so ill that s/he cannot move any part of her/his body, Allah *the Almighty* allows such a person to pray seated or reclining, or to pray by gesturing with the head or even with the eyes. In this regard, we stress once again that even the paralysed person must perform prayer by imagining its motions in his/her head.

We know for certain that 'prayer' is the only pillar of Islam which must be offered at all times. In fact, it is enough for one to declare the Testimony of

Faith just once in his/her life and a permanently ill man is excused from the obligation of fasting and may compensate for this by feeding the poor. However, if the illness is temporary or one is on a journey, a person may make up the days s/he broke her/his fast. In the same connection, one might not pay out *zakat*, i.e. the obligatory charity to the poor, and also for pilgrimage because he himself is poor; one is not obliged to perform it as long as s/he cannot afford it or does not have the power to do it. However, as for prayer, man is not allowed to leave it at any time.

The greatness of prayer is clearly manifested by the way it was legislated. As a matter of fact, all the pillars of Islam were legislated by revelation, whereas prayer is the only pillar that is given directly by Allah *the Almighty* to Prophet Muhammad. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* does not say to Gabriel, 'Deliver this obligation of prayer to Prophet Muhammad', but rather, He *the Almighty* has called him *peace and blessings be upon him* to Himself to deliver him the obligation of prayer Himself.

We previously explained that when an employer wants to tell his employees something the information might reach them by means of the daily memos which are sent to them from him; but if the issue is important, he telephones the supervisor and tells him how important it is. And if the matter is of great importance, the boss sends for the supervisor and tells him about it in person. Similarly, legal obligations are revealed in a manner which is commensurate with its level of importance—so what do we think about an obligation that was delivered directly from Allah *the Almighty* to Prophet Muhammad in the Heavens?

We have previously learnt that some commandments were delivered to Prophet Muhammad by inspiration, while others came to him *peace and blessings be upon him* by revelation through the Archangel Gabriel. As for prayer, Allah *the Almighty* has made it obligatory upon him *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Heavens. Consequently, Muslims must offer five prayers a day. Due to the fact that man is never excused for not performing prayer, Allah *the Almighty* has made it the dividing line between the believer and the disbeliever. When the Muslim hears the call to prayer, s/he hastens to offer it. In reality, prayer is a summons from the Creator to those whom He has created to enter into His

Presence five times a day. Having fulfilled the obligation of performing the Daily Prayers, one is free to meet her/his Lord whenever s/he wills. Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* never becomes tired of giving rewards till you become tired of doing good deeds.

Beware of allotting certain times for mentioning the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* saying, 'This is the time for work, and that is for the Remembrance of Allah'. In fact, when you work to seek Allah's Bounty, you must not forget Allah at all because His *Glorified is He* Remembrance must be continuous during all of man's actions. Bringing us into existence, He *the Almighty* wants us to worship Him alone without ascribing any partner to Him. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells us that He has sent Prophet Saleh to the people of the Thamud. Allah *peace be upon him* ordered them to worship Allah alone, for He *the Almighty* is the One Who has brought them into being from the earth. He *peace be upon him* also ordered them to ask Allah for forgiveness and to show repentance to Him *the Almighty*. (*Hud: 61*)

Consequently, everything that leads to thriving and making progress in the world is viewed as an act of worship. This is based on the fact that He *the Almighty* extends the jurisprudential term 'worship' to apply to all the different motions of life. This point has been previously explained in the chapter of *al-Baqara* when He *the Almighty* tells Muslims that they, i.e. men, will incur no sin if they divorce women, while they have not yet touched them nor determined a dowry for them; but (even in such a case) they must make provision for them—the affluent according to his means, and the straitened according to his means—a provision in an equitable manner: this is a duty upon all who do good. He *the Almighty* then states that if they divorce them before having touched them, but after having determined a dowry for them, then they must (give them) half of what they have already determined—unless it be that they forgo their claim or he in whose hand is the marriage-tie forgoes his claim (to half of the dowry). He *the Almighty* then clarifies that to forgo what is due to you is more in accord with Allah-consciousness, demanding them at the same time not to forget (that you are to act with) grace towards one another (*al-Baqara: 236-237*).

This verse discusses one of the worldly matters concerning family affairs. Having shed light on this affair, He *the Almighty* immediately speaks of an act of worship; a matter which indicates the correlation between acts of worship and worldly affairs. Allah *Glorified is He* orders Muslims to be ever mindful of the prayers, and of the midmost prayer in particular; and to stand before Him in devout obedience. He *Glorified is He* then states that if they, i.e. Muslims, are in danger, they can (pray) walking or riding, adding that when they are again secure, they must remember Allah—since it is He Who teaches them what they did not previously know (*al-Baqara*: 238-239).

After that, He *the Almighty* returns to shed more light on family affairs, saying that if any of the Muslim men die and leave wives behind, they bequeath thereby to their widows (the right to) one year's sustenance without their being obliged to leave (the dead husband's home)...(*al-Baqara*: 240).

And He *the Almighty* does the same again here in this chapter of *al-Ma'ida*; having shed light on the blessings He *Glorified is He* bestows upon us, He then takes us in to His Presence; a matter that requires man to purify himself/herself before entering into this meeting with Him *the Almighty*. He tells us that certain parts of the body must be purified. This obligation of purification is called *wudu'* (ablution) in which man is supposed to wash the face and the two hands up to the elbows, wipe the head and finally wash the feet up to the ankles. Concerning this particular process of purification, i.e. ablution, it is important to know that Allah *Glorified is He* has defined the exact area to be washed for some parts of the body while leaving the others subject to personal reasoning. He gave explicit instructions for three things: the washing of the face, the washing of the hands and arms up to the elbows, and the washing of the feet up to the ankles. Concerning the wiping of the head, He *Glorified is He* does not specify the exact area to be wiped. In other words, He does not order us to wipe the entire head, and nor does He order us to wipe a quarter of the head. This matter clearly indicates that the scholar who exercises his personal reasoning on this particular matter, i.e. wiping of the head, may understand the particle *bi* here according to any possibly acceptable lexical meanings. To sum up, it is clear that He *the Almighty* gave us explicit instructions for some rulings and left others up to our personal reasoning. Having finished speaking

about ablution, He *Glorified is He* and then moves to tell us that we must purify ourselves from sexual impurity before being in His Presence.

At that point, careful reflection upon the aforementioned two verses reveals that Allah *the Almighty* casts light on different topics, including 'the kinds of cattle we are permitted to eat' and 'marriage'. As for the second topic, i.e. marriage, He *Glorified is He* widened the scope of permissibility, to allow a Muslim to marry women from among the people of the Book.

Due to the fact that the food we eat results in our excretion of urine and faeces, while sexual intercourse causes chemical changes in the body, He *the Almighty* therefore ordains us to purify ourselves from the minor body impurity, i.e. urine and faeces by performing ablution and to purify ourselves from the major body impurity, i.e. sexual impurity by performing total ablution. He *Glorified is He* says: '...And if you are in a state of sexual impurity, purify yourselves....'

Due to the fact that He *the Almighty* wants us to be constantly connected to Him, He does not limit the means of preparation and purification for prayer to water alone because we sometimes may not have any water or we may have it but are unable to use it. As such, He *the Almighty* does not want to break the connection between man and Him by limiting the means of purification for prayer to water alone. Hence, He makes it lawful for us to make purification by another means, that is, *Tayammum* or dry ablution. That is, if you do not have any water to purify yourself for prayer, you can purify yourself by another lawful means of purification; namely, dry ablution (*Tayammum*) with dust. It goes without saying that dust exists everywhere on the surface of the earth and that one will be able to find it at all times. He *Glorified is He* says in this regard: '...But if you are ill or you are travelling, or have just satisfied a want of nature or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water—then take resort to pure dust....' Hence, if one is ill and unable to use water, or if s/he is on a journey and can find no water, or if s/he satisfies a call of nature by going to *Al-Gha'it*—the word '*Al-Gha'it*' means a place which is low and concealed; Arabs, men and women, used to go to such places for the particular purpose of answering the call of nature so that no one would see them—and even after cohabiting with women, and one does not find water

after these things, the alternative is dry ablution. As a matter of fact, those who think that water is the only means of purification are wrong, for Allah *the Almighty* has provided a substitute for it, i.e. dust which is more prevalent than water. This plainly indicates that He *the Almighty* wants us to be in constant contact with Him all the time; and this is achieved by Him allowing us to purify ourselves with dust in the absence of water or when one is unable to use it.

In this respect, I do not want to exhaustively discuss scholars' different opinions concerning the difference between 'touching' (*Lams*) and 'cohabitation' (*Mulamasa*); it suffices to say that the word *Lams* does not imply any interaction, while the word *Mulamasa* does. In other words, this means that *Mulamasa* indicates that there are two parties involved in a particular action, which means that it refers to more than the process of touching, i.e. it refers to sexual intercourse. When one is in a state of sexual impurity and there is no water available, s/he is allowed to perform dry ablution with dust. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Take resort to pure dust (*Sa'id*).' The word *Sa'id* means what lies on the surface of the earth; it is made of the same material as the earth and is unadulterated by man-made substances. Examples of *Sa'id* are dust and rock. As for the red bricks we make, they are not appropriate for dry ablution since they are adulterated by man-made substances.

It is obligatory to purify four parts of the body in ablution; for total ablution, the entire body has to be purified. With regards to dry ablution, He *the Almighty* allows us to wipe only the face and the hands. The same also applies for purification from sexual impurity. We may observe here that Allah *Glorified is He* includes the wiping of the head in the ablution in order for us to be familiar with the action of wiping when we come to make dry ablution.

He *the Almighty* then says: '...Passing lightly over your face and your hands with it. Allah does not want to impose any hardship on you....' This verse clearly indicates that He *the Almighty* does not want to impose any hardship upon us and because of this He allows us to purify ourselves with water or with dust when water is not found or when one is unable to use it. It goes without saying that the person who does not find water to purify herself/himself with will indeed undergoes hardship because s/he does not find a means with which to purify himself. Consider the case of having only a little water to drink; would a

person use it for ablution or keep himself/herself alive by drinking it? Allah *the Almighty* does not want to make things difficult for His Creatures or impose hardship on them, and therefore He made things easy for them by making dust a good and satisfactory substitute for water. He *the Almighty* says: ‘...but (He) wants to make you pure....’

Indeed, those who think that cleanliness is the ultimate purpose of ablution are wrong; if ablution were only meant for cleanliness, then it would only be possible to do it with water. Furthermore, we are faced with the following question: ‘Why do we wipe our faces with dust?’ This clarifies that cleanliness is not the ultimate objective of performing ablution. Moreover, if someone says, ‘I will clean myself with cologne’, we say, ‘This is not what you are legally obliged to do. Allah does not want you to clean yourself this way, but rather, He wants you to purify yourself. It is taken for granted that the conditions for purification are set by the One with whom you wish to meet, i.e. Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* has made two ways in which this process of purification can be done, either with water or with dry ablution with dust’. And it is clear that purification makes one worthy to be received by his Lord in the way He has ordained. Once again, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who lays down these rules and not you (O man!). Ordering man to purify himself/herself with either water or dust indicates that Allah *the Almighty* wants man to remember these elements from which s/he has been created, which will make him/her constantly humble to Him.

He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...and to complete His blessings on you....’ In truth, man is surrounded by many blessings. But suppose that a person’s father is far from him/her, and news of his/her father comes to him/her every day in the form of money, food, drink and other comforts. In this way, the person takes all the blessings which a father is meant to give her/him, yet s/he yearns to be with this absent father whose blessings s/he enjoys. Clearly, being with his father is the complete and perfect blessing from the father to his son—and if this is the case with Allah’s creatures, then you can imagine how great the favour is when Allah bestows His Complete and Perfect Blessings on His servants.

In fact, the pious servant hopes to see the One Who bestows all of these blessings upon him/her. And He *the Almighty* conditions purification as a

necessary prerequisite for meeting with Him. When one comes to prayer and says, 'Allah is the Greatest', this means that s/he enters the Presence of His Lord. If we take into account how happy man is with the material blessings including food, drink and clothes, bestowed upon him/her by another creature, such as a father, a brother, or a relative, what do we really think of the Blessing He *the Almighty* bestows upon man while in His Presence? These blessings in actuality will be unknown but to the person who is in His Presence.

So, when He *the Almighty* says: '...and to complete His blessings on you...', this means that His Blessings are completed on you (O believers!) by calling you to meet Him *Glorified is He* and to be in His Presence. To fully illustrate this point, let us refer to the previous example of the son and the absent father. It is in this example that we find that the son looks at the gifts his absent father sends and says, 'I do not want these things; I just want my father!'

The complete and perfect blessing—on the human level—is for a person to see the one who bestows his/her blessings upon him/her, and he is a human being just like him/her. As for the complete and perfect blessing from the Creator to the creature, it requires that one must purify himself/herself in the way He *the Almighty* has ordained, and then enter the prayer and thus meet Him and be in His Presence.

He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...and to complete His blessings on you, so that you may have a reason to be grateful'. When we hear Allah *the Almighty* saying, 'I did this for you to have a reason to be grateful', this means, 'If you do what I tell you, you will get something wonderful in return, for which you will naturally be grateful'. This indicates that man must be deeply thankful for Him *the Almighty* for the Blessings He *Glorified is He* bestows upon him/her. Similarly, He *the Almighty* tells us that man must be grateful to Him *the Almighty* for the blessings of hearing, sight and intellect which He endows him/her (*an-Nahl*: 78). Hearing, sight and intellect are undoubtedly the channels of perception. Consequently, He *the Almighty* orders us to be grateful for the fact that He *the Almighty* has created us, and we had no knowledge, and then has given us means of perception.

وَأَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَقَهُ الَّذِي وَاتَّكُم بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ
 سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأَنْتَقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٧﴾

Remember God's blessing on you and the pledge with which you were bound when you said, 'We hear and we obey.' Be mindful of God: God has full knowledge of the secrets of the heart [7] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 7)

A person may ask, 'What does "remembrance" (*Ad-Dhikr*) mean?' It means to memorise something, or to bring it to mind. As a matter of fact, the process of memorisation entails that only the object itself should be kept in the mind, just as it is. As for the word '*Istihdar*', it refers to recalling the actual meaning of what one has in the mind. Consequently, there is a difference between memorising something and bringing it to mind. This is actually the true meaning of remembrance. Moreover, 'remembrance' may indicate the act of 'mentioning' something, because you do not mention something unless you first bring it to your mind. Actually, we find that the brain performs the functions of remembering, memorising, and imagining facts.

One of the wonders of the creation of the human being is that a person may be unable to remember particular events that took place decades ago, but then may suddenly remember them due to the occurrence of a particular incident that reminds him/her of them. Consequently, it is clear that man does not totally forget an event that s/he experienced twenty years ago; rather, this particular event was just absent from her/his mind for twenty years or more, and then certain things happened that reminded her/him of it. This means that this information was stored by the person even though s/he forgot about it for a long period of time.

And 'remembrance' means to call to memory such information that was previously stored in the mind so that it comes to the forefront of the consciousness. For example, two people might have experienced something twenty years ago and then forgot it, but when they meet one another and sit and speak about the past, they remember the event which they experienced more than twenty years ago. This indicates clearly that the event did not leave the memory forever but was stored somewhere in the subconscious of the mind, to the

extent that the more time passed, the more it seemed that the person had forgotten about the incident. Yet, when s/he undergoes certain circumstances, s/he will be able to recall it to the subconscious of the mind where one is able to remember past memories. This actually tells us how Great and Powerful Allah *the Almighty* is.

To elaborate, one of us might record some speech on a cassette, but when s/he wants to record something else on the same cassette, s/he has to erase what has been previously recorded; however, human memory does not function like this. As a matter of fact, when events are in the conscious part of the mind, one is able to remember them, yet if another event will be stored in the mind, the previously stored incident will have to move to the subconscious mind to give room for the new one, and so on. This is because the conscious part of the mind can only accommodate one thought at a time; if it is occupied with another thought, the previously stored event will leave to the subconscious mind. It is important here to realise that thoughts are not erased by one another within the human mind. As a result, one is able to recall past events whenever s/he wishes. This actually indicates the great difference between Allah's Creation and the production of man.

Moreover, it is of great importance to realise that human minds store nothing but abstractions and that physical objects can never be stored in man's memory; otherwise, the brain would not be able to contain them, i.e. all these physical objects. Consequently, these abstractions do not jostle for space in the mind, but rather, they build up within it so that if a person searches through the abstractions in her/his mind, s/he can recall minding what s/he wants to remember. This could not be the case if the brain were not created by *the Almighty* Creator. As long as abstractions do not take up any physical space, man can easily store them in his/her memory.

A person might sit down and revise the names of the world's mountains, saying, 'The world's mountains include Mount Everest, the Himalayas, Mount Uhud, and Mount Thawr'. In fact, when the person mentions these names, s/he indeed pictures what they mean. In other words, what exists in her/his mind at the time of uttering these words are their meanings and not the physical realities they designate. Consequently, these abstract meanings never jostle or expel one another, but rather they remain stored in the memory and the subconscious of the mind.

In truth, those who think that people have different levels of intelligence are wrong. Unfortunately, people may mistakenly think that someone has high intelligence and is thus able to memorise things from the first glance, while another who has less intelligence, as they think, will not be able to memorise it except after reading it twice or thrice. This is wrong because every man has a mind that functions like a camera which can take a photo from the first shot. But if a man takes a picture with a camera and something clouds over the lens of the camera, s/he takes the picture again. The same is true for the human mind: if a person wants to memorise something while her/his mind is occupied with something else, information will not perfectly settle in the conscious part of the mind and therefore s/he will have to repeat the action of reading to confirm the information therein in order for it to be imprinted in the conscious part of the mind.

The following is an illustrative example of this point: a student may enter the school's examination hall, and five minutes before the bell rings to start the exam, one of his colleagues may say to him, 'Did you revise such-and-such a topic?' The student replies, 'No, I did not', and his friend says, 'There will be a question about this topic in the exam'. As a result, the student opens a book and reads about this topic just once. At this moment, the student will not think about what he will eat for lunch today, or whom he will meet, but rather, he will be well aware that his chance is slim, which will force him to concentrate fully on what he is reading. For this reason, he is able to memorise the subject at the first glance, to the extent that he will be fully able to answer a question on this particular topic. On the other hand, we may find another student who studies the same topic for several days but is still unable to answer questions on it. As such, it becomes clear that the mind can imbibe something in a single moment as long as the person does not receive the information while his/her mind is occupied with something else. This point is proved by the fact that man might hear a poem or a speech only one time and yet memorise more than just one verse of the poem or more than just one sentence of the speech. Why is this?! It is because at that particular moment her/his mind was not occupied with anything, and as a result s/he was able to memorise very easily. As for the rest of the poem or speech, her/his mind might have been occupied with other topics at that time, and thus was unable

to store the information it received. Hence, one tries to repeat the process of listening or that of reading more than once in order to prepare her/his conscious mind to easily memorise all what s/he wants to store.

Based on the above, it is clear that the mind can imbibe something in one moment. As for the memory, it evokes the notions which are stored deep in the mind. Concerning that point, we stress that nothing is ever lost from the memory and therefore man is able to recall minding all that s/he wants. It is as though these impressions of Allah's Blessings are painstakingly recorded in man; s/he just has to evoke them from the stores in the memory and seek them out.

Careful reflection on the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And (always) remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 7) indicates that He *Glorified is He* uses the word *Ni'ma* here, which literally means 'a blessing' in the singular, even though His Blessings are countless. Why is this? This shows man that s/he should remember every single blessing which is bestowed upon her/him by Allah *the Almighty* in every aspect of life. Allah's Blessings are indeed manifold, but man must remember every single blessing in itself in order to fully express gratitude to Him *the Almighty*; a person is thus supposed to remember the blessing of being created out of nothing, the blessing of sight, and that of hearing. In reality, each one of these blessings should always be remembered by man. Moreover, we should know very well that no one divine blessing cancels out any other. If man gives consideration to every blessing, s/he will find that s/he has to remember them all the time. Another possible interpretation for this word is that it, i.e. the word 'blessings', is a generic noun that includes all that can be referred to as a blessing. For example, the word 'man' may refer to any human being; it may refer to Khalid, Mohammed, 'Ali, etc.

Moreover, this particular word '*Ni'ma*' could be attributed to its cause. For example, a blessing caused by the chivalry of a single human being may be attributed to him/her. Here, it is of great importance to know that the effect of these blessings provided by mankind is in relation to their limited human abilities. The matter is totally different when it has to do with those Blessings which are provided by Allah *the Almighty* since they, i.e. such divine Blessings, must also be in correlation with His *Glorified is He* Infinite and Unchallenged Power.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And (always) remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you, and the solemn pledge by which He has bound you to Himself....’ The word ‘to bind’ entails the interaction between two particular parties: man and Allah *the Almighty*. Man is in constant need for the sustenance provided to him/her by Allah *the Almighty*; however, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Absolute Sustainer. It is a relationship between the Lord and His slaves. In another position in the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells us to fulfil our promise to Him so that, in return, He will keep His Promise to us (*an-Nisa*: 20).

Again, it is clear that the phrase *wathaqqum* (He has bound you to Himself) indicates that there is interaction by two parties; a point of view which is supported by the fact that the verb *wathaqa* (has bound) is in the morphological form (*fa’ala*), which implies the interaction of two parties, just like the verb *sharaka* (to participate), which indicates that two or more people work together, or *qatala*, which means ‘to fight one another.’ As such, when He *the Almighty* says that He ‘has bound’ (*wathaqa*) His slaves, this means that He participated with them in this pledge and accepted it from them. But what pledge is this?

We should know that there are a number of pledges which have been given by man to Allah *the Almighty*; the first of which was taken from the children of Adam, while they were still in his (Adam’s) loin. The text of this particular pledge is mentioned by Allah in the chapter of *al-’Araf* in which He *Glorified is He* states that He has brought forth the descendants of Adam from their fathers’ backs, and has made them bear witness against their own souls: “‘Am I not your Lord?’” They said, “‘Yes! We bear witness (to this).” Lest you should say on the day of resurrection, “‘Surely, we were heedless of this’” (*al-A’raf*: 172).

As a matter of fact, this is the pledge of natural disposition which was taken before the soul and its passions existed. There is also another pledge known as ‘the pledge of the intellect’. It is by means of this pledge that man ponders over the universe and is thus able to adduce that the universe has been created in a very precise way, which clearly indicates the Existence of Allah *the Almighty*. There comes after this the pledge which has to do with faith in Allah. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* presented the teachings of Islam, some people believed in them, that is, he took from them a pledge that they will follow Allah’s Directions and Commands.

This point is definitively proven by the fact that he *peace and blessings be upon him* took a pledge from the people of Medina at Al-'Aqaba when they said to him, 'Take whatever pledge you want for yourself and your Lord'. As a result, Prophet Muhammad spoke, recited the Quran to them, called them to Allah and Islam and then said, 'I take a pledge from you that you will protect me like you protect your womenfolk and your children', whereupon Al-Barra' ibn Ma'rur took his hand and said, 'Surely, I swear by Him Who has sent you with the Truth that we will protect you like we protect our kin. Indeed, we pledge this, O Prophet Muhammad, for we are men of war, having arms that have been handed down from father to son.'⁽¹⁾

The same also occurred at the Pledge of Allah's Pleasure (*Bai'at Ar-Ridwan*) which took place under the tree. To conclude, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...the solemn pledge by which He has bound you to Himself...' may refer either to the general pledge of faith made at the time of the seed or to the pledges of faith which were made by the intermediation of the Messengers and Prophets.

He *the Almighty* then says: '...The solemn pledge by which He has bound you to Himself when you said, "We hear, and we obey...."' In fact, when a person has faith, s/he says, 'I have heard the Commands of Allah and I obey them', and in this way her/his pledge to Allah *the Almighty* is completely fulfilled. He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '...So, be mindful of Allah: verily, Allah has full knowledge of what is in the hearts'. To be mindful of Allah (*At-Taqwa*) means to place a protective barrier between Allah's Attributes of Majesty and ourselves. In other words, even though we are all required to strictly adhere to Allah's Way of Guidance, we must also place a protective barrier between His Anger and ourselves. We have previously explained that the meaning understood from being mindful of Allah *the Almighty* is the same as that understood from His Order to be mindful of the fire. Yet, someone may ask, 'Does the hellfire issue commandments and prohibitions?' We say to such a questioner, 'You do not understand this point properly. Our statement means that you should place a protective barrier between yourself and Allah's Wrath because the hellfire is one of Allah's

(1) Narrated by Ahmad

soldiers'. That is why He *the Almighty* tells us to be cautious and to 'place a protective barrier between ourselves and His Attributes of Majesty'. In relation to this, we should know that Allah's Attributes are of two kinds: Attributes of Majesty and Attributes of Beauty. The list of His Attributes of Majesty includes Absolute Power, Vengeance, and Compulsion, whereas the list of the Attributes of Beauty includes Mercy, Forgiveness, Sustaining His Creatures, and Wisdom, etc. To conclude, we must place a protective barrier between ourselves and His Attributes of Majesty to protect ourselves from the soldiers through which Allah's Attributes of Majesty are exhibited, one of which is the hellfire.

We previously explained that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us that Allah, the All-Compelling, showers His slaves with His Mercy in the last night of *Ramadan*. Concerning this, someone may ask, 'Why did he not use the word "the All-Forgiving" instead of the word "the All-Compelling"?' This is because this Most Beautiful Name, i.e. 'the All-Compelling' indicates one of Allah's Attributes of Majesty, which implies that the sinner will be punished. As a matter of fact, sins are closely related to the Attributes of Majesty and not to those of Mercy. Logic dictates that the sinner shall stand before Him *the Almighty* whose Vengeance is severe because the situation corresponds more closely to the Attributes of Majesty. But we must take into account the undeniable fact that He *the Almighty* postpones the infliction of His punishment to allow the sinner to show repentance. In addition, we should bear in mind that He rejoices in His slave's repentance and that His Mercy overcomes His wrath.

He *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying: '...verily, Allah has full knowledge of what is in the hearts'. Allah-consciousness, as we know, does not only apply to physical actions, but it also applies to inner states of consciousness. Good intentions and bad intentions are best examples in this regard. As a matter of fact, envy, hatred, plotting, and scheming are all bad attributes which have to do with man's inner consciousness. Hence, you should not think that Allah-consciousness only applies to physical actions, for it also applies to feelings. In the same connection, the deeds of the heart also fall under the category of Allah-consciousness. He *the Almighty* then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَاءَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰ ءَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ؕ اَعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

You who believe, be steadfast in your devotion to God and bear witness impartially: do not let hatred of others lead you away from justice, but adhere to justice, for that is closer to awareness of God. Be mindful of God: God is well aware of all that you do [8] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 8)

We know perfectly well that when Allah *the Almighty* wants to issue an order to the group of believers, He *the Almighty* does this with His saying: ‘O you who believe....’ He *the Almighty* does not deny people their free will by forcing them to follow His Way, but rather, He issues commandments and obligations to those who believe in Him. He is telling us ‘O you who believe in Me as the All-Wise and All-Powerful, follow My Way of Guidance’. In fact, when He *the Almighty* wants to address mankind, He calls upon them with His saying: ‘O Mankind’. This means that He wants to direct the attention of all humanity to His Existence. As for those who believe in Him, they are included in His words: ‘O you who believe....’ Having heard this particular call from Allah *the Almighty* to the group of believers, they must carry out His commands and orders.

We know for certain that there is a great difference between being Allah’s slaves and being Allah’s Worshippers. We can state that all mankind are Allah’s slaves but not all are His *the Almighty* Worshippers. The difference between being ‘slaves’ (*‘Abid*) and being ‘worshippers’ (*‘Ibad*) is that the former indicates that people are compelled in certain matters of their lives and that they cannot apply their free will to these particular matters. A rebel may say, ‘I do not believe in Allah’, but can s/he rebel against Allah’s fate upon her/him! If such a person falls ill and then claims that s/he is not actually ill, what will happen to her/him?! Could any of these rebels dare to refuse to die?! Definitely, no one could; no one can do such a thing. As such, it is clear that Allah’s slaves are naturally compelled by Allah and thus we all are slaves to Him *the Almighty*. Hence, He *the Almighty* can summon us whenever He wants. In addition, He *Glorified is He* can afflict us with any punishment that

we are not able to ward off. As for Allah's Worshippers (*'Ibad*), they are the ones who say to Allah, 'We relinquish our own free will and are happy with whatever you may command us with, either to "Do" or "Do not"''. This is actually the difference between the two terms.' Allah's slaves' are compelled to submit to His Will, whereas 'Allah's Worshippers' are those who are pleased to relinquish their free will in favour of what He *the Almighty* loves and chooses for them; they surrender themselves to Him. That is, they are compelled by free choice, while the slaves are compelled by force.

He *the Almighty* says: 'O you who believe! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to Allah....' The Arabic word *Qawwam* (steadfast) is an intensive adjectival form of the word *Qa'im*, which means 'one who stands'. If a person stands frequently for long periods of time, he is called *Qawwam*. Similarly, when a man who is not skilled in carpentry takes a plank of wood and uses it to cover a hole in his door, we do not call him *Najjar* (carpenter), but rather, we call him *Najir*, i.e. the one who performs an act of carpentry even though he is not specialised in it. However, the word *Najjar* refers only to that person who makes his living out of carpentry. Likewise, we call the one who goes out to sea in his boat and catches a couple of fish '*Sa'id*', i.e. the one whose hobby is to catch fish. And of course, we do not call him *Sayyad* (fisherman) because fishing is not his profession.

Here, the verse under discussion indicates clearly that Allah *the Almighty* does not want every believer to just 'stand up' for Him; rather, He *Glorified is He* wants them to be steadfast, i.e. to be especially diligent in their devotion to Him *the Almighty*. The opposite of 'standing' (*Qiyam*) is 'sitting'. Naturally, sitting is followed by reclining, that is, to place one's side on the floor, and after that comes lying down which is eventually followed by sleeping; Man's body can undergo different positions, as follows: standing up, sitting, reclining and sleeping. In Islam, a person who is asleep is not responsible for her/his actions; s/he is not held accountable for legal obligations and ordinances while sleeping. As a matter of fact, these different positions are mentioned by Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *an-Nisa'* in which He *Glorified is He* orders us to remember Him—standing, sitting and lying down (*an-Nisa'*: 103).

That is, (O believers!) you must constantly remember Allah *the Almighty*. A man's natural state involves actions, that is, s/he may stand and sit, etc.

As a matter of fact, when Arabs say, '*Qam fulanun bi Amr al-Qawm*' (so-and-so was steadfast in fulfilling the needs of the people), this means that he exerts his utmost efforts to run the affairs of the people, which is viewed as the most difficult thing that is undertaken. In this regard, it is important to know that He *the Almighty* does not want us to just stand before Him, but rather, He wants us to be steadfast and therefore always devoted to Him. However, we should fully realise the fact that our obedience to Him *Glorified is He* never means that He attains benefit from it, for He *the Almighty* created His Creatures due to His Attributes of Perfection. Moreover, we must know for certain that the creation of His Creatures never produced any new Attribute of Beauty or Perfection for Him. To continue, when man carries out Allah's Commands, s/he does this so as to be obedient and devoted to Him. Indeed, He *the Almighty* wants the believers to be steadfast in their devotion to Him, because all the actions of the Muslim society must be devout, complementary, and constructive. In truth, if these are really the actions of the Muslim society, they will bring about the happiness of mankind; for if this is really the case, man with his/her steadfastness will benefit him/herself along with the entire society. This means that all Muslims must always be devotedly obedient to Allah's Commands. Thus, we must realise that all legally charged Muslims must submit to and carry out the divine orders and commands by means of which rights of all the members of the society are protected. In fact, if you are required to be honest, everyone else in the Muslim society is also required to be honest. In the same connection, when He *the Almighty* forbids you from being treacherous, He similarly commands everyone else to refrain from being treacherous to you.

Hence, if we carefully reflect upon the divine obligations, we will find that they serve one's own interests. No one should thus think that s/he is the only one asked to carry out the religious obligations and commands. As a matter of fact, all people are asked to carry out these divine obligations and commands, in the same way as one person is ordered to do them. Consequently, when Allah commands you not to take the possessions of others, He *the Almighty* also prohibits them from taking your possessions unlawfully. This plainly indicates that the divine obligations serve the interests of the entire society and not just the individual. That is why one is asked to be steadfast in devotion to Him *the Almighty*. Concerning this, we stress the fact that the one who intends to

show off with his/her deeds will be deprived of the reward, but one who sincerely works for the sake of Allah will be continuously provided with blessings. As an example, someone may say, 'I did all these things for so-and-so, yet s/he does not acknowledge them!' We say to him, 'This is a natural result, since you did not do them for the sake of Allah. But had you done them for the sake of Him *the Almighty* He will recompense you for it in full'. Referring to those who seek the pleasure of Allah with their deeds, He *the Almighty* orders us in the Quran to remember the Day of Judgement in which every human being will find himself faced with all the good that he has done (*Al- 'Imran*: 30).

It is now clear that the believer must seek the pleasure of Allah *the Almighty* by dedicating all his/her actions to Him *the Almighty*. In fact, if one's actions are intended for the sake of Allah, then He *Glorified is He* does not squander the reward of those who do good deeds. In the same connection, losers are those who act for the sake of people even though people cannot benefit them in any way. They might even desert them or harbour hatred and bitterness towards those who treat them kindly. They, i.e. people, might even become their enemies. For example, if one confers favour upon another who might then be given a prestigious position by Allah, when this particular person meets the one who did him a favour, he might feel embarrassed and ashamed, to the extent that he may wish if this meeting had not taken place. Similarly, if he encounters him afterwards in the street, he turns his face away from him to avoid him. This is because the one who did him a favour makes him feel ashamed and weak, but he himself wants to act proudly with the people. To conclude, He *the Almighty* wants us to seek His Pleasure alone, because nothing is ever lost with Him. In addition, we must fully realise that Allah is watching over you and no action of yours escapes Him.

At this point, it is important to know how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* defined *Ihsan* ('perfection' or 'benevolence'). He said, '*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (know that) Allah sees you' ⁽¹⁾. Could you, as a human being, do an ill deed to someone in front of his eyes? In fact, you cannot do

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

any ill deed to anyone except behind their backs. Hence, why do you do evil deeds and disobey Him *the Almighty* when He is watching you all the time?!

Consequently, as He *the Almighty* wants you to treat yourself and others well, this means that you must take into account that all of your deeds and actions must be intended for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*. Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* has made all of the creatures subservient to mankind. In addition, He *the Almighty* has given us all the constituents of life, and as a result He asks us all to be steadfast in devotion to Him. In truth, man is required to be steadfast (*Qawwam*) in devotion to Him *the Almighty* all the time. This means that as long as you are healthy enough to work, then work; and do not only work as much as you need to, but also work as much as you are able to because if you only worked as much as you needed to, then those who are unable to work would not have anything to live on.

As such, it is clear that one must work as much as s/he is able to for her/his work to be of benefit to all the people. In fact, when He *the Almighty* says: ‘...Be ever steadfast in your devotion to Allah, bearing witness to the truth in all equity....’ this means that He *Glorified is He* teaches us not to render our deeds as scattered floating dust, but rather to entirely devote our deeds to Allah, because He *the Almighty* never forgets to reward His slave and He returns every favour; in the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells us that the reward of good must be good (*ar-Rahman*: 60). And in another position, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He does not fail to requite the doers of good (*at-Tawba*: 120).

When one of us is steadfast in devotion to Allah, s/he uses the motions of her/his life for the good of Allah’s Creatures. In fact, man is required to do so. In addition, it is not enough for you to do only this, but rather, you must also be a just witness to the truth and guide those who incline towards deviancy back to the path of justice. When you are steadfastly devoted to Allah, this is a good thing. In the same connection, you must try to convince others to be steadfastly devoted to Allah by bearing witness to the truth in all equity and justice. When this is actually done, i.e. bearing witness to the truth in all equity and justice, the wrongdoer will not continue his/her wrongdoing. It goes without saying that the main reason that makes a wrongdoer continue her/his wrongdoing even more is that s/he sees people circumventing justice, concealing faults and cheating people.

But if there are people who work hard to maintain justice, there will be no wrongdoing. In fact, the wrongdoer loves to see people circumvent justice; he thinks, 'So-and-so committed the same crime as me and got away scot-free!' It goes without saying that an unjust testimony leads to the breakdown of the society. If a society sees that the testimony given within it is just and equitable, all its members who wanted to commit a wrongdoing will restrain themselves from doing so. In addition, in such a society, the wrongdoers are punished, and in this way, others will be deterred from committing wrongdoings. The believer is first required to be steadfastly devoted to Allah by rectifying her/himself. S/he is then required to be an equitable and just witness for the truth in order to rectify others.

The Arabic word for 'equity' is (*Qist*), from which many other words are derived. Surprisingly, this word may be used to refer to both 'justice' and 'injustice'. It is one of those Arabic words which can give the meaning of the word and its opposite. This is actually one of the interesting phenomena of the Arabic language. Such words of this special phenomenon require the listener to examine them and deduce their meanings based on the context. The verb *Qasata/Yaqsitu* means 'to be just', and the verbal noun is either *Qist* or *Qusut*. As a matter of fact, it is the verbal noun that indicates the exact meaning of the word in question, that is, whether 'justice' or 'injustice' is meant: the verbal noun *Qist* means 'justice', while the verbal noun *Qusut* indicates 'injustice'. As such, we see that this verb may indicate a particular meaning and its opposite which means that the listener must be fully attentive to know how to determine the correct meaning of the word based on the context, that is, whether it indicates 'justice' or 'injustice'.

As for the verb *Aqsata*, it means 's/he made justice'. With regard to this, we must fully realise that there is a great difference between 'being just at the outset' which is *Qist*, and 'being just after injustice had been committed' which is *Aqsata* that means 'to remove injustice'.

Allah *the Almighty* says in the Quran that the wrongdoers (*al-Qasitun*) will be the fuel of the hellfire (*al-Jinn*: 15). But back to this particular verse under discussion from the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...bearing witness to the truth in all equity....' This means that we all must bear witness

for justice. As a matter of fact, the listener to or the reader of the Quran must be fully attentive to be able to determine the correct meaning of the word based on the context. In other words, s/he must have enough fluency in the Arabic language to be able to distinguish between the synonym and the antonym. Hence, it is clear there is difference between *Qist* which means 'justice', *Aqsata* which means 's/he maintained justice after removing injustice', and *al-Qusut* which means 'injustice'.

In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He loves those who act equitably, i.e. *Al-Muqsitun* (*al-Ma'ida*: 42). The word '*Muqsitun*' is the plural of '*Muqsit*' and is derived from the verb '*Aqsata*' which means 'to remove injustice'. Once again, it is the context and the verbal noun of a word that indicates its exact meaning. Incidentally, the verbal noun may be used in place of an adjective. For example, the word '*Adl* (justice), which is a verbal noun can also be used as an adjective to refer to 'someone who is just', in which case it is always written and pronounced '*Adl* and never changes, irrespective of the fact that it refers to a masculine or feminine, or to a singular, dual or plural noun (although an ordinary adjective would change its form in these cases). In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says that He shall set up just (*al-Qist*-singular form) balance-scales on the Day of Resurrection (*al-Anbiya*: 47). In another position, Allah *Glorified is He* orders us to weigh with true (*al-Qistas*-singular form) scales (*ash-Shu'ara*: 182).

In the Egyptian countryside, the merchant makes his own weights out of stones, gauging a certain stone to weigh one kilogram and gauging other stones to weigh certain fractions of a kilogram. Due to the frequent use of these stones, the merchant knows that they will wear down. To allow for this, he reweighs them every now and then; it is said that he 're-gauges his weights'. This is actually called *al-Qistas*. That is, *al-Qistas* is the standard against which the weights are gauged. If a person makes weights out of material that wears down or is affected by being touched, he has to re-gauge them every now and then in order not to wrong anyone in the least. He *the Almighty* says: '...this is more equitable (*Aqsatu*) in the sight of Allah....' Here, the word *Aqsatu* means 'being more equitable'. In truth, Allah's Standards of judgement are not as those of man, for man's standards may be subject to

differences of opinions. In addition, we see that some merchants decrease their measures by putting something under one of the balances to trick people. As for Allah *the Almighty* He is the All-Just and His Standards of measure are the most just.

This particular verse (in the chapter of *al-Ahzab*) was revealed because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made a judgement which was correct and just according to human standards, yet Allah *the Almighty* tells him that there is another judgement which is even more equitable than his. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to say to him 'It is true, O Prophet Muhammad, that your judgment cannot be subject to human caprice, interest or desire, but Allah's Justice is even more precise and exacting'. He *peace and blessings be upon him* made this judgement according to human equity; it concerned Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him* who was the freed slave of Prophet Muhammad. The Mother of the believers Khadija bint Khuwayled *Allah be pleased with her* had gifted Zayd to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Zayd's family knew that he had been captured and sold as a slave, and that he was finally owned by Prophet Muhammad, so they went to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked for their son. But Zayd refused to go with them and preferred to stay with Prophet Muhammad. That is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to honour Zayd who preferred him to his own father and family. He *peace and blessings be upon him* did this due to the point mentioned clearly in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* states plainly that Prophet Muhammad has a higher claim on the believers than (they have on) their own selves (*al-Ahzab*: 6).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* naturally had a high esteem for Zayd ibn Haritha, to the extent that he freed him and named him 'Zayd, son of Muhammad' as a way of honouring him. This was actually the usual practice of the Arabs at that time. But Allah *the Almighty* wanted to abolish the practice of adoption telling the believers that their adopted sons will never be like sons from their loins (*al-Ahzab*: 4).

In this regard, He *the Almighty* ran the affairs very precisely to abolish this act forever. Allah *Glorified is He* started with Prophet Muhammad; He ordered him to call Zayd by the name of his real father. In the Quran, He *the Almighty*

orders the believers to call their adopted sons by their (real) fathers' names since this is more equitable in the sight of Allah (*al-Ahzab*: 5).

Allah *the Almighty* did not deny that Prophet Muhammad was equitable, but rather, He *Glorified is He* wanted to tell us that His Verdict is even more equitable. Allah *the Almighty* having ordered Prophet Muhammad to call Zayd by the name of his real father, He consoled Zayd by mentioning his name in the Quran. As a matter of fact, Zayd Allah *be pleased with him* is the only Companion whose name is explicitly mentioned in the Quran. In the chapter of *al-Ahzab*, He *the Almighty* states that when Zayd had come to the end of his union with Zaynab, He *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Muhammad to marry her (*al-Ahzab*: 37). In this way, Zayd's name was recorded in the Quran, and as a result Muslims will recite it to the end of time. In fact, this was more than enough to remove his sadness. As such, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...more equitable in the sight of Allah...' is used in its proper place. Furthermore, if Allah *the Almighty* asks us to be as steadfast as we can in devotion to Him, i.e. to let no opportunity to do good without taking full advantage of it as best as we can, and asks us to be just in the society by being witnesses to the truth in all equity, this will mean that everyone can claim his/her rights. In addition, the strong will not be able to wrong the weak because the weak will find people to, truthfully, bear witness for him.

He *the Almighty* then warns Muslims not to let caprice negatively affect their standards of justice. Even if the matter has to do with your enemies or rivals, justice is more important and more essential. In this regard, He *Glorified is He* says: '...And never let hatred of anyone make you deviate from justice....' That is, do not let the hatred you feel for people prevent you from treating them equitably and do not let it cause you to transgress against them; for everyone has his/her rights. We know perfectly well the story that happened when a Muslim stole a shield from another Muslim but accused a Jew of committing this crime. Concerning this incident, He *Glorified is He* has revealed verses of the Quran in which He says that He reveals the Quran upon the heart of Prophet Muhammad for him to judge among the people with what Allah has taught him. In addition, He *the Almighty* orders him not to contend with those who are false to their trust (*an-Nisa*': 105).

Moreover, He *the Almighty* orders him *peace and blessings be upon him* not to support those who are treacherous against those who are innocent. In the same connection, the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...and never let hatred of anyone make you deviate from justice...’ means that Muslims must not let their hatred for people cause them to be unjust; otherwise this hatred will be for the good of their enemy. This is because when Muslims allow their hatred to make them follow their caprice, Allah will punish them for the injustice committed against this enemy. In this way, it is clear that basing one’s judgment on hatred, enmity, and caprice only helps the enemy of Islam. That is why He *the Almighty* orders the believers not to let their hatred for enemies cause them to deviate from justice.

He *the Almighty* then says: ‘...Be just: this is closest to having Allah-consciousness....’ In fact, when an enemy is treated justly, this actually rebukes and reproaches this enemy for going against the Faith to the effect that s/he will surely wonder: ‘This Muslim is too just to say anything but the truth; his/her belief must make him/her strong. Furthermore, the religion which commands him/her to act as such must be the best of religions!’

As a result, when you, as a believer, judge your enemy justly, you thereby rebuke him/her for being an unbeliever. But if your enemy were to see you act unjustly and go against the truth, you will only encourage her/him to remain a disbeliever because s/he will know that you were only following your caprice. If, on the other hand, s/he sees you taking such a stance which pleases Allah even though it benefits the enemy, s/he will reach the conclusion that the creed in which you believe must be true, and that you uphold the truth even if it benefits your enemies. Consequently, this person will rebuke himself to an extent that s/he might convert to Islam.

He *the Almighty* says: ‘...Be just: this is closest to having Allah-consciousness....’ But the question to be asked here is: ‘Which kind of Allah-consciousness will the person be closer to? Is it the enemy that will be closer to attaining piety when s/he sees that the believer upholds justice and truth?!’ As a matter of fact, this may happen; the enemy may come to her/his senses and say, ‘Faith has allowed this believer to overcome her/his hatred and to judge according to the truth even though s/he knows for certain that I am her/his enemy’.

The story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) offers us the best example in this regard when a stranger came to him and asked for food or lodgings, yet he *peace be upon him* did not give him what he asked for because this stranger was a disbeliever. The man went away. At that point, Allah *the Almighty* revealed to Abraham *peace be upon him* 'I know perfectly well that he is a disbeliever, yet I do not withhold My Blessings from him; however, he asked you for something to eat or a place to stay the night, but you did not give any to him!' Upon hearing this, Abraham *peace be upon him* went running after the man until he caught up with him. The man was surprised and asked Abraham, 'Why did you change your mind?', whereupon he *peace be upon him* replied, 'My Lord censured me for what I did'. The man then replied, 'Indeed, great is that Lord Who censures His beloved on behalf of His enemies!' He then became a believer. This story actually illustrates to us the meaning of His saying: '...closest to having Allah-consciousness....' It clarifies that the disbelieving man came closer to Allah-consciousness. To sum up, the psychological impact exerted on your rival or the one who hates you or is at odds with you when s/he sees you giving precedence to the truth over your hatred for her/him will make such a person become closer to attaining the faith which instructs its followers to give precedence to the truth over caprice. S/he will therefore become closer to Allah-consciousness, and in this way s/he is the one who bears witness to the truth with equity.

Allah *Glorified is He* finally concludes the verse with His saying: '...So be mindful of Allah: verily, Allah is aware of all that you do'. This indicates that He *the Almighty* is fully aware of all that we do. Here, it is of great importance for the believers to take into consideration the fact that their deeds must be intended for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*. In other words, they must not show off with their good deeds.

In fact, many people judge unjustly in order to become famous for being just, but how does this happen? Suppose a dispute arises between your son and your neighbour's son: it might seem courageous for you to rule in favour of your neighbour's son even though he is not in the right, but in reality, it is more courageous for you to rule in favour of your own son if he indeed is in the right. If you rule in favour of your neighbour's son even though he is not

in the right, you thereby rule unjustly simply in order to become famous amongst the people for being just!

That is, the truth must be dearer to you than both your son and your neighbour's son. Consequently, you (O Muslims!) must be wary of doing things which apparently seem to be just when really they are intended to show off. And we know that every part of the body has a particular role to play: the tongue's role is to speak; the ear's role is to hear and the role of the nose is to smell. Indeed, an action can be done by either word or deed; in the Quran, He *the Almighty* orders the believers to say what they do (*as-Saff*: 2-3). Consequently, it is clear that speech is performed by the tongue and deeds are performed by other body parts, and together these two make action. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾

God has promised forgiveness and a rich reward to those who have faith and do good works [9] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 9)

When we carefully reflect on the word *Wa'ada* (to promise), we find that another word in Arabic is similar to it, which is *Aw'ada*. If the thing which is promised is not mentioned, *Wa'ada* means a promise of good tidings, but *Aw'ada* indicates a warning of something bad. But if the thing promised is explicitly mentioned, the meanings of the two words are equivalent. As a result, you can use the word *Wa'ada* to mean either 'promise' or 'warning'. But if you do not explicitly state what the thing being promised is, *Wa'ada* means a promise of glad tidings and *Aw'ada* means a warning of something bad. In this regard, a poet says:

If I threaten (*aw'ada*) him or promise (*wa'ada*) him,

I break my threat but keep my promise.

When He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah has promised (*wa'ada*)...', this is an unassailably firm promise which cannot be broken, for the one who breaks promises is man who is subject to vicissitudes; the time might come to fulfil the trust, but man finds him/herself unable or no longer willing to fulfil it. However, when Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who promises, He cannot be

affected by vicissitudes, for He is the One Who causes vicissitudes to occur, and therefore His Promise is absolutely true and no power can prevent it from being fulfilled. As for human promises, any other power may cause them to be unfulfilled.

He *the Almighty* says: ‘Allah has promised to those who believe and do good works (that) for them there is forgiveness of sins....’ In this verse, He *the Almighty* makes it clear that His Forgiveness covers and includes all His servants, not only the especially pious and virtuous among them; rather, He *the Almighty* is directing His speech here to those who commit sins, telling them that if they repent, they will be forgiven. This is because preventing what is bad is given priority over gaining what is good. For example, if you are sitting somewhere and someone comes from the right and offers you an apple, and just as you are reaching out for the apple you see that another person is about to strike you, what action will you be more likely to take? Of course you will first defend yourself against the one who wishes to strike you. The same applies here; He *the Almighty* tells us that He effaces sins first by forgiving them and then admits people into His paradise. In the Quran, He *the Almighty* tells us that the prosperous in the Hereafter will be those who shall be drawn away from the Fire first and then admitted into Paradise. (*Al-’Imran*: 185)

Clearly, the first step of gaining the attained object is to be drawn away from the Hellfire, and then to be admitted into Paradise. That is, Allah *Glorified is He* gives precedence to the prevention of what is bad over the gaining of what is good. Accordingly, He *the Almighty* states in this verse under discussion that He will first grant them forgiveness. As a matter of fact, the human mind always thinks of what it fears first: it fears harm; it fears that its hopes will not be fulfilled. Hence, preventing what is bad has a higher priority than attaining what is good.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse by His saying: ‘...for them there is forgiveness of sins and a mighty reward’. In truth, every worldly reward for an action lasts for a defined period of time. That is why we reiterate that man’s rewards for his/her work in this worldly life always come to an end because even the man him/herself comes to an end by dying. As for the reward of the Hereafter, it lasts forever. In addition, it never leaves man, nor does s/he leave it—and this is the truly mighty reward.

Of course, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks about a concept pertaining to faith and good deeds, the soul is actually fully prepared for it; that is, there are ways that encourage what is good and others that cast fear about what is bad.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٠﴾

those who reject faith and deny Our revelations will inhabit the blazing Fire [10] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 10)

In the verse, we hear the saying of Allah: ‘...they will be companions of the Blazing Fire’, and our souls are moved with dread at this ‘companionship’ in which we would never wish to partake; for the word ‘companionship’ indicates closeness and a connection, and that one of the companions never leaves the other. It is as though the blazing fire will never leave them, and nor will they be able to leave it; it even indicates that the blazing fire will yearn for them. On the Day of Resurrection, the hellfire will have two functions to perform: the first will be the ‘companionship’ from which the disbeliever will not be able to extricate him/herself, while the second is that it will not give the disbeliever any opportunity to escape. Speaking about the hellfire, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He will ask it on the Day of Resurrection whether or not it is full and it will reply by asking for more (people) to torture (*Qaf*: 30). He *Glorified is He* then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ أَن يَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنْكُمْ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

You who believe, remember God’s blessing on you when a certain people were about to raise their hands against you and He restrained them. Be mindful of God: let the believers put their trust in Him [11] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 11)

Remembrance, as we have previously explained, means to call something to mind. As a matter of fact, man is liable to be afflicted with heedlessness, yet s/he must not continue in this state. On the other hand, some people may yet play with people’s emotions and say, ‘Allah knows that I do not remember Him’. When someone hears these words, s/he might bitterly rebuke and

censure the one who said them; but then the person explains what s/he meant by completing the statement, saying, 'For how could I remember Him, when I never forget Him?' Upon hearing this, one is calmed.

Once again, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...the blessings which Allah has bestowed...' using the singular word *Ni'ma* (a blessing) rather than the plural *Ni'am* because He deserves to be thanked for every single blessing He gives, and every single blessing is great enough to merit thanks. It also means that Allah's Blessing refers to every grace He sends to His creatures, the greatest of these blessings being that He is our Lord. He *the Almighty* says: '...Remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you when (hostile) people were about to lay hands on you, but He withheld their hands from you....' As long as the word 'when' is used, this means that a specific blessing is being referred to here. Allah *the Almighty* is clarifying the matter to us, to 'Remember how Allah blessed you at the time this event occurred' because He mentions a specific time, and told us to remember His Blessing on that occasion. In fact, He *the Almighty* is reminding us of the blessing which occurred when people were about to lay their hands on us.

That is, there is a flexing of the hand (*qabd*) which is a gesture of stillness and immobility, and an extension of the hand (*bast*) which is an indication of activity. The true blessing we obtain in this life from Allah is to be able to recognise His Bounties. The blessing mentioned in this verse is how Allah prevented further harm from the disbelievers from reaching the believers, after the disbelieving hands had been outstretched with evil and wrongdoings. If we choose to pause at this point in the verse mentioning the disbelievers' extending their hands in evil, some of us may mistakenly think that Allah *Glorified is He* uses the material means of His creatures as a channel for His decrees to reach us. Some of us may incorrectly assume that Allah's Blessings reach us by material means through the physical bodies of His Creation. However, this is not the meaning of these noble words. When we continue to read the rest of the verse, we clearly see that the Divine Blessing granted by Allah was that He arrested their hands from continuing to do wrong. In Arabic, the word '*bast*' (to stretch out) is commonly used to refer to a tongue uttering obscene language, and this verb '*bast*' is similarly used when describing a hand that commits mischief.

We can see that Allah *Glorified is He* uses the phrases ‘on you’ and ‘from you’ in these verses, both of which refer to the believers and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The believers closely adhered to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, and any harm reaching Prophet Muhammad also harms those who believe in him. It is possible that these verses are referring to the events of the tribe of Banu An-Nadir. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had signed a treaty with Banu An-Nadir stating that they would not aid the enemies of Islam in any way, and that if one of the Muslims mistakenly killed a man from outside Medina, Banu An-Nadir would help to pay the compensation. Prophet Muhammad had sent a Muslim on a raiding party, and two men who had a treaty with the Muslims were inadvertently killed. Indemnities were demanded for the two men, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not have the money to pay them, so he went to Banu An-Nadir to ask for help in paying them. They welcomed him and said they would give him food and drink before giving him what he asked for. Then, they sent one of them to climb a wall in order to drop a boulder onto Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as he sat next to one of their houses. However, Allah *Glorified is He* told His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him* what they had planned, and therefore he stood up and left without delay.⁽¹⁾

‘When (hostile) people intended to stretch out their hands (*yabsuto*) against you and He (Allah) withheld their hands from (harming) you’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 11). The Arabic word used here for ‘intended’ is ‘*hamma*’, which means ‘to consider doing something’. If the idea then moves on to the next stage of action, it becomes a ‘purpose’ (*qasd*). The Arabic word ‘*hamm*’ (insistent thought) can be identified as something that overwhelms a person’s hidden thoughts, and is accompanied by ‘anxiety and apprehension’ (*ghamm*). We often hear people saying that they are weighed down by an insistent thought (*hamm*) and apprehension (*ghamm*), or ‘concern and anxiety’ because an idea that does not leave the mind alone will cause anxiety. An insistent thought is an enemy which no one can conquer because it infiltrates the heart, whereas the mind

(1) The story of Banu An-Nadir throwing a stone at the Prophet *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*

might be able to repel any other enemy. We know that Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb (Abu Al-Hassan) *Allah be pleased with him* was well known for his clear rulings in religious jurisprudence⁽¹⁾, and that he had sufficient knowledge to answer whatever question he was asked. The extent of his knowledge led 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* to say about a particular matter, 'Indeed, this is a vexing problem in the absence of Abu Al-Hassan! 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* considered complicated problems worrisome if Abu Al-Hassan *Allah be pleased with him* was not there to solve them. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* would even seek refuge (from Allah) from a place where 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was not present. When people came to know this about the breadth of his knowledge, they started wondering, 'Where does he get these answers from?' They came up with a puzzle to observe how he would solve it. They started by posing the question among themselves, 'The universe is immense and contains some objects that are stronger than others. Certain powers in our world can certainly defeat all other powers'. Then, they tried to think of a particular force that is stronger than everything else. One of them said, 'The mountain is the strongest creation', but another replied, 'Yet we can cut stones from it with an axe made of iron'. As they continued to try to select the strongest object in creation, 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* came along. They directed their problem towards him, 'O Abu Al-Hassan, what is the strongest force in Allah's creation?' Imam Ali *Allah be pleased with him* answered as though he was reading from a book, showing that he had thought of the matter beforehand. He specified the strongest force, stating a number of forces that were the strongest. He said, 'The strongest of Allah's created forces are ten in number': 'The firm mountains are strong, but iron can break through these mountains. Fire melts iron, but water puts out fire. The clouds that are suspended between the sky and the earth carry water, but the wind breaks up these clouds. The Son of Adam can deter the wind and keep moving in order to carry out his worldly affairs, but drunkenness overpowers the Son of Adam. Sleep overpowers drunkenness, but concern and grief (*hamm*) can overpower sleep. Consequently, the strongest of Allah's forces are concern and grief'.

(1) The story of Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* about the strongest soldiers of Allah

We cannot pass by the word '*hamm*' in the Quran without mentioning the other instances in which it is mentioned in Allah's Book. One of these occasions is found in the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and people frequently ask about it in public meetings and in letters.⁽¹⁾ In the following verses, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the attempt of Al-'Aziz's wife (Zulaykha) to seduce Yusuf (Joseph): 'And, indeed, she desired him (*hammat bihi*). And he would have desired her (*hamma biha*), if he had not been shown the proof of his Lord. But We turned him away from evil and abomination, for he was one of Our sincere worshippers'. (*Yusuf*: 24)

Let us examine this matter. Some people find it hard to believe that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* could ever think of such a thing. However, we can primarily argue that a thought running in the mind is not an actual action and that it can be possible. Indeed, to think of something and then correct oneself might even require more power than not thinking of it at all. Resistance requires one to fight the soul's impulse, and fighting temptation is hard. We can also add the fact that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* had not yet received any revelation, and was not yet an actual Messenger at that time. Here, the verse says: 'And, indeed, she desired him (*hammat bihi*). He would have desired her (*hamma biha*), if he had not been shown the proof of his Lord' (*Yusuf*: 24). Thus, we can see that the wife of Al-'Aziz (Zulaykha) was the one who initiated the attempt to seduce Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*. Did this lead to any action? No. This would have required the assent of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*. So: 'she desired him' means that she would have liked to move on to the stage of action, but Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* refused to allow that. Regarding the one who was being seduced, namely Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He would have desired her (*hamma biha*), if he had not been shown the proof of his Lord'. (*Yusuf*: 24)

Let us give an example to make this easier to understand. If someone says to you, 'I would visit you, but only if that person was not with you', this means that the speaker will actually not visit you. In the same way, we find that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* saw the evidence of the truth from his

(1) The story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and the nobleman's wife (Zulaykha)

Lord, and therefore did not desire her. This distinction can be used to confirm the argument that chooses to absolve Yusuf (Joseph) of even thinking in that way. She desired him, but in order for the act to be carried out, there had to be acceptance from the other party. Thus, the action did not occur, not because she refused it, but because he refused to comply. He would have desired her, had he not seen an evidence of the truth from his Lord.

Why does Allah say that Yusuf (Joseph) would have desired her had he not seen an evidence of the truth from his Lord? Allah *Glorified is He* tells us this story to show us the reason why Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* refused the seduction. This refusal was not due to physical impairment on his part. In fact, were it not for the revelation he received from His Lord, the misdeed could have continued. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to tell us that Yusuf's masculinity was sound and that his virility was unimpaired. It was devout abstinence, and not a biological restraint. This is how we understand the nature of the account between the nobleman's wife (Zulaykha) and Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*.

Let us return to the verse we are currently examining: 'When (hostile) people were about to stretch out their hands against you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 11). The word '*qawm*' (people) is derived from the word '*qiyam*' that means 'to stand'. Standing is a position of activity and fervour. As we clarified before, a man's levels of activity can include standing, sitting, reclining, being recumbent or sleeping. These levels are in ascending order of comfort. Standing is the most exhausting level because the weight of the body is carried by the feet over a small area. Sitting distributes the weight over a larger area, and when a person reclines, the area which bears his weight is even larger. Consequently, the word '*qawm*' is used to mean 'a group of men' because it is a man's nature to stand to attention, whilst a woman's nature tends to be calm and concealing. As such, '*qawm*' means 'men' in contrast to the word '*nisa*' which means 'women', for it is not in the nature of women to rise vigorously. An Arab poet said, 'I do not know, nor am I close to knowing, if the tribe of Hisn are men (*qawm*) or women (*nisa*)'!

When the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'When (hostile) people (*qawm*) were about to stretch out their hands against you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 11), this means that no women thought about harming Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

in this incident. We also find that the Arabic word 'bast' (to stretch out) raises a question. Does 'bast' mean 'to extend the hand to harm others' or 'to extend the hand to provide for others'? Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For if Allah were to grant (*yabsut*, the verb of *bast*) (in this world) abundant sustenance to (all of) His servants, they would behave on earth with wanton insolence' (*ash-Shura*: 27). In this case, the Arabic word 'bast' means 'to give'. As for the opposite meaning of the word 'bast' (i.e. 'to harm'), Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that Abel said to Cain: 'Even if you stretch out your hand (*basat*) against me to slay me, I will not stretch out my hand against you (*basit*) to slay you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28).

'Stretching out a hand' is a phrase that refers to physical action. This active physical movement is the tangible expression of an intangible thought that had already passed through the mind; to stretch out one's hand requires prior planning and deliberation. Thus, we learn from these verses that these people stretched out their hands (to harm) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers.

And when we look at the experiences of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with his enemies, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And remember (O Prophet Muhammad), how those who were bent on denying the Truth schemed against you in order to restrain you (from preaching), to slay you or to drive you away. They plotted and planned and Allah too had planned, but Allah is the Best of planners' (*al-Anfal*: 30). They sat together and made schemes and plots, but how can witnesses ever be able to see such schemes until the scheming hands have become stretched out to carry out their plans? In their evil plans, this group of disbelievers wanted to restrain Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by any of several methods. These included restricting him to his home, imprisoning him, inflicting injuries to incapacitate him from moving, killing him or banishing him from his land. But what was the outcome of their schemes?

For anyone to harm Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was an offence to all the believers because the believers could not be guided without their Prophet. Consequently, because harming Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was like harming all the believers, Allah stopped the disbelievers' hands and turned their plans against them.

The word '*makr*' (translated as 'to plot and plan') in Arabic literally refers to a tree whose branches are intertwined in a manner that conceals which leaf grows from which branch. Metaphorically, '*makr*' means to plot secretly. It is evidence of weakness and not strength. Strong people face their obstacles directly and do not choose to plot. Therefore, it is said that only weak people plot against others. Moreover, some people think that women's weakness motivates them to plot cunningly. They find evidence for these views from two Quranic verses. The first are Allah's words about Satan: 'Verily, Satan's plot is always weak' (*an-Nisa*: 76). The second verse narrates how a man described the plot of Zulaykha (to seduce Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*): 'Verily, your plot is great!' (*Yusuf*: 28)

To sum up, only weak people choose to plot schemes, as they are unable to face problems directly. However, even if human beings conceal their plots from others, they cannot conceal them from Allah, for He knows all that hearts conceal. The Lord's planning is more powerful than that of any human being, which is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'They plotted and planned and Allah too had planned, but Allah is the Best of planners' (*al-Anfal*: 30).

We notice that Allah's plans are always good. The Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to let the enemies of Islam know that despite all their plotting, they could not harm Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by any means, either by persecuting his people or by plotting against him. Despite their never-ending schemes, the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left his house in Mecca and set out for Medina as they lay sleeping.' And We have enveiled them, so they cannot see.' (*Ya Sin*: 9)

We are amazed by all the ways in which Allah kept the hands of the disbelievers from harming Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah protected His Messenger, Muhammad, by mobilizing inanimate objects, plants, animals, and human beings to guard him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* threw dust⁽¹⁾ and covered the sight of the disbelievers, and

(1) The story of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* throwing dust over the heads of the disbelievers.

thus dust became one of Allah's soldiers. Asma' ⁽¹⁾, the daughter of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with them* carried food to Prophet Muhammad and her father in the cave ⁽²⁾ as she tended her flock and the sheep ate the grass, thereby covering the tracks made by the caravan of Prophet Muhammad. As a result, plants also joined this troop protecting Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the disbelievers' harm, as did this herd of sheep. The hooves of a horse (belonging to Suraqa ibn Malik ⁽³⁾) sank into the ground, doves built a nest outside Prophet Muhammad's cave and a spider spun its web over the cave's entrance ⁽⁴⁾. All of Allah's soldiers responded to His Divine Command and participated in guarding Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the disbelievers' grasp.

Even more remarkable than that, Allah *Glorified is He* arrested the disbelievers' hands by using other disbelievers; we find that Prophet Muhammad, who came to guide mankind from the glooms of darkness into light, was shown the way to his abode of immigration (Medina) by a disbeliever. Consequently, we can see that spiritual guides can utilize worldly, material guides; here, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the bearer of the spiritual light for mankind, made use of material assistance provided by a disbeliever. We know that another group of Allah's soldiers in the city he immigrated to (Medina) were Jews despite their obstinacy. Did they not previously taunt the Aws and Al-Khazraj tribes, even before Prophet Muhammad had been sent by Allah? They would say to the Aws and Al-Khazraj tribes, 'A prophet will

(1) The story of Asma' carrying food to her father and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while they were in the cave

(2) Reference is to the Cave of Hira'.

(3) The story of Suraqa ibn Malik and his horse while pursuing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*

(4) From the proofreader: The scholars have differed concerning the Hadith about the spider spinning a web over the entrance of the cave. It was classified as hasan (good) by Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar in Fath Al-Bari and by Ibn Katheer in Al-Bidayah wa'Al-Nihayah (3/222), but it was classified as weak by Al-Albani in Al-Silsilah Al-Da'eefah. Ahmad Shakir said in Tahqeeq Al-Musnad (3251), 'There is some dispute concerning it'. The commentators on Al-Musnad said (3251), 'It is classified as weak'. Concerning the Hadith about the doves, it was similarly classified as weak by the commentators on Al-Musnad.

arise amongst you (the Arab tribes). We shall follow him and slay you as 'Ad and Iram were slain'.

When the Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj heard that a prophet had appeared in Mecca, they said, 'This is the prophet of whom the Jews warned us, so we must not let them reach him first!' Hence, they went to him first, embraced Islam, and swore allegiance to him. However, the Jews disbelieved in his message and denied what they had said before he was sent by Allah. So, Mu'adh ibn Al-Jabal, Bishr ibn Al-Barra' ibn Ma'rur and Dawud ibn Salama *Allah be pleased with them* said to them, 'O Jews, fear Allah and embrace Islam, for you used to predict your victory over us by means of a prophet when we were an idolatrous people, and you told us he would appear and described him just as we see him now!' Salam ibn Al-Mashkam, one of the tribe of Banu An-Nadir, said, 'He has not brought us anything we recognise, and he is not the one of whom we used to speak to you.'⁽¹⁾ After that, Medina became the destination of the Muslims' Emigration.

Thus, we can see that falsehood may serve truth, and unbelief may serve faith. 'Abdullah ibn 'Urayqat who was a disbeliever offered himself as a guide for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and accompanied him on the Emigration, and he did not seek the bounty which Quraysh had offered to anyone who delivered Prophet Muhammad to them. Consequently, we see that their hands were turned away in many different ways.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was involved in incidents that the Companions witnessed wherein Allah *Glorified is He* gave him extraordinary wonders that verified his truthfulness. We do not consider them miracles as such because the Noble Book (the Quran) is the miracle of Islam until the end of time. However, Prophet Muhammad's life contained physical miracles, like the ones which were offered to other Messengers before him. The Lord *Glorified is He* did not want these extraordinary incidents to be witnessed by all the Muslims, but some of the Muslims and disbelievers of that time witnessed them. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* needed wonders that could verify that he was indeed a Messenger. The Prophet's

(1) *Ibn Kathir, (Tafsir), narrated on the authority of Ibn Abbas Allah be pleased with him*

Companion Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him*⁽¹⁾ said, ‘There was a Jew in Medina who used to give me a loan of dates that I would repay at harvest time’. (Jabir *Allah be pleased with him* owned land which was on the road to Ruma).’ The harvest failed one particular year,⁽²⁾ and when the Jew came to me at harvest-time I had nothing for him, so I began to ask him for a year’s extension. He refused. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was informed of this, and therefore he said to his Companions, “Let us go and ask the Jew to give Jabir more time.” They came to me at my orchard, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* began to speak to the Jew, who said, “O Abu Qasim. I will not give him more time.” When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw this he stood up and walked around the palms, and then he returned and asked him again, but he refused. I brought a few soft dates and placed them before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad ate from them and then said, “Where is your hut, Jabir?” I told him where it was and he said, “Spread out a blanket for me in it.” I did so and he went in and took a nap. When he woke up, I brought him some more dates, and he ate them. Then he got up and spoke to the Jew again. The Jewish man again refused to give him more time. Hence, he got up and walked around the fresh date palms a second time, and then said, “O Jabir, harvest and pay (your debt).” He stood in the harvesting area and I picked enough from the trees to pay my debt, still having more than I needed. I went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him this good news, and he said, “I testify that I am the Messenger of Allah!”⁽³⁾

In another instance, some of the Companions did not have enough water for their needs⁽⁴⁾, and therefore Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* dipped his hands in the water they had and it became ample for all the people to drink from it. Could any of those who witnessed this miracle deny it? Of course no one could! But is this miracle meant for us? If we trust the

(1) The story of the loan of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah *Allah be pleased with him* to the Jew and the miracle of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he reached the wall

(2) In another narration, he said, ‘One year the harvest was different than usual’.

(3) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

(4) The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* placing his noble hand in the water to make it suffice all his Companions

one who narrated it to us, we will not find it implausible that Allah could have blessed the water for His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, we also know that Allah *Glorified is He* preserved the Quran to be his lasting miracle, as Allah said: 'Behold, it is We who sent down the Quran, and indeed We will be its Guardian (from all corruption).' (*al-Hijr*: 9) Allah, *Glorified be He*, also said: 'Falsehood cannot approach it (the Quran) from before it or from behind it; (it is) a revelation from a (Lord who is) Wise and Praiseworthy'. (*Fussilat*: 42)

It was reliably narrated ⁽¹⁾ that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took little provisions on one journey, but he prayed to Allah as He decreed and then fed an entire army with the food. Those who live after the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* can either believe in these miracles or choose not to believe in them, but every believer who knows the rank and position of Prophet Muhammad in his Lord's sight should believe in these wonders when they are reliably narrated with a chain of transmission that is, without doubt, they are sound. Consequently, there is no need to argue with those people who do not believe in the physical miracles, and we say to them, 'None of you are obliged to believe in these miracles, but you are obliged to believe in the miracle of the Quran'. The wonders which occurred were either meant to strengthen Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or to strengthen the faith of his Companions on occasions when they were overwhelmed by grievous events that shook them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So that We might strengthen your heart,' (*al-Furqan*: 32) and He says: ' (For) there and then the believers were tried and they were shaken with a dreadful fear.' (*al-Ahzab*: 11) Clearly, the believers were in need of signs from Heaven to make their faith firm. The conclusion is that all the physical wonders which were given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were not meant for all the Muslims in general, but were rather meant for those who witnessed them. As a result, these wonders do not need to be debated because the only miracle which was meant for all the people was the Book of Allah *Glorified is He*.

(1) The story of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* feeding all the Muslim army with very little food

Many of the enemies of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were determined to harm him. Did a Jewish woman⁽¹⁾ not want to poison him, but Allah stopped her hand (from doing this)? There was also the incident of Banu An-Nadir⁽²⁾, when they wanted to drop a boulder on Prophet Muhammad, but the Prophet moved away before the assassin dropped it on him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Also, Safwan ibn Ummayya⁽³⁾ wanted to take revenge on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after the battle of Badr. He hired 'Umayr ibn Wahb Al-Jumahi and said to him, 'Go to Medina and kill Muhammad, and I will pay your debts and care for your family as though they were mine for as long as they live'. As a result, 'Umayr went to Medina and approached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Prophet said to him, 'What has brought you here, O 'Umayr?' 'Umayr replied, 'I have come due to the prisoner you are holding, so treat him well; 'Umayr's son was being held as a prisoner of war by the Muslims. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked, 'Then why is that sword hanging from your neck?' 'Umayr answered, 'Fie upon swords! Have they done us any good?' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Tell me the truth. Why have you come here?' 'Umayr said, 'I have come for no other reason than that'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'No, for you sat with Safwan ibn Ummayya in the Hijr and spoke of those men of Quraysh whose dead bodies were in the wells (of Badr). Then you said, "Were it not for my debts and my family, I would set out to slay Muhammad." Consequently, Safwan took it upon himself to care for your debts and sustain your family so that you would slay me. But Allah is the One Who protected me from you'. 'Umayr said, 'I testify that you are the Messenger of Allah! O Messenger of Allah; we used to call you a liar when you brought us tidings from Heaven and the Revelation which was sent down to you. There was no one present in

(1) The story of the Jewish lady who put poison in the food of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

(2) The story of Banu An-Nadir throwing a stone at Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

(3) The story of Safwan ibn Umayya hiring 'Umayr ibn Wahb Al-Jumahi to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

that place except Safwan and myself. By Allah, I know that no one but Allah could have told you of it. Praise be to Allah, who has guided me to Islam!'⁽¹⁾

Jabir *Allah be pleased with him* related another example⁽²⁾ which was about the battle of Dhat Ar-Riqa'. He narrated that a man named Ghawrath ibn Al-Harith approached Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, 'Who shall save you from me?' The Prophet replied, 'Allah'. The sword fell from the man's hand and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* picked it up and said, 'And who will save you from me?' The man said, 'Be the better one of those who took the sword!' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Do you bear witness that there is no deity but Allah?' The man said, 'No! But I pledge to you that I will not fight you or join any people who fight you'. Jabir *Allah be pleased with him* said about that incident, 'We slept for a while, and then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called us. We found a Bedouin man sitting with him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "This man took my sword as I slept, and I woke as he held it unsheathed in his hand. He asked me, 'Who will save you from me?' and I said to him, 'Allah'. And here he now sits' ". Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* let him go and did not punish him.⁽³⁾ And when the Bedouin man went to his companions, he said, "I come to you from the best of people!"⁽⁴⁾

When the man heard the first time that Allah will save Prophet Muhammad from him, the sword fell from his hand as his body trembled and it returned to his natural instinctive faith. And when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* picked up the sword and asked the man who could save him, he did not say 'Hubal', 'al-Lat' or 'al-'Uzza' (idols in Arabia). The man knew that idol-worship was nothing but a string of lies; had he truly believed in his idols, he would have said one of their names. Even if a man lies to all the

(1) *Ibn Hisham, (As-Sira An-Nabawiyya)*

(2) *The story of Ghawrath ibn Al-Harith who wanted to kill the Prophet may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him*

(3) *(Narrated by Al-Bukhari) / Ibn Ishaq added that Angel Gabriel peace be upon him, struck the man on his chest, and he dropped the sword. The Prophet picked it up and then said, 'And who will save you from me?' to which the man replied, 'No one.' Al-Waqidi added that the man embraced Islam and then returned to his people and guided many souls.*

(4) *Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in Al-Bidaya, iv. 84*

people in the world, he will not be able to lie to himself. The word 'Allah' is what shook the man's disbelief and returned him to the Truth.

At the battle of Badr⁽¹⁾, we find that the Companion of Prophet Muhammad, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was on the side fighting with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, whilst his son, 'Abd Ar-Rahman, was on the side fighting with the disbelievers. Sometime after his son had embraced Islam, the son was sitting with his father and reminiscing. The son said, 'I saw you on the day of Badr and avoided you'. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'But had I seen you, I would not have avoided you.'⁽²⁾ Abu Bakr's son saw his father, but did not kill him, and there is no doubt that a struggle ensued in his mind and soul between his love for his father and his allegiance to Hubal or those other idols; he realised that his father was worth much more to him than those statues. When Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Had I seen you, I would have killed you', the inner decision was between his faith in Allah and the love for his son, and faith was dearer to the soul of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. Both Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and his son were logical with themselves in this regard.

These actions occur because if innate human nature is not interfered with by anyone, it will shine forth with faith. We can see this clearly in the early days of Islam when the Companions were persecuted in Mecca and made their first emigration to Abyssinia. Did they go there randomly, or did they follow (in faith) a noble plan of Prophet Muhammad? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* first searched for a land where they could go and be accepted by the people as emigrants. He looked at the Arab Peninsula and found that Quraysh were able to control all the tribes of Arabia during the pilgrimage season, and therefore no tribe could protect the emigrants. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'If you went to the land of the Abyssinians, there is a king there under whom no one is oppressed, and it is a land of sincerity. Stay there until a time when Allah shall give you relief from what you are now suffering.'⁽³⁾

(1) *The story of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with him with his son Abd Ar-Rahman*

(2) *Narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba and Al-Hakim on the authority of Ayyub*

(3) *Ibn Hisham, (As-Sira An-nabawiyya)*

Indeed, the Muslims travelled to Abyssinia⁽¹⁾ as emigrants. Quraysh attempted to bring the Muslims out of the land of Negus (King of Abyssinia). They even sent an envoy to bring them back, but Negus refused. Negus heard about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and realised that he was the Prophet the *Injeel* (Gospel) foretold about. It is certain that Negus embraced Islam because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for him when he died. His embracement of Islam was indeed a great reward from Allah for protecting the believers. It was a great blessing for Negus to die as a Muslim and for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lead his Funeral Prayer.

These were all incidents in which Allah protected Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers from harm to verify the Truth for all who witnessed these incidents. Thus, the believers were able to affirm they were on the right path and that Allah was not going to desert them. They should not think their enemy was stronger than they were, for Allah is more powerful than all His creatures. ‘...And He withheld their hands from (harming) you....’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 11) Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to prepare the believers for the task of conveying His guidance to mankind. Therefore, the believers have to persevere in obeying Allah’s Commandments and remain conscious of Him for Allah to protect them from harm. A disbeliever can only defeat a believer who is negligent in adhering to Allah’s Guidance, for the Lord *Glorified is He* does not state Quranic principles and then let physical laws of nature over-ride such principles. He said, ‘And that, verily, Our soldiers will indeed (in the end) be victorious!’ (*as-Saffat*: 173)

Consequently, if you see an army of Muslims being defeated, then know that they have abandoned Allah’s way so Allah abandoned them. When some Muslims disobeyed the command of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the disbelievers defeated them. Allah does not change His physical laws of nature for the sake of people who attribute themselves to Him, but they do not obey His commandments and Guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...If you help (the Cause of) Allah, He will help you and will make your

(1) *The story of Negus (the king of Abyssynia) with the Muslims*

steps firm' (*Muhammad*: 7). And He *Glorified is He* says: 'So remember Me, and I will remember you...' (*al-Baqara*: 152).

If you attribute yourself to Islam, you must truly adhere to its teachings. If you see believers go to battle and be defeated, be sure that they had abandoned Allah's Way of guidance. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And how many a prophet fought (in Allah's Cause), and with them (fought) many Allah-devoted men. They did not lose heart because of what they had to suffer in Allah's Cause, and they neither did weaken, and nor did they abase themselves (before the enemy). Allah loves those who are patient in adversity; All that they said was, "Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our extravagances in our affairs! Make firm our steps and help us against those who deny the Truth!" Whereupon Allah granted them the rewards of this world, as well as the good rewards of the life to come: for Allah loves those who do good' (*Al-'Imran*: 146-148).

Those who fought alongside Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had to endure some sufferings. They did not weaken, but rather were patient and asked the Lord *Glorified is He* to forgive their sins. They knew what the source of their weakness was, and they sought Allah's aid against it. Thereafter, what did Allah do for them? He *the Almighty* granted them rewards in this worldly life and the amplest rewards of the Hereafter, for Allah loves the doers of good. This is the faithful conduct that guards one against being defeated and deceived by the enemy; it is a result of being pious and constantly aware of Allah's Existence and Company. When a Muslim is in Allah's Company, none of Allah's Creatures is able to touch him.

We have an illustration of that principle in the story of Prophet Muhammad's Emigration. The Prophet's Companion, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was eager to protect Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* related that on the night they were in the cave, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'O Messenger of Allah, let me enter the cave before you, so if there is a snake I can deal with it before you enter'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* agreed to this, and therefore Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* entered the cave and began to search for any holes there. Every time he found a hole, he would tear a part of his cloak to fill the hole with it, until he used his entire cloak for this purpose.

There was one hole remaining, so he used his feet to cover it and then asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to enter.

When morning came, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Where is your cloak, Abu Bakr?' Abu Bakr told him what he had done, and as a result Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* raised his hands and said, 'O Allah, place Abu Bakr with me on the Day of Resurrection!' Allah *Glorified is He* then revealed to him, 'Verily, Allah has granted your request.'⁽¹⁾ Abu Bakr Allah *be pleased with him* saw the disbelievers as they passed in front of the cave, and said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'If one of them looks beneath his feet, he will see us!' To that, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O Abu Bakr, what do you think (of the protection) of two men when Allah is their third Companion?''⁽²⁾

This was a perfect response because they were both in Allah's Company. If a believer is in the Company of Allah, whom no sight can encompass, then no harm will be able to encompass the believer either. We may not know how, as we do not know all of Allah's Secrets, but He is the All-Powerful and Almighty.

With regard to people, we find that if a young child goes out by himself he may be harmed by other children, but if he goes out with one of his guardians, such as a father or an older brother, the other children are not able to harm him. Similarly, we should consider ourselves under the Guardianship of Allah, and seek refuge in His Company. When a believer does that, Allah's soldiers will provide protection if anyone seeks to harm him. Allah *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying: 'And in Allah let the believers place their trust'. (*al-Ma'ida*: 11) Consequently, do not say, 'Our numbers and resources are few'. You are responsible for preparing whatever you are able to, and then you must leave success to Allah's aid.

'Hence, make ready for their confrontation whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster.' (*al-Anfal*: 60) The history of faith shows us many instances in which small forces have defeated larger gatherings by Allah's Will. Someone might say, 'This is a material matter which requires great

(1) *Abu Na'im, (Hilyat Al-Awliya')*

(2) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

numbers and resources' to which we reply, 'The Lord *Glorified is He* told us to make ready whatever we are able to, not more than we are able to; and He *Glorified is He* possesses subtle soldiers which cannot be seen'.

'...I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the Truth...' (*al-Anfal*: 12). As long as Allah has cast terror into the hearts of the enemies, the matter will be settled, regardless of the numbers and resources involved. One must first prepare whatever he can, and then place his trust in Allah. This is the way of actively ensuring victory.

However, we should be aware that placing our trust in Allah is not the same as being slothfully dependant on Him. The one who places his trust in Allah must be aware that every physical part of his body has a spiritual role; it has to implement Allah's Law. The ear hears the commandments of the Lord *Glorified is He* and as a result, you should obey these orders. If you hear people mocking Allah's signs, you have to turn away from them. The tongue speaks, so do not use it for anything other than good speech. Every part of the body has its function, and the function of the heart is to have certitude and to trust in Him. Let us remember that the feet are for walking, the hands are for acting, and the heart is for trusting. Therefore, do not assign the work of the heart to the feet or the hands, because to truly trust Allah means to act with your body and trust with your heart.

There are many who work in their lives without trusting Allah, until their actions become all in vain. We find that if a farmer does not place his trust in Allah, his crops grow very well until a storm, or a change in weather suddenly destroys his harvest, driving all his work in vain.

However, beware of neglecting the means because if you neglect the means, then you are not placing your trust in Allah. Some people choose to sluggishly depend on Allah's Assistance by assigning the function of the heart to the limbs. If someone claims, 'I do not work because I simply place my trust in Allah', challenge their argument. Tell them, 'Alright, let us see how you truly trust Allah'. Bring before him a plate of his favourite food, and when he stretches out his hand to bring the food closer, stop him, and say, 'No! Let the food jump from the plate into your mouth'.

Allah *Glorified is He* told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stories of the other Messengers in order to strengthen his faith and provide him with educational examples. Allah did not want the Prophet's heart to be aggrieved by the actions of the Jews or the idolaters: 'If you experience, O Muhammad, any denial and abuse, much of that was directed to the Messengers who came before you'. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ اثْنَيْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا وَقَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَيْتُمُ الزَّكَاةَ وَآمَنْتُمْ بِرُسُلِي وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّئَاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿١٢﴾

God took a pledge from the Children of Israel. We made twelve leaders arise among them, and God said, 'I am with you: if you keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, believe in My messengers and support them, and lend God a good loan, I will wipe out your sins and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams. Any of you who now ignore this [pledge] will be far from the right path' [12] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 12)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of the pledge which was taken from the children of Israel. This might mean the pledge of the seed of Adam *peace be upon him* the pledge concerning which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And behold, Allah took a solemn pledge from the prophets' (*Al- 'Imran*: 81), or the pledge concerning which He *Glorified is He* says: 'Hold fast with (all your) strength to what We have given you' (*al-Baqara*: 63).

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'When we appointed from among them twelve leaders' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12). Let us consider the religious rule that Allah *Glorified is He* decreed here. He did not represent the different tribes of people with a single delegate (from only one of the tribes) as this could have caused tribal disputes to arise. Hence, He chose twelve leaders to represent the number of the tribes of Israel. In this way, none of the tribes felt estranged and they did not ask, 'Why was a leader not chosen from our tribe?' This 'leader' was an individual who managed the tribe's social and religious affairs. The Arabic word for 'leader' is '*naqeeb*', which is derived from the root letters

(*nun-qaf-ba*) from which comes the word '*naqb*' which means 'crevice', i.e. a deep split in any solid mass.

The fact that the Lord *Glorified is He* chose the word '*naqeeb*' indicates that the true leader must be vigilant and alert when he assigns appropriate roles to each individual. The leader must focus on assigning the work in a way that best serves the collective effort of the group. Therefore, in the tribe, every member should have an appropriate duty and position. This can only be achieved by an insightful, unearthing, and investigative (*tanqeeb*) procedure. Therefore, the leader should look into the condition of each individual and his inclinations, and then place each person in the right position. He should not stop at the superficial aspects of matters, but rather investigate everything in depth to discover the roots as well as the means of every individual. Consequently, choosing a leader from each tribe prevented the tribal conflicts that could have arisen if a single leader had been chosen for all the tribes. Also, a leader chosen from each tribe will be thoroughly informed about his own people.

In our daily lives we often hear the word '*manaqib*' (depths) which is derived from the same root as '*naqeeb*' (leader). It is used to refer to the 'virtues' of an individual; if a person is described as having 'depths', it means that he has many virtues of which other people are aware. In fact, the word indicates that a virtuous person should not boast of his virtues himself, but rather leave the people to discover (*yanqubu*) his virtues on their own accord. Likewise, the treasures of the earth and those of lost civilisations are under the ground and we must dig (*nanqub*) to find them. On the other hand, remains above the surface of the earth are blown away by the wind and worn down by weathering until nothing is left for anyone to see. The same root gives us the word '*niqab*' which means the veil with which a woman covers her face.

The Lord's words: 'Behold, I am with you,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) offers the believers a further aspect of faith, so none of them will imagine they have to face the enemies of Allah on their own. Each believer will realise that they are aided by Allah, and as a result s/he will not weaken or falter as long as they are believers. This is similar to Allah's saying: 'Hence, make ready (for their confrontation) with them any force and war mounts you are able to muster'

(*al-Anfal*: 60). Once the believers have gathered all that they can, they should leave the rest up to Allah. His words: 'Behold, I am with you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) also mean that the leaders of the tribes were not free to do whatever they wanted. Allah informs them that he will accompany their individual actions and witness how each of them manages their tribal matters.

After this, Allah said: 'If (Arabic: *la'in*) you establish prayer, pay *zakat*, believe in My Messengers and assist them, and offer to Allah a beautiful loan, I will surely efface your bad deeds.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) The Arabic compound word 'la'in' ('if') comprises both a condition and a vow, as though Allah *Glorified is He* is saying, 'By My Might, I vow that if you are constant in prayer, and you do such-and-such, your reward will be that I will erase your bad deeds'. The Arabic word '*la*' indicates a vow and the Arabic word '*in*' indicates a condition. Signifying a condition is one of the functions of the Arabic word '*in*'.

A vow, as we know, requires a main clause, and a conditional phrase also requires a main clause. One might say to a student, 'If you study, you will succeed', which a conditional statement is. Another person might say, 'By Allah, I will surely do such and such', which is a statement containing a vow. The words 'By Allah' are the vow, and the phrase 'I will surely do such and such' is the main clause of the vow which is emphasised by the word 'surely'. When a vow is found in a sentence on its own, its main clause comes after it, and the same is true for a conditional statement.

However, what if we have a sentence that contains both a vow and a condition? Are there now two main clauses, one for the vow and the other for the conditional phrase? When you have a vow and a condition in the same sentence, look at which one comes first. The one which comes first is the more important element. Thus, its main clause is the phrase which is given later in the sentence, and there is no need for a separate main clause for the other element.

Consequently, in this verse the element which comes first is the vow which lies in the first part of the word (*la'in*); '*la*' is the vow, while '*in*' is the condition. This is similar to a person saying, 'I vow that if Zayd stands, I will surely stand'. In this case the main clause belongs to the vow. On the other hand, if we had said, 'If Zayd stands, I vow by Allah to treat him well', the conditional statement comes before the vow.

All of this is proper if there is no element in the sentence that requires a predicate, such as a subject or another component following similar grammatical rules as subjects. But if such an element exists, then the conditional phrase is the more important one, meaning that we should consider the main clause as part of the conditional phrase and not a part of the vow; this is because the conditional phrase is now essential in the sentence, while the vow is only meant for emphasis. The grammarian Ibn Malik states this rule in his *Alfiyya* as follows: 'When a condition and a vow come together, leave out the main clause for whichever of them comes second, since it is included in the main clause of the other; this is unless they both follow something which requires a predicate, in which case the conditional clause should be considered the more important, whatever order they happen to be in'.

In this verse of the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* of the Quran, the vow comes before the conditional clause (as is clearly shown by the use of the Arabic compound word '*la'in*'), and as a result the main clause refers to the vow. This main clause states: 'I will surely efface your bad deeds' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12).

Allah's words: 'If you establish prayer', refer to the fact that to be constant in prayer necessitates two requirements. The first requirement is that the obligatory units of prayer should be completed. The second is that each unit must take its due right and form. Then, the verse says: 'and pay *zakat*' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12). In the books of jurisprudence, the obligations of prayers and almsgiving (*zakat*) are placed in the section of 'acts of worship' (*'ibadat*). Although this traditional division used in conventional jurisprudence is meant to make it easier for a Muslim to understand their basic obligations, in reality, everything which Allah commands is an act of worship. Worshipping means to obey all the commands you receive from the One you worship and to refrain from everything He forbids. Consequently, every Divine Commandment is an act of worship.

We said before that the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'When the call to prayer is proclaimed on Friday (the day of assembly), hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave all worldly commerce'. (*al-Jumu'a*: 9) And He *Glorified is He* continues: 'and when the prayer has finished, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain (some) of Allah's Bounties' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10).

In these verses, we find the first commandment of worship telling us to leave our businesses and commerce to pray in congregation. Then, the next

commandment of worship tells us that, after finishing the prayers, it is obligatory for us to disperse freely on earth and seek out Allah's Bounties (in worldly dealings). There is no conflict between the two commandments, for they are both connected to worship. You are commanded to work on earth as much as you can, both to meet your needs and to provide for others.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'And believe in My Messengers and assist them.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) This means that faith must become firmly set in the heart so that no further deliberation will shake it. The following order to aid the Messengers means to support them and help them. The Arabic word '*azr*' (to assist) also literally means 'to prevent harm', and in this verse it refers to preventing other people from harming any of the Messengers of Allah in any way.

In your daily life, if anyone tries to harm a loved one who lives in a distant land, you will wish to be able to reach that loved one and protect him from the potential injury. And if the enemy is right in front of you, you will actually prevent him from approaching the one you love. The word '*azr*' means to prevent the enemy from reaching the one you want to protect. Believers consider a Messenger's life more precious than their own lives. While protecting a Messenger from harm, one of the believers might be injured or harmed, but this is a believer's way of honouring, assisting, and revering the Messenger.

We are saying all this in order to respond to those who say, 'Muslim scholars do not agree on lexical definitions. Sometimes they say that '*azzartumuhum*' means 'to assist the Messengers', while at other times they define it as 'preventing the Messengers from being harmed'. Our answer is that both meanings are closely related because the word '*azr*' means to both repel and prevent. Consequently, it can be used to indicate the effort to prevent the enemy from reaching a Messenger or the act of preventing a Messenger from being harmed by the enemy. It can also indicate both meanings at the same time. We can also understand the word '*azzartumuhum*' to mean 'Honour them' because honour and reverence are the reasons why people assist the Messengers in the first place.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And offer to Allah a beautiful loan.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) The Lord *Glorified is He* arranges the financial policy for all the believers. This includes those who are financially able and those who are

in need. To those who have money, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'Do not work only as much as you need to, but work as much as you are able to. Use what you need to provide for yourself and your dependants and give the rest to those who cannot work for themselves'. If everyone only worked as much as they needed for their personal sustenance, those unable to work will not find any provisions to live on. We should never forget that the Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Truly, the believers have already prospered. They are the ones who are submissive in their prayer, and the ones who turn away from idle talk and the ones who unstintingly give the poor-dues (*zakat*).' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1-4)

When He *Glorified is He* says about those '...who unstintingly give the poor-dues', this does not mean that they only give their due alms to the poor, but rather, they work with the intention of earning extra wealth from which to pay the poor more otherwise, what would the difference be between the believer and the disbeliever? The disbeliever works to provide for himself and his dependants without thinking of Allah. On the other hand, the believer works to support himself and his dependants, and additionally intends to earn excess wealth to give to the weak. The thought of giving to the weak is a driving thought in his mind when he initiated work. This is the meaning of Allah's words: 'and the ones who unstintingly give the poor-dues.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 4)

There is also another right that should be duly spent, aside from the obligatory poor-dues (*zakat*). The ruler should use this to meet the needs of the believing society as long as he upholds all of Allah's Laws (while doing so). *Zakat* means to give a specifically appointed amount of one's wealth. On the other hand, *Sadaqah* (voluntary charity) is not included in the poor-dues but are an addition to it. Following these two payments are loans you give to those in need. A loan is a sum of money which the soul is still attached to. This is because the loaner gave the money on condition that the person will return it after a given time. For this reason, some say that the reward for giving loans may surpass giving charity because one does not ask for a loan unless he has a genuine need for the money, while a person who takes charity might not really need it. Moreover, the soul of the one who gives charity ceases to be attached to what he gives as soon as he gives it, whilst the soul of one who gives a loan remains attached to what he lends, and every time he is

patient about it he earns a good deed. Every time he postpones its collection, he earns a good deed. In this way, to lend money to those in need may be better than giving charity.

Consequently, the Lord *Glorified is He* wants our worldly work to earn ample and surplus wealth. However, how could He *Glorified is He* say: 'And offer to Allah a beautiful loan' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) when He is the Giver of all blessings and the One Who ordains them all? How could the Lord give blessings to man and then say, 'Loan them to me'? Allah *Glorified is He* values man's efforts and toil as long as he works and strives on earth. A man's wealth is his, but his fellow man might need some of it. As a result, he should lend it to others, and Allah *Glorified is He* considers this as a loan from the servant to Him. We find that the provider for a family might say to one of his sons, 'Take some of the pocket-money you have saved and give your brother what he needs, and I will consider this as a loan to me'. The provider for the family gave the money to his dependant in the first place, but he can still consider it a loan to make sure all his dependants are provided for. (If this is the reply of the father), then what do you think (about the reply from) the Lord *Glorified is He* who created us all? He gave to every one of us the fruits of his efforts, and considered these fruits to be the property of their owners. And if they then choose to lend some of these fruits to the needy, He considers this to be a loan to Him.

The Lord *Glorified is He* calls this loan 'beautiful'. This means that the lender should not exhibit any pride while giving it away. Similarly, he should not gain any worldly benefit from this transaction; otherwise, it would entail usury. We have the best example⁽¹⁾ of this in the story of Imam Abu Hanifa *Allah be pleased with him* while he was sitting one day in the shade of his friend's house, when this friend borrowed some money from him. The next day, Abu Hanifa *Allah be pleased with him* sat at a distance from the shade of the house, and therefore his friend asked him why he was sitting away from the shade. He replied, 'I feared that (enjoying the shade of your house) would count as usury'. The friend replied, 'But you used to sit there before you gave me the loan'. Abu Hanifa *Allah be pleased with him* replied, 'When I sat there

(1) The story of Abu Hanifa's loan to one of the Muslims, and his abstaining from sitting in the shade of his house afterwards

before today, you were the favourable one as you gave me the shade. Now, it may be a repayment for my favour of lending the money’.

Consequently, a beautiful loan is one that is not marred by flaunting of favour, insult, or benefit. As this loan creates debt, Allah *Glorified is He* established rules for recording it: ‘O you who believe! Whenever you give or take credit for a stated term, set it down in writing’ (*al-Baqara*: 282).

The Lord *Glorified is He* thereby protects the borrower from his own self because if he knows that the debt is recorded, he will try his best to work and pay it back, and then society will also benefit from his work. When the loan is written down, this provides motivation and encouragement for it to be repaid. However, if it is not written down, then circumstances might arise that cause it to go unanswered. If this happens to someone, then no one else will help him out of any crisis thereafter. Clearly, the Lord *Glorified is He* wants to preserve the means by which the fruits of labour are circulated. A popular expression summarizes this concept, ‘The one who takes money and gives it back will come to own the world’s wealth’. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And do not be weary from writing down every contractual provision’ (*al-Baqara*: 282).

This is a way of protecting the soul from vicissitudes; but the Lord *the Exalted* did not forbid a person from trusting those who are faithful (by not writing any agreement): ‘...if one of you entrust the other, let the one who is entrusted discharge his trust (faithfully), and let him be afraid of Allah, his Lord’ (*al-Baqara*: 283).

In this manner, the Lord *Glorified is He* protects economic dealings. We also find that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was full of mercy towards the believers, heard that a man had died while owing debts, he said to his Companions, ‘Offer Funeral Prayer over your Companion’; he did not pray over the deceased man himself. The people then wondered why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not pray over him and what sin he had committed to deserve this. It was as though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to teach the people about the importance of repaying debts. He did not prevent them from praying over the indebted deceased, but he did not pray over them himself in order to encourage them and incite them to fulfil their obligations and clear their

conscience by paying off their debts. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was narrated to have said, 'Whoever takes people's money with the intention of repaying it, Allah will help him to repay it; and whoever takes people's money with the intention of spoiling it, Allah will spoil him'.⁽¹⁾

This is because it is possible that the person who died while he was in debt, with nothing in his possession to repay his debt, could have lacked the intention to pay off his debt and his soul might have tempted him not to repay it.

By approaching this matter from a psychological perspective, we may find that sometimes a borrower takes a large amount which he could not possibly ignore or forget, but the lender might not even think of it, or the lender might be so sensitive that he deliberately avoids the debtor in order not to embarrass him. In such a case, it is likely that Allah caused the lender to think and behave this way because the borrower truly intended to repay the loan. On the other hand, if the mind of the lender is occupied with thoughts of the borrower, and he constantly thinks about the amount that he has lent him, this could mean that the borrower has enough to repay the loan. In other words, the borrower has the means to repay all or some of the loan. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* would not embarrass anyone who strives and struggles to repay his debt.

Regarding the part of the noble verse that says: '...and offer to Allah a beautiful loan...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12), someone might say that the lexical context suggests that the word '*iqrad*' be used for 'loan' rather than '*qard*' since the verb is '*aqrada*' and the gerund of this verb is '*iqrad*' (and a verb usually takes its gerund, if the noun needs to be referred to). But in this context, the Lord *Glorified is He* is speaking of the beautiful loan (*qard hasan*) itself; however, the word (*iqrad*) describes the transaction occurring between the one who asks for a loan and the one who gives it to him. Allah *Glorified is He* places the beautiful loan in His Hand, and it up to us to imagine how great a recompense Allah's Hand can give (for this beautiful loan). An example of this lexical usage is also found in Allah's Words: 'And Allah has caused you to grow from the earth a (progressive) growth' (*Nuh*: 17).

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Ahmad on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

The verb '*anbatakum*' (caused you to grow) expresses the process of causing growth (*inbat*). However, the earth does not cause the process of growth; rather, it produces growth itself. Therefore, the word '*nabat*' ('growth' or 'crops') is used in this verse, and not the gerund '*inbat*' (the process of causing to grow) –sometimes Allah *Glorified is He* uses a verb but then uses its gerund because He wants to refer to its noun. The verb '*anbata*' here in the verse means that Allah causes crops to grow from the earth for mankind.

Similarly, Allah *the Exalted* says of this loan: '...and offer to Allah a beautiful loan. I will surely efface your bad deeds...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) which is the main clause of the aforementioned vow. After this He *Glorified is He* says: '...and admit you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow (in Heaven)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12). We have already spoken much about these gardens. The Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the noble verse by saying: '...but if any of you, after this, denies the Truth, he will indeed have strayed from the right path!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 12) Yet, has the one who denies the Truth not already strayed from the right path before this? Indeed he has, but the one who denies the Truth after all these bounties and rewards that were mentioned, will be even further astray. The word for 'right' here is (*sawa'*) which occurs often in the Quran with various lexical meanings. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Not all of them are alike (*sawa'*)...' (*Al-'Imran*: 113). Also, (*sawa'*) can mean 'middling' or 'equal', and these meanings are closely related because when there is a middle, there are also two sides. And if the divider is in the middle, then the two sides are equal; when we say 'middle', this means that this point is positioned at an equal distance from each side. Therefore, we must be aware that there are many words which have more than one meaning. They are termed 'homographs' which means that the form of the word is the same, but the meaning is different.

Another example is found in Allah's Words: '...turn your faces (in prayer) in the direction (*shatrah*)...' (*al-Baqara*: 144). The word '*shatr*' means 'direction' and also 'half'; the half can be said to be the direction which, when a person is facing the *Ka'ba*, requires that he be standing at a point on the horizon which forms a line that cuts directly through the middle of the circle of the horizon as he sees it. Therefore, if you say that (*shatr*) means 'direction', this is correct; and if you say it means 'half', this is also correct.

Concerning the part of the verse saying: ‘...he will indeed have strayed from the right path’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 12), the Quran was revealed to a community who lived in the desert and whose roads passed between mountains. The road might have been smooth at certain points or might have passed between two valleys or two mountains; and in order to be on the cautious side, a person walks in the centre of the road. In fact, Imam ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘Both right and left cause you to stray; the best way is always the middle course’. This is because one might go to the right and slip, or to the left and slip, or a rock might fall upon him. We find that a father counsels his son, saying, ‘Start moving and do not look right or left, but go straight to your goal’. We also find that the Lord *Glorified is He* describes the path on which the believer will walk on the Day of Resurrection by saying: ‘And he will look and see him in the midst (*sawa'*) of the Hellfire’ (*as-Saffat*: 55). The midst of the hellfire means the very centre of it, without any possibility of escaping to the right or the left. Allah *the Exalted* says:

فَمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَاسِيَةً يُحَرِّفُونَ
الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِۦ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِۦٓ وَلَا نَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى خَآئِنَةٍ
مِّنْهُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

But they broke their pledge, so We distanced them [from Us] and hardened their hearts. They distort the meaning of [revealed] words and have forgotten some of what they were told to remember: you [Prophet] will always find treachery in all but a few of them. Overlook this and pardon them: God loves those who do good [13] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 13)

When Allah *the Exalted* refers to the ‘covenant’, this entails the obligation of honouring and fulfilling the covenant; and did they (the children of Israel) honour their covenant? No, they broke it, so Allah cursed them. Cursing or damnation (*la'n*) means to be expelled and banished. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘But because of their breaking of their covenant, we cursed them...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 13), that is, the curse was a consequence of them breaching their solemn covenant with Allah. The use of the Arabic particle ‘*ma*’ here (which cannot be translated, but which occurs in the Arabic before

the words 'their breaking') has been explained in various ways. Some of the scholars say that it is an addition which has no meaning (*za'ida*), while others say that it is meant as a connector. However, only human beings use extra insignificant words, not Allah. Nothing in the Quran could be a superfluous addition. Every word in the Quran is used precisely and exactly. The Lord *Glorified is He* tells us of how Luqman advised his son: '...and bear with patience whatever befalls you. Indeed, (all) that is of the matters requiring determination' (*Luqman*: 17). And in another verse, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And whoever shows patience and forgives—indeed, that is certainly among the foremost Commandments of Allah that require diligent resolve' (*ash-Shura*: 43).

In the first verse, the word 'certainly' (*la* in Arabic) is not present, while in the second verse it is present. This is not simply a matter of rhetorical flourish; for when Allah says: '...and bear with patience whatever befalls you. Indeed, (all) that is of the foremost Commandments of Allah that require diligent resolve' (*Luqman*: 17), this is a call for patience amid calamities that do not involve an adversary such as illness or death of beloved ones. Asking for patience here is meant to give consolation and comfort. As for the saying of the Lord *Glorified is He*: 'And whoever shows patience and forgives—indeed, that is certainly of the foremost commandments of Allah that require diligent resolve' (*ash-Shura*: 43), this is a call for patience and also forgiveness which indicates the involvement of an adversary who has inflicted this harm or calamity.

Here, Allah asks the believers to forgive those who harm them and to bear this patiently. Since there is an adversary involved, the soul wants to take vengeance, and therefore such a situation requires that more emphasis be placed on exercising strength of character than that mentioned in the previous verse. In the first verse, there is no clear adversary from whom vengeance can be taken. But the presence of an adversary stirs the desire of revenge within the soul. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* stresses this patient response by saying: '...that is certainly of the foremost Commandments of Allah that require diligent resolve' (*Luqman*: 17).

In another place in the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* says: '...lest you say, "There came to us no bringer of good tidings"...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 19). Before the word '*bashir*' (translated in the above verse as 'bringer of glad tidings'), there

is the preposition 'min' which literally means 'of'; the grammarians consider the word '*bashir*' to be the subject of the verb 'come', and they deem the preposition '*min*' to be a superfluous addition which does not change the meaning but only changes the grammar of the sentence. In fact, there is no superfluous addition here because in Arabic the word '*min*' can be used to mean 'at all' to emphasise a negation. Accordingly, if a person says, 'I have no money', he may well have some small sum which he has not counted. But if he says, 'I have no money at all' by using the preposition '*min*' before the word '*mal*' (money), this means that he possesses absolutely no money of any kind. Consequently, the preposition '*min*' here is not a superfluous addition, but rather, it imparts a meaning to the sentence. Hence, '...lest you say, "There came to us no bringer of good tidings"...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 19) (*ma ja'ana min bashir*) literally means 'no kind of bearer of glad tidings at all ever came to us'.

Allah *the Exalted* also says: 'So, due to mercy from Allah, you (O Muhammad) dealt gently with them....' (*Al-'Imran*: 159) Here, the word '*ma*' occurs before the word '*rahma*' (mercy). Some people may think that this too is a superfluous addition; but we say, 'What is the root of the derivation of all Arabic words?' It is the gerund (*masdar*). Sometimes the gerund is used to mean the verb; it can be used as an imperative, such as when you use the gerund *darb* to mean 'strike' rather than the usual imperative '*idrib*'. The same is true of Allah's Words: '*fa bi ma naqdihim mithaqahum*' which is literally translated as: 'So, because of their breaking their covenant....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13).

Since here the word '*naqd*' ('breaking' or 'breaching') is a gerund, it may be functioning as a verb; and as long as a gerund is functioning as a verb, it is possible to use another verb with it, and therefore the meaning becomes: 'Then, for having broken their covenant, We cursed them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13), (i.e. referring to the act of breaking their covenant). Hence, the word '*ma*' here indicates that the gerund is functioning as a verb, and the '*ma*' also indicates that the gerund is standing in for an elided verb. Or, it may be that '*ma*' here is used to express an exclamatory question, such as, 'How many were the times that they broke their covenant, and so we cursed them?' This would imply that they broke their pledges constantly in many ways.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But because of their breaking their covenant, we cursed them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). The word '*naqd*' (translated in the verse at hand as 'to break') is the opposite of 'to conclude' or 'to settle' (*ibram*). *Ibram* signifies settling and adjudicating a case based on evidence, while '*naqd*' ('to unbind' or 'break apart') a case means to unravel its components. It is as though they broke the solemn pledge that Allah took from them. The Arabic word '*aqida*' ('doctrinal belief' or 'creed') literally originates from the word '*aqd*' (which means 'to tie' or 'to knot', and also means 'a solemn pledge'). Why? That is because it is derived from the concept of tying something securely in order for it not to resurface in the mind to be thought about again. The same is true of a solemn covenant ('*mithaq*'): it is confirmed and established. When they broke it, they unravelled it; that is, they released themselves from the obligations of this covenant. And because they broke their covenant with Allah, they brought a curse upon themselves.

The part of the verse saying: '...and made their hearts grow hard...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13) signifies that when they broke their covenant, Allah set a seal upon their hearts. He did not seal their hearts to begin with, but rather, they disbelieved first. After disbelieving, Allah left them in their error and delusion and sealed their hearts so that, neither the disbelief within them leaves, and nor could anything enter them from without. The Arabic word '*qasiya*' means 'rigid and hard'; although hardness is blameworthy, when it affects the heart, it is not like this when employed in defence of the Truth. We should judge everything according to its function. When everything performs its proper function, the entire world becomes beautiful. For example, we do not criticise a hook for being crooked. A hook must be crooked; its crookedness is what allows it to perform its function. The crookedness of a hook is what makes it proper. Likewise, hardness is not blameworthy if it is shown in the right situations; it is blameworthy only if it is in the wrong place. Hard hearts are blameworthy because the Lord *the Exalted* wants the hearts to be soft: '...then their skins and their hearts soften at the Remembrance of Allah...' (*az-Zumar*: 23).

The Arabic word '*qaswa*' (hardness) is derived from the word '*qasiy*', which means a hard solid. We know that *dinars* used to be made of gold and *dirhams* of silver. A cashier, while examining them, might take one of them

and declare it to be fake because he listened to the chiming sound it made, and checked if it was hard or not. Also, when a coin is truly hard, it is described as being '*qasiya*'.

Gold is a soft metal, as is silver. When we say that some gold is 24 carat (99.99 percent pure), this means that it is not alloyed with other metals that enable it to be shaped. Gold in its pure form cannot be moulded into jewellery, and therefore the goldsmith mixes it with another metal to harden it and enable it to be fashioned into jewellery. The level of hardness of gold or silver varies according to the carat value or, in other words, its purity. Items made from high-carat gold, such as gold ingots, are not suitable for use as jewellery.

When another metal is mixed with gold or silver, it makes them hard. Hardness, therefore, is praiseworthy when used in the proper place and blameworthy when used in the improper place, such as is the case with the hardness and cruelty of hearts.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...They changed the words from their (correct) places...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). An example of this is when Allah commanded the children of Israel to say '*hitta*' (forgive our sins), but instead they said '*hinta*' (wheat). '...and have forgotten a good share of the Message that was sent to them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). Abrogation of previous Divine Scriptures before the Quran took place by people forgetting a good share of the Message that was sent to them. Forgetfulness, in this case, may indicate people's failure to adequately understand or comprehend the Message, but it also implies that Allah's Teachings did not really occupy their minds. Had the scriptures been on their minds, they would have continued to remember them. Moreover, they concealed the parts which they did not forget, and distorted and twisted those parts which they neither concealed nor forgot. It would have been bad enough if this was all they did, but they also invented teachings and statements of their own and attributed them to Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah", to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby' (*al-Baqara*: 79). Thus, four kinds of methods of tampering were applied to the original scriptures: forgetting, concealing, distorting and inserting personal statements and then attributing them to Allah.

Now let us reflect on the beauty of these wise Divine Words: '...and have forgotten a good share of the Message that was sent to them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13) Their wickedness was so immense that they forgot that which could have brought them a great deal of good fortune '*hazh*' (translated as good share in the verse) literally means good fortune in Arabic) such as their forgetting and concealing the glad tidings that heralded the advent of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Had they believed in them, their fortune will have been great. This is because they forgot something which could have brought them a great reward, and therefore they wronged themselves. Islam will have profited nothing if they had believed in it and followed its guidance; but rather, the loss was all theirs. Still, Allah *the Most High* aided them with regards to their forgetfulness, which also holds as a proof against themselves, by reminding them of what they had forgotten. This should have caused them to be just to themselves and return to true faith. The Lord *Glorified is He* reminded them of what they had forgotten in order that they will attain, for themselves, good fortune. This may also suggest that they forgot the Teachings of Allah deliberately, ignoring and turning away from them on purpose.

Allah *the Exalted* then says: '...And you will not cease to discover treachery in them, except a few of them. But forgive them and overlook (their misdeeds). Verily, Allah loves those who do good' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). That is their treachery to you, O Prophet Muhammad, to your followers and to Allah's Law of guidance on the earth will continue. Nothing can testify more clearly to this than their crimes against their own Messengers, although they were from their own people and tribe. They were, like them, from the children of Israel, so what do you think they will do to a Prophet who came from another race to withdraw from them their temporal power?

Therefore, their treachery to Allah *Glorified is He* was expected. The word '*kha'ina*' ('treachery'; the word '*kha'ina*' is usually a feminine active participle which means 'she who is treacherous') here means the same as '*khiyana*' (treachery), just like the word '*qa'ila*' (also in a feminine active participle form) means the same as '*qaylula*' (siesta). The word '*kha'ina*' can also mean 'a treacherous soul' or 'a treacherous woman', it might be an emphatic adjectival form which seems feminine although it is used for a male, or it might mean 'a treacherous group'.

Consequently, the single word here comprises all the different sources of treachery, whether man, woman, group, or all of them together. The speaker here is the Lord of the worlds. He is speaking to the Arabs, a people of eloquence; hence, the discourse is very lofty in tone.

Owing to the perfect precision and fairness of the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* says: '...except a few of them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13), in line with the principle of 'allowing for possibilities'. When Allah addressed His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to clarify to him the position of the Jews regarding him, was it not possible that some Jews, endowed with deep understanding, considered believing in this Messenger and so calm down and stop the wild assumptions they had made about him? In fact, some of them thought this way and embraced Islam.

If these people had heard Allah passing a non-exclusive judgement over all the Jews, they will have said, 'Why should we be judged the same as the rest when we are thinking of embracing the true faith?' It is as though His Words: '...except a few of them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13) allowed for the possibility that some of them might have thought about believing. Those who indeed were thinking about believing will hear the Lord's Words: 'except a few of them' and thus would realize that the Quran was truly a revelation and light from Allah. This actually happened and a few of them did embrace Islam.

On the other hand, what was the position of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when the Lord *the Exalted* informed him that he will experience treachery from the Jews in the future? This certainly could have affected the attitude of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers towards the Jews, and any act of betrayal by the Jews will have been retaliated against according to the basic law of self-defence. But Allah *Glorified is He* did not want to leave the matter up to the emotions of any human being, and hence He says: '...forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds). Verily, Allah loves those who do good' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13).

The Arabic word '*afw*' ('pardon' and 'forgiveness') literally means 'effacement of traces'; i.e. your tracks are noticeable on the ground, and then the wind comes and brushes away all traces and marks of them. Consequently, the commandment to pardon the disbelievers means: remove from yourself any

effects and vestiges of the sins or wrongs they had committed against you and act as though they never happened. But would the impact of such wrongdoings have remained with Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah? No, because there is a command for forbearance and an overlooking of faults. There is a difference between erasing the ill deed of others utterly, and allowing the impact of such an ill deed to remain in your soul so that you continue to feel rage and bitterness.

Allah *Glorified is He* here commands that 'Afw' (forgiveness) be shown, which means to wipe off the traces that the misdeed has left, and also to practice forbearance and an overlooking of faults, which means to expel any effects of the misdeed from the mind. In such an experience, every human being goes through several stages: the first stage is when someone sins against him and he controls himself from returning the aggression; this is forgiveness. The second stage is when he does not allow the effect of the sin to continue to work on his heart, but rather, he practices forbearance and overlooks the fault. This frees the believer's heart from being preoccupied with something which he has already forgiven. The third stage provides the opportunity for those who wish to acquire a higher level of moral perfection or excellence (*ihsan*) and increase their certitude and faith by doing good to the one who wronged them. These three stages are made clear in the saying of the Lord *Glorified is He*: '...and those who suppress their anger, and who pardon people; verily, Allah loves those who do good' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134).

Yet, is the act of being good to those who abuse or wrong us logical to the human soul? It might be considered illogical, but human beings do not make their own laws for themselves. Rather, their laws are made by One Who is above and beyond the human soul. The Creator says to you, 'If you knew the good that the one who wronged you has done to you, you will be grateful to him. This is because when you wrong one of Allah's creatures, the retribution for and the restoration of the right of this creature is claimed by the Lord of this creature Himself. Allah is always on the side of those who suffer wrong or injustice'.

When your enemy wrongs you, he, in fact, places Allah on your side; hence, does he not deserve to be thanked for this? You should remember the well known saying, 'Should you not be good to the one who puts Allah on

your side?' This is Allah's Standard: '...verily, Allah loves those who do good'. (*al-Ma'ida*: 13) And to do good here means for one's faith to rise above the level of: '...whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is with those who fear Him' (*al-Baqara*: 194).

Ihsan or moral excellence means to do more than what Allah has obliged you to do, but of the same kind of action that Allah has enjoined on you. The one who does good (*Muhsin*), who reaches the station of moral excellence or perfection (*ihsan*) is the one who worships Allah as if he sees Him—for although he cannot see Him, Allah *Glorified is He* surely sees all His creatures. We know that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, the righteous will be in the midst of Gardens and springs (in Heaven) Taking joy in the things which their Lord has given them. Verily, they were before this those who do the good'. (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16) What is it that constituted their moral excellence according to the previous verse? The answer is, 'They used to sleep but little by night (invoking and praying to Allah with humility).' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17) Does Allah enjoin His servants to sleep only a small part of the night? No. Allah has enjoined on Muslims to offer prayers and told them that after the Evening Prayer they are free and can sleep until the Dawn Prayer. Then, on hearing the call for the Dawn Prayer, they should wake up and pray. Here the doers of good, who want to take their faith to a higher level, sleep little to offer extra supererogatory prayers during night. In addition, the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions another attribute of these doers of good: 'And in the hours before dawn they ask forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 18)

Does Allah enjoin all people to ask for forgiveness during the pre-dawn hours? No, rather, when a man asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the obligatory acts of worship he was required to do, he told him about the five pillars of Islam, including the five obligatory daily prayers to which the man replied, 'By Allah, I shall do no more and no less than this!' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'He will be successful, if he proves truthful (concerning what he has just said).'

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in the Book of Iman (Faith)

Allah *the Exalted* then adds, completing His description of the doers of good: 'And in their property is a portion due to him who begs and to him who is deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19) We may observe here that Allah *Glorified is He* does not say 'a known right', but rather: '...a portion due to him who begs and to him who is deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19) The 'known right' is the obligatory charity; as for those who do the good, they give a share of their wealth to the poor and needy beyond what is obligatory. In this way Allah *the Most High* widens the arena for spiritual aspiration. Those who give more shall be recompensed more by Allah. To continue, the Lord teaches us, saying: '...forgive them and overlook (their misdeeds). Verily, Allah loves those who do good' (*al-Ma'ida*: 13) because being good to these opponents will evoke in them the instinctive feelings of gratefulness. Consequently, this goodness will remove the bitterness from their hearts and open up their ears and hearts to the words of Truth.

'...Then verily, he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend!' (*Fussilat*: 34) This is because enmity only grows severer if it is reciprocated in some way. But when you treat your enemy in the best way instead of returning his enmity, how long will he remain your enemy? He transgresses against you once, and you do not respond to him, and then he transgresses again and you still do not respond to him; at this point, he will surely calm down. So enmity does not continue unless it is returned. We learned what happened in the confrontation between Pharaoh and our master Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, when Allah willed that the enmity should be on both sides, not only one, for the struggle to be intense because if the enmity only came from one side, the attacking side would soon calm down.

'And the family of Pharaoh picked him up (out of the river) so that he will become for them an enemy and a (cause of) grief.' (*al-Qasas*: 8) Did they take Musa *peace be upon him* for him to become their enemy? No, they took him so that he would be a source of joy for them, but Allah had already decreed otherwise. The hope was that Musa *peace be upon him* would become a source of joy for Pharaoh's household, but Allah willed that he be raised by them and then afterwards become an enemy to them. Thus, it becomes clear to us that the plans of Heaven have precedence over the plans of earth. Musa,

the Samaritan, for example, was raised by Heaven through Angel Gabriel *peace be upon him*. His mother gave birth to him in the midst of the desert, and Gabriel *peace be upon him* came down with food for him until he reached manhood. However, Musa, the son of `Imran (Amram) *peace be upon him* was raised by Pharaoh. Yet Musa the Samaritan, who was raised by Gabriel *peace be upon him* became a disbeliever, while Musa, the son of `Imran, who was raised by Pharaoh became a Messenger to the children of Israel. Both of these destinies were willed by Allah. In this regard, a poet once said:

If it does not coincide with fate,

Then no hope or wish can be fulfilled:

The Moses whom Gabriel raised was a disbeliever,

Yet the Moses whom Pharaoh raised was a prophet.

It was as though the household of Pharaoh raised Musa, the son of `Imran, to be an enemy to them, not a source of joy; and that enmity became mutual between Musa and Pharaoh, as Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Put him (the child) into the chest and put it into the river (Nile), then the river shall cast it up on the bank, and there, an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his shall take him.' (*Ta Ha*: 39)

Therefore, enmity was on both sides. The Lord *Glorified is He* commanded His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to show forbearance in the face of the treachery from the children of Israel, that perhaps this would help awaken in them the instinct of belief and they would say, 'He did not treat us as we treated him'. It could lead them to recognise Prophet Muhammad as a merciful, compassionate, and kind prophet of Allah, and as a result they will no longer stand in the way of his mission. But is pardon and forbearance the only instructions that the Lord *Glorified is He* gives to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? No, for the Divine Commandments passed through many stages; as Prophet Muhammad draws the human soul by winning it over with kindness, but if it is not won over by kindness then the Prophet must roll up his sleeves and do as Allah commands him. Let us read the following saying of Allah: 'Many of the People of the Scripture wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy from

themselves (even) after the Truth has become clear to them. So pardon and overlook this until Allah delivers His command.' (*al-Baqara*: 109)

There is a subtle matter here, expressed by the words: '...until Allah delivers His command...' (*al-Baqara*: 109). Allah *Glorified is He* commands His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to leave them and show pardon and forbearance until another stage comes, in which he will be commanded to chastise them. This is a natural human process which was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs. The Arab was kind to his enemy once, twice and thrice, but when this kindness availed nothing, he fought the enemy. The poet said:

Patience, and it if avails not, then a threat;
And if this, too, avails not, this is the end
Of forbearance, and rigour must be employed instead
For rigour comes when forbearance fails.

And another poet said:

We made peace with Banu Dhahl,
And held them as our brothers:
Perhaps in good time they shall
Become as they once were.
But when evil came forth
And showed itself plainly,
We became as lions,
And furious lions, what is more!
With a widow-making blow,
Terror and boisterous clamour,
And stabs like the pecks of a bird –
A bird that is well fed!
For evil brings relief,
When kindness relieves naught,
And there are times when forbearance
Brings nothing but disgrace!

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had the same kind of experiences with the Christians that he had with the Jews, as Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِي أَخَذْنَا مِيثَقَهُمْ فَنَسُوا
حَظًا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ
الْقِيَمَةِ وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

We also took a pledge from those who say, ‘We are Christians,’ but they too forgot some of what they were told to remember, so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection, when God will tell them what they have done [14] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 14)

They said that they were Christians, and the Lord *Glorified is He* took a solemn pledge from them; this could either mean the pledge taken from all the descendants of Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah drew the progeny of the children of Adam from their loins and made them bear witness to His Divinity and Lordship; or this could be referring to the pledge they made to their Prophet `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, the son of Maryam (Mary) Allah *be pleased with her*. Yet, they forgot much of what they had been taught, abandoned what the *Injil* (Gospel) had commanded them, and broke their pledge, and as a result they were divided into many hostile sects. After this verse comes reference to what Allah destined, as He had promised beforehand:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ
كَثِيرًا مِمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَيَعْفُو عَنْ
كَثِيرٍ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

People of the Book, Our Messenger has come to make clear to you much of what you have kept hidden of the Scripture, and to overlook much [you have done]. A light has now come to you from God, and a Scripture making things clear [15] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 15)

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is giving them the opportunity (to return to Him) as well as proof against them, so that none of them will say

that no Message from the Messengers of Allah ever reached him/her, and there was a time during which no Messenger came. But here the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came bearing a complete Message of guidance. The coming of a new Messenger gives them the opportunity to renew their solemn pledge of faith. They concealed some of the laws contained in their scriptures, such as those that prescribed stoning and prohibited usury. As the Quran tells us, some of the children of Israel said about usury: 'There is no blame on us if we betray and take the properties of the illiterate people (Arabs).' (*Al- 'Imran*: 75) That is, they claimed that it was lawful to engage in usurious transactions with those who did not follow their religion, but not with those who did follow it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to gather the children of Israel together and join their hands to his hand; he was the prophet they had been awaiting for and whose tidings were foretold in their scriptures. He wanted all the believers to stand united against the forces of godlessness on earth in order for the Law of Heaven to rule the life on the earth. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...There has come to you from Allah a light....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15) This signifies that their concealing some of Allah's Teachings created darkness in the world. As long as darkness had come into the world, especially moral darkness, the world was in need of a light to show it the way. We know that light is what makes things bright and clear.

When the Lord *the Exalted* speaks to us of material light, He wants to guide us using the concept of material light to that of spiritual light. Material light dispels the darkness from the path in order for us not to collide with obstructions, fall into holes, or break things. When a person carries a light, he can see where he is going. Material light prevents creatures from colliding as they move, and in this way energy is not wasted because when it is wasted, the world is ruined and nothing is achieved.

During the day, the sun lights up the world. The moon comes after the sun and reflects some light. People are also guided by the stars in the darkness of the land and sea. Allah caused these creatures to exist to prevent collision in the motion of physical beings. Just as Allah has made a material light in order for creatures not to collide with one another, He is also capable of providing

light for morals and spiritual values. That is, the Lord *the Exalted* created the light of morality to guide mankind to the right path. Both the disbeliever and atheist equally benefit like the believer from the material light which secures physical motion on the earth. No one ever says, 'I do not need to benefit from physical light'. Consequently, we need to say to the disbelievers and atheists, 'Since you benefit from physical light, you should know that Allah has also provided a moral light which you must follow, too. Allah's System of Guidance condenses this moral light into the principles: 'Do' and 'Do not do'.

The Law of Allah, then, is a light from Him. Let us read the following Words of Allah: 'Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Nur*: 35). Allah takes our hands and guides us along the way with the material light from which everyone benefits, whether believer or disbeliever.

In the following verse, He *the Most High* gives us a similitude of this light: '...The example of His Light is like a niche within which is a lamp...' (*an-Nur*: 35). A *Mishkah* (translated in the previous verse as 'niche') is an aperture in a wall. It is different from a window. It is a hollow in the wall where an oil or kerosene lamp can be placed. It used to be found in primitive houses before the invention of electric lamps and chandeliers. The hollow was not more than thirty centimetres in breadth, forty centimetres in height, and fifteen centimetres in depth, while the room it lit was in the range of three metres wide, long, and high.

The Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about the hollow here, not the room itself; and any lamp which was placed in the hollow lit up the whole room. We should pay attention that this is no ordinary lamp, but rather, it is enclosed in glass. We know that the glass-enclosed lamp is one of the great achievements of human ingenuity. In the past, lamps had no glass and their flames would throw up smoke which blackened the walls and the space around them with soot. The lamp was also easily extinguished by wind. Then man began to place glass around the lamp which protected the flame, concentrated the light, and reflected the beams, and the fire could still draw the air it needed through the glass.

'...The example of His light is like a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is enclosed in glass...' (*an-Nur*: 35). That is, the light of this lamp is

especially bright because the glass reflects its rays and spreads the light everywhere. The glass in which this lamp is enclosed is not ordinary either: '...The glass as if it were a pearly (white) star...' (*an-Nur*: 35). A star itself produces light, and the glass is shining like a bright radiant star. As for the kind of fuel with which the lamp is lit, it is described as: '...lit from (the oil of) a blessed olive tree...' (*an-Nur*: 35). This increases and intensifies the lamp's light for it is lit from the oil of an olive tree; and it is no ordinary tree. It is: '...neither of the east nor of the west...' (*an-Nur*: 35). Consequently, it is a tree which is distinguished by being totally balanced.

'...Light upon light...' (*an-Nur*: 35), this is an aspect of Allah's omnipotent power concerning the light of the material world; hence, it would be inconceivable for Him to leave spiritual and moral values bereft of light. Just as mankind is guided in material affairs, s/he must be aware that the Lord *the Exalted* has the power to guide her/him in spiritual affairs as well. Evidence of this is the saying of Allah: '...Allah guides to His light whom He wills...' (*an-Nur*: 35).

Allah gives spiritual and moral guidance to those who want it. An atheist might be guided by the light of the sun, but his sight is blind to the light of the Divine Law and moral values. As such, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that there is a Divine Light, which is His Way and Law, and He puts forth this similitude to illustrate metaphysical concepts by means of material concepts. We all seek light according to our means: a poor man or a country-dweller seeks the light of a small gas-lamp, and a wealthier person may buy an electric generator. Everyone seeks light according to his means, but when the sun rises in the morning, what happens? Everyone puts out these lights, for the sun is a light which Allah has provided for all mankind and to the entire world.

Likewise, if we use our minds to think of something that will give light to our lives, each one of us will think according to the ability of his mind. But when a light comes down from Allah, it eliminates the need for any other light. And we should do the same thing spiritually as we do materially.'...Light upon light. Allah guides to His Light whom He wills. And Allah presents examples for mankind, for Allah is All Knowing of all things...' (*an-Nur*: 35).

What indicates to us that the second light is the light of ethical and moral values, which are contained in the rules of 'Do' and 'Do not do', is that Allah *the Exalted* says after this: 'In houses (mosques) which Allah has ordered to be raised, in them His Name is glorified in the mornings and in the evenings' (*an-Nur*: 36).

If you look for the noun connected with the *Jarr wa Majrur* (Arabic technical term for the genitive case) 'in houses', you will find that it can only refer back to the words 'light upon light'. This is to signify that the light upon light comes from seeking guidance in mosques; for they are the Houses of Allah to which we come to experience the light which the Lord *the Exalted* bestows upon His creation.

'In houses (mosques), which Allah has ordered to be raised; in them His Name is glorified in the mornings and in the evenings. Men whom neither trade nor sale diverts them from the Remembrance of Allah' (*an-Nur*: 36-37). The words '...neither trade nor sale diverts them...' (*an-Nur*: 37) do not mean that commerce is forbidden, but rather, it stresses that an honest man is not distracted by commerce from the Remembrance of Allah. Allah must be constantly on a believer's mind. When a person remembers Allah, He extends His grace to him.

This brings us back to the point in question. Consequently, O people of the Book, this light has come to you, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has explained to you many of the matters over which you have differed and has overlooked many of your misdeeds. He offers you full conciliation and purification; hence, you must wake up, heed his call, and change your attitude towards this new Message. Search for what Allah intends by these teachings, which Allah illustrates using the parable of light. This light guides by means of 'Do' and 'Do not do'. But who can tell us that this light comes from Allah? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does. And what can indicate to us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is truly sent by Allah? The indication of this is Allah's saying: 'O mankind! Verily, there has come to you a convincing proof (Prophet Muhammad) from your Lord, and we have sent down to you a manifest light (this Quran)' (*an-Nisa*': 174).

Consequently, what your Lord sent first was the firm proof that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly sent by Allah to deliver to us the Book containing His Message of guidance. The Quran is distinguished by the fact that it constitutes both the proof of the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad and the luminous, enlightening Divine Message itself. *Burhan* (translated as 'proof' 'in the verse at hand') means the strongest evidence or argument that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly sent by Allah.

In education, we encounter proofs when we study geometry. When confronted with a geometrical problem, we consider the data that we are provided with and see what we have to prove. After this, we consider the given information once more and use it to derive the proof. If the information does not supply that proof, we then take a further step to attempt to reach it. This universe is filled with data and information. It is an exact, ordered universe. We can witness its perfect order in the natural world over which we have no control: 'It is not possible for the sun to reach the moon, or for the night to overtake the day, for each, in an orbit, is swimming....' (*Ya Sin*: 40)

The universe is perfectly balanced by the interplay of the sky, the earth, the wind movement, and all other natural components. We find that the laws governing these systems in which humans play no role function perfectly, efficiently and consistently. In fact, if humans wish to appreciate the information and design of the universe, they should observe the matters over which humans exercise influence. They will find that they are subject to corruption because they are subject to human caprice. But the Creator is far above and beyond any such influences; He *the Exalted* says: 'And the heaven He has raised high, and He has set up the Balance' (*ar-Rahman*: 7).

It is a perfect balance that does not allow either the sky to fall upon the earth or the stars to collide with one another. Allah *Glorified is He* then shows us how to live in conformity with the orderly system of the universe: '...that you may not transgress the (just) balance' (*ar-Rahman*: 8). If you want your life to be orderly, observe the matters over which you have power and handle them as Allah handles the matters over which you have no power.

'And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance'. (*ar-Rahman*: 9) You can admire the balance of the greater universe because it

was made according to a precise system. Since the Lord *the Exalted* has given us a precise system of guidance contained in the code of 'Do' and 'Do not do', it follows that if you adopt this guidance and live your life according to Allah's Way, you will not corrupt your freely-willed actions and you will maintain an upright balance. The Lord *Glorified is He* has supplied us with information which, when contemplated naturally and spontaneously, without predispositions or inclinations, will lead the person to belief. These balanced beings must surely have a creator because humans were brought into being after them; many creatures appeared before mankind, and no human could ever claim that he made this universe.

We must search for the One Who created this precisely ordered universe. When a certain claim is free of any weak points, is it true or false? It is absolutely true. Allah has declared that He created the heavens, the earth, and the entire universe, and no one else has come forward to claim that he created them. Consequently, it is confirmed that this matter (the creation) is from Allah until another claimant comes forth. But no matter how much time passes, no one will ever claim this.

The role of the human mind is to think and use reason to know the One Who created this universe, and it has to show gratitude to the one who came and solved this mystery for him/her. The Messengers came to solve this riddle and to guide us for what pure innate minds search. If we were to follow the chain of existence, we will find that the human is the master of this existence because every other creature works and strives to serve humankind. As we know, the classes of organisms that are made subservient to humankind include animals, above which humans are distinguished by reason and intellect. Next in the chain comes the plant kingdom which exhibits the characteristic of growth, and finally, inanimate creation. All these creatures are made to serve humankind. The class of inanimate beings does not simply refer to motionless entities, but rather includes the air, the sun, the soil, and so on. They all perform their function in existence in order to serve the genera which are higher than them; and humankind benefits from them all. Plants benefit from inanimate beings, animals benefit from both plants and inanimate beings, and the totality of all beings serves humankind.

Is it not appropriate and necessary, then, for humans to ask themselves who placed them in this distinguished position? And, if a Messenger came to answer this question for us, and he also told us that humankind was created by Allah; moreover, he then explained to us Allah's Attributes and informed us of His Message whose truth was strengthened and supported by a miraculous sign, this miraculous sign being proof for us that he and his Message were from Allah as it is a sign and miracle which no human can duplicate even though this Messenger challenged all humankind to produce the like of this miraculous sign—if all this was the case, all humans will certainly believe in him, provided they are honest and sincere in their understanding and intention.

So, what constituted this firm proof? The firm proof was the sign that attested to the Messenger being truly sent by Allah to convey and deliver His Message on His behalf. Conveyance of the Creator's Message is what a pure innate mind demands and searches for, and such a person believes that a Creator must exist even if the name of the Creator—Allah—is yet unknown to that mind. The Messenger is the one with the authority to tell people the name and nature of their Creator and present to them His Message.

Accordingly, the coming of Messengers is a logical issue necessitated by natural human instinct and reason. As a result, the Lord *the Exalted* sent down the doctrinal light and the code of guidance which protects society from chaos, because Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if the Truth was in accordance with their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth and all those who are in them will have been corrupted...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

Religion came from Allah to govern all issues in which human inclinations and desires differ and clash. Allah conclusively settled all possible conflicts arising from different inclinations and desires by establishing Himself as the Sole Lawmaker and revealing a law that would resolve and unify these differences. Consequently, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you (truly) believes until his desires (or inclinations) are in line with what I have brought.'⁽¹⁾

That is, all inclinations and desires must be united under the banner of a single law. For, if every human being followed his own personal caprice, we

(1) Narrated by Ad-Daylami

would inevitably fall into conflict. Let us repeat: human conflicts, whether on the level of the family, the community, the nation, or the entire world, are the result of conflicting inclinations and desires. As for the issues in which human tendencies play no part, the whole world is in agreement on them. This is proved by the fact that we can say that the former Eastern power and the current Western power differed because of two political ideologies, one called 'communism' and the other called 'capitalism'.

There is no laboratory in which we can analyse communism or capitalism and see which of them is good for us. These are matters of caprice, which is why they have been constantly in conflict. Communism was defeated, although its effects still remain. However, people do not differ about physical issues. As the famous saying goes, there is no Russian or American electricity, or Russian or American physics. There is an agreement concerning all issues which can be empirically verified; differences only occur regarding those issues in which inclinations and desires differ and clash.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* has left open for us all that is in the earth for us to freely interact with it using the minds, abilities, and perceptions which He has endowed us with for this purpose. He made it clear to us that empirical and material aspects will not divide us; rather, we will agree upon them, and each group will even try to obtain the results of the other group's experiments, and some will even attempt to access such information through espionage or theft. But what really brings harm to us and our societies are the differences that arise because of conflicting inclinations and interests. It would have been bad enough if that was where it stopped: material agreement and capricious conflict; but no, humans have even used the things they agreed upon, which were derived from experimentation, invention and discovery as a way of forcing upon others the ideologies by which their inclinations and desires were governed. It is as though we have corrupted matters entirely: we use what we agree on to forcefully impose ideas we differ on.

The Lord *Glorified is He* gave us all this for life to proceed properly. Life cannot proceed properly unless the final judgement concerning matters involving desires belong solely to the Lord *Glorified is He*. For this reason, in the countryside people say, 'If the Law of Allah cuts a person's finger (for having

committed a crime), it will not bleed'. This signifies the people's belief. That is, when a ruling comes from Heaven, it is received with no hurtful feelings; since it is the judgement of the One Who created us and created this entire universe. Heaven intervenes in matters in which inclinations and desires differ by giving Allah's Way of guidance in the form of 'Do' and 'Do not do'. As for the matters in which inclinations and desires play no part, Allah makes it clear, 'You shall agree on these matters in spite of yourselves—and you will even steal them from one another—so they are not dangerous'.

The danger lies in capricious and whimsical exercise of judgement and decisions; and remember that concerning highly important matters which maintain the balance of society in accordance with Allah's Criteria, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave the example himself by going through the experiences himself. He did not pass this burden to one of the believers. For example, when our Lord wanted to bring an end to the practise of adoption so that no one will call anyone else his son unless he truly was his father, Allah first ended it for His own Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...so that (in future) there may be no difficulty for the believers in respect of (marriage to) the wives of their adopted sons when the latter have no desire to keep them (i.e. they have divorced them)....' (*al-Ahzab*: 37)

In the context of speaking about material issues versus those involving desires, we may mention here the Hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik *Allah be pleased with him* which states that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* happened to pass by some people who were busy cross-pollinating date-palms (as they usually did), and he said, 'If you were not to do it, it would be good for you'. (Therefore, they abandoned the practice), but the crop did not grow and yield properly. He *peace and blessings be upon him* later happened to pass by them again, and he said, 'What has gone wrong with your date-palms?' They said, 'You told us such-and-such', to which he replied, 'You know better about your worldly affairs.'⁽¹⁾ Clearly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left them to exercise their own discretion for their worldly affairs.

(1) Narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Ibn Hagar

Heaven, then, does not intervene in empirical matters because Allah *the Most High* has endowed us with minds and provided us with matter that can be subject to experimentation. We have seen how Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* revised his opinion after he saw that another opinion was better. He did this to affirm an important issue which is that physical, empirical, and experimental matters are outside the scope of religion, and therefore we should not attempt to apply religion to them. For example, we should not say, 'The earth is not spherical', or 'The earth does not revolve'. This has nothing to do with the religion, since religion has absolutely nothing to do with such matters that require experimentation, laboratory testing, inference and the formulation of theories. The purpose of religion is to protect us from the conflicts that result from different inclinations and desires. When we differ on something, religion decisively says to us: 'Do this, and do not do that', and therefore settles the matter. However, if something is not included within the order 'Do this and do not do that', this means that whether we do it or not, the world will not become corrupted because of it. We are free in matters which are not covered by 'Do' and 'Do not do'. We are free to differ about them; for differences in views belong to the sphere of natural instinct and disposition.

In this regard, Allah says: '...There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15). Does this 'light' refer to the Divine Revelation or something else? In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O mankind! Verily, there has come to you a convincing proof (Prophet Muhammad) from your Lord, and we sent down to you a manifest Light (this Quran).' (*an-Nisa'*: 174)

These Quranic statements indicate that the 'Light' here refers to the Quran; it combines in itself two characteristics: being a sign, i.e. a miracle, and being a light that shows us our way to live.' Therefore, believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad) and in the Light (this Quran) which we have sent down...' (*at-Taghabun*: 8). Belief in Allah is a process which is fulfilled in stages; 'Allah' is the pinnacle of faith and 'His Messenger' is the one who delivers Allah's Message on His Behalf. He brought us light. But some people who tend to overstate realities say that the word 'Light' stands for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. We answer by saying that we do not object to him being light because it is also possible that the conjunction 'and' in

the text is meant to explain what came before it, not add something to it. We do not wish to enter a labyrinth of arguments with those who say, 'No, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was not light, but rather, he was a physical being'; and those who respond to them with the Hadith on the authority of Jabir *Allah be pleased with him* when he said, 'What was the first thing that Allah created, O Messenger of Allah?' To which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'The light of your Prophet, O Jabir.'⁽¹⁾

The Hadith goes as follows: It was narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah that he said, 'O Prophet Muhammad, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, tell me about the first thing Allah Almighty created before everything else'. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O Jabir, before all other things Allah created the light of your Prophet from His own Light, and He made this light roam wherever He willed by His Power; and there was not, at that time, a Tablet, a Pen, a Paradise, a Fire, an angel, a heaven, an earth, a sun, a moon, a jinn or a human.'^{(2) (3)}

In order to avoid delving into a matter of the unseen which not all minds can grasp and some will be misguided by and leading to vain arguments, we say, 'If it appears to anyone that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is light, then he should keep this knowledge to himself; he should not try to convince anyone else of it as he should avoid causing tumults and disagreements. If the Hadith of Jabir is to be examined, we wonder, 'Did Prophet Muhammad assume that the first thing Allah *Glorified is He* created was "your Prophet," or "the *light* of your Prophet"?' The Hadith said 'The light of your Prophet', not the Prophet himself, a man made of flesh and blood; Muhammad came from Adam, and Adam came from dust. Therefore, we need not delve into issues which can only be understood by those of outstanding spiritual excellence, or else tumults will occur. As a result, if someone says, 'Do you say

(1) From the proofreader: This is a fabricated Hadith (Fataawa Al-Lajnah Al-Daa'imah, 1/464).

(2) Narrated by 'Abd Ar-Razzaq on the authority of Jabir as mentioned in *Kashf Al-Khafa'*

(3) From the proofreader: With regard to the narration that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was created from the light of Allah, this is a fabricated Hadith (Fataawa Al-Lajnah Al-Daa'imah, 1/464). Some people claim that 'Abd Ar-Razzaq narrated this in his book *Al-Musanna*, but this is not true.

that “light” here means Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?’ we say, ‘Indeed yes, Prophet Muhammad most certainly is light, for light prevents us from colliding, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought us guidance to light up our way; the Quran is the theoretical Methodology, while Prophet Muhammad provided the applied Methodology. If you use light to avoid collisions, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Verily, in the Messenger of Allah you have a good example...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 21). To sum up, the theoretical and applied Methodologies should both be followed.

‘...There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 15). ‘Clear’ means that it covers every issue and matter, as Allah says: ‘...No single thing have we neglected in our decree...’ (*al-An'am*: 38). That is, of those matters for which your desires and inclinations might vary. Imam Muhammad ‘Abdu⁽¹⁾ was once asked in Paris, ‘you say: “...No single thing have We neglected in Our decree...”’ (*al-An'am*: 38): do you mean even the number of loaves of bread that can be made from an Ardab (a certain weight measure) of flour?’ He asked them to wait a moment, and he found a baker and asked him about the number, and then told them the answer. They said, ‘No, you say it is in the Quran’. He replied, ‘Indeed, the Quran told me: “...Ask those who know, if you know not”’ (*an-Nahl*: 43)’.

As such, Allah’s words ‘...No single thing have we neglected in our decree...’ (*al-An'am*: 38) mean those things wherein mankind’s desires and inclinations might vary, or by which the motions of life on earth are corrupted. Our Lord *the Exalted* has made people have different preferences and like different fields.

‘...There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 15). That is, O people of the Book, be aware that this is your opportunity to settle the question of doctrine on earth, end the conflict between the two earlier religions, and return to one universal religion for all people, so that this partisanship will no longer remain on earth and the motions of man’s life will be complementary, not conflicting. Furthermore, Allah says: ‘Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger; and those who are (truly) with

(1) The story of Imam Muhammad Abdu being asked in Paris about the number of loaves of bread made from one ‘ardab’ of wheat

him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the Truth, (yet) full of mercy towards one another...' (*al-Fath*: 29).

Look at how Islam brings together two opposing things: Islam did not come to make mankind hard and unyielding because there are many situations which require mercy, and it did not make the person always merciful either because there are situations which require firmness. Islam did not come to cast man in one single mould; rather, it allowed the believer to react to the vicissitudes of life.

And Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...people who are humble towards the believers, firm with the disbelievers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). That is, Islam did not cast the believer in a mould of humility, nor a mould of pride, but rather, a believer is adaptable and adjustable to the changes of affairs and situations; he is humble and lenient towards the believer, firm towards the unbeliever. And Islam tells us: 'and thus have we willed you to be a community of the middle way (just community)...' (*al-Baqara*: 143).

That is, you must first know the two extremes and then mark them; for the middle cannot be known unless the two extremes are marked. The Jews went too far in their materialism, and the Christians went too far in their spirituality and monasticism: '...But as for monastic asceticism—We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves...' (*al-Hadid*: 27).

When Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was asked about a matter of inheritance, he said, 'I was not sent to teach inheritance' because his purpose was to recharge the religious and spiritual battery. Despite the grave disparity between the Jews and Christians, their scholars decided to compile the Old and New Testaments in one single Book. And there are some who assume that Islam is their arch-foe, but Islam was revealed to give people the freedom of choice. When we examine the materialistic approach together with the spiritual one, we see that the Jews went too far in materialism; they said: '...O Musa (Moses), indeed we shall not believe you until we see Allah face to face...' (*al-Baqara*: 55).

They took their materialism to the point that when they were straying in the wilderness and their provisions came straight from our Lord as manna and

quails—and as we know, ‘manna’ is a food like white discs which came down from the sky, settled on trees or stones and then dried, and which was sweet-tasting like honey; and Allah sent them quails⁽¹⁾, which are birds similar to chickens—they said: ‘...We cannot endure but one kind of food...’ (*al-Baqara*: 61).

They wanted the crops which grow from the earth instead. The thing which caused these materialistic impulses to be more apparent is that they started to doubt the unseen: they said, ‘Perhaps the manna will not come, or perhaps we will not be able to catch the birds; we want our food to be secure’. Hence, metaphysical matters were far beyond them, and they were excessively materialistic; Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to redress this extremist materialistic outlook, and therefore He sent down spiritual teachings in the form of the message of ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and reinvigorated them with purely religious sentiments which contained no material laws so that they would adopt these elements and the balance would be restored. But dispute broke out between them, and therefore a new religion had to come in order to combine rational and composed materialism with sound spirituality which was neither lax nor excessive: it was a spirituality taken directly from Heaven meaning that there was no need for man to contrive a religion which combined the two elements into one. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* said to us: ‘Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger; and those who are (truly) with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the Truth, (yet) full of mercy towards one another. You can see them bowing down, prostrating themselves (in prayer), seeking favour with Allah and (His) Good Pleasure: their marks are on their faces, from the traces of prostration...’ (*al-Fath*: 29).

These are all matters of worship. In fact, adherents to Islam follow both a materialistic and spiritual lifestyle at the same time. And Allah *the Almighty* continues: ‘...This is their likeness in the Torah...’ (*al-Fath*: 29).

It is as though Allah described the followers of Muhammad in the Torah, ‘O you who have gone too far with your materialism! A Messenger will come to redress the balance of beliefs and laws, and his community will be completely different to you. You are materialists, but Muhammad’s followers

(1) (*Salwa*), i.e. kind of birds

will bow and prostrate seeking the favour and Good Pleasure of Allah, and there are marks on their faces from the traces of prostration. That is what your way lacks and will be found in the Methodology of the adherents of Islam'. Allah then says: 'and their likeness in the Injil (Gospel) is: (they are) like a seed that brings forth its shoot, and then strengthens it so that it grows stout, and (in the end it) stands upright upon its stem, delighting the sowers...' (*al-Fath*: 29). Hence, their likeness in the Torah was what the Jews were lacking, and their likeness in the Injil (Gospel) was what the Christians were lacking. That is, the religion of Prophet Muhammad combined material and spiritual values, and as a result it was a middle way between the other two. Further, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15), that is, take the opportunity to correct your mistakes and start afresh a new life which will link you to Heaven in a way that combines the values of worldly life with those of the life of the Hereafter.

Allah then says:

يَهْدِي بِهِ اللَّهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ السَّلَامِ وَيُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٦﴾

**with which God guides to the ways of peace those
who follow what pleases Him, bringing them from
darkness out into light, by His will, and guiding them
to a straight path [16] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 16)**

As long as Allah is the One Who guides, He *Glorified is He* is free of the desires to which they are attached, and therefore, we can be sure that Islam is not governed by desires and personal inclinations. The cause of any lawmaker's failure is that he is prone to include enactments by which he achieves some personal preferences and gains, while a truly just lawmaker must not benefit from the law he enacts; and this is not true of anyone but Allah *Glorified is He* because He enacts the decrees and ordinances for everyone and He is greater than everyone.

'There has come to you from Allah a Light and a clear Book through which Allah shows to all who seek His Good Pleasure...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15-16).

Allah guides those who seek His Good Pleasure to the paths of salvation (*'salam'* which means 'peace'); there is good pleasure which is sought, and paths of salvation which are given as recompense. Are there paths and venues for peace and salvation? Yes, because a soul can be at peace with itself, with its family, with its community, with its nation, with the world, with the whole universe or with Allah; peace can be found with all of these. Clearly, the paths of peace and salvation are manifold; and one attains peace with Allah by exalting Him, O slave of Allah, and not worshipping other gods along with Him, or attaching any other being to Him; that is, by not associating anything with him, or by saying that there is no god at all.

Therefore, we find that Islam takes the middle ground even in the matter of doctrine: it came in the midst of those who claim that there is no god, which is a negation, and others who said, 'There are many gods: evil has a god and goodness has a god, darkness has a god and light has a god, even the air and the earth have gods!'

Those who advocated atheism based this conviction on their material senses, all of them forgetting that man is made of both matter and spirit, and when the spirit departs, the body becomes a mere corpse. Yet none of them have asked himself, 'Where is the spirit which controls both your soul and your body? Have you ever seen it? Where is it? Is it in your nose, or your ear, or your stomach, or where? What shape is it? What colour is it? What taste is it?' You cannot perceive it, yet it exists. One of Allah's creations dwells within you, yet you cannot perceive it; so could you possibly perceive the Being of your Creator? This is a manifest error, for if a god could be perceived by the senses it would no longer be a god because if you perceive something, this means you can limit it with your vision, and as long as you can limit it, this means your vision has in a sense overpowered it—and the Supreme Power cannot be overpowered by that which is lower than it. When Allah *Glorified is He* wants to indicate this, He says: 'and also (there are signs) within your own selves: will you not then see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21)

The other misguided team have claimed that there are many gods as this universe is vast, and everything in it must require its own private god. Hence, Islam came with the Truth and stated: There is only One God because if there

were many gods, as you claim; one for the sun, another for the sky, another for the earth, another for water and another for air, then each of these gods would be incapable of accomplishing any other task besides that which fell under the limited authority of his godhood, and disputes and conflicts would arise amidst them, as is made clear by Allah's words: '...Each deity would surely have gone off (away from the others) with what he had created, and they would surely have (tried to) overcome one another...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91).

So the sun-god might remove the sun from the universe, and the water-god might deny water to all other beings; but Allah gives the final judgement on the matter by saying: 'Say, "If there were—as some people assert—(other) deities with Him (Allah), surely (even) they would have to strive to find a way to submit to the Lord of the Throne"' (*al-Isra'*: 42). And in another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than Allah, both (these realms) would surely have fallen into ruin!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 22) The natural laws which you observe are also governed by the One God. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has come to you to tell you that there is One God, and he *peace and blessings be upon him* adds, 'There is no god but Allah'; the confirmation 'there is no god' negates that there are any gods at all, and then he says 'but Allah'; and this is for man's own good so that he does not remain in humble subservience to the 'sun-god', the 'air-god' or the 'water-god'. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Allah sets forth a parable: A man belonging to several partners, (all of them) at variance with one another, and a man belonging totally to one person; can these two conditions be deemed equal?' (*az-Zumar*: 29)

Clearly, our Lord *Glorified is He* wants to spare us delusion, fancy and doubt: Allah *Glorified is He* is One God, and when He enacts a decree, no one can contradict it, as He *the Almighty* guides us by the laws He makes for us because He has neither desires nor preferences that can affect His laws. The meaning of desire is that you do something to serve your own interest, yet Allah *the Exalted* does not need anyone because He created all existence before He created mankind, and none of His creatures—no matter how much knowledge or intelligence he has been given—has any power or influence over the act or arrangement of creation' Through which Allah shows to all

who seek His Good Pleasure...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 16). As long as one seeks His Good Pleasure, Allah *Glorified is He* will guide him to the ways of salvation. There are two forms of guidance: Allah *Glorified is He* guides those who seek His Good Pleasure to the paths of salvation, and He *the Exalted* said in another verse: 'But for those who are (willing to be) guided, He (Allah) increases their (ability to follow His) guidance and causes them to grow in piety' (*Muhammad*: 17).

Beware of thinking that the reward and recompense of Allah-consciousness only comes in the Hereafter for every time you do something, you find that it has an effect on you: when you pray, you find that your concerns are eased, and if you refrain from committing sin when no one can see, your heart will not be weighed down; and in this way, the believer lives in peace with his own self. The paths of peace and salvation are manifold. These are, the way to be at peace with Allah, the way to be at peace with the whole universe, the way to be at peace with society, the way to be at peace with one's family, and the way to be at peace with one's self. Allah says: 'And (know) that this is My Way leading straight (to Me): follow it, then, and do not follow other ways lest they cause you to deviate from His Way...' (*al-An'am*: 153). That is, there are ways of peace and salvation, and also ways of error.

Allah says in the following verse in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*: '...and, by His grace, brings them out of the depths of darkness into light and guides them to a straight way' (*al-Ma'ida*: 16). The depths of darkness are where collisions occur; and when Allah takes them out of the depths of darkness into light, they see the right path that leads to goodness, and also the path which leads elsewhere. After they come out of the depths of darkness into the light, their motions are complimentary and not conflicting; they do not collide with one another, and no hatred or enmity arises amidst them. Or it may mean that Allah *Glorified is He* guides them to the Straight Path which leads to Heaven.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَمْلِكُ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ
وَأُمَّهُ، وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ۗ وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا
بَيْنَهُمَا يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾

Those who say, ‘God is the Messiah, the son of Mary,’ are defying the truth. Say, ‘If it had been God’s will, could anyone have prevented Him from destroying the Messiah, son of Mary, together with his mother and everyone else on earth? Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to God: He creates whatever He will. God has power over everything’ [17] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 17)

And Allah says earlier: ‘So, We planted among them enmity....’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 14) Consequently, the Jacobites said one thing, the Nazarenes said another thing, and the Melkites said another. As such, Allah *Glorified is He* addressed the most important issue: ‘Truly, they have disbelieved who say, “Indeed, Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary...”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 17).

And Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘Say’, replying to them: ‘...And who could have any power against Allah...?’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 17) That is, who could prevent Allah *Glorified is He* from doing as He willed with the one whom you call a god, ‘...if He willed to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, his mother, and everyone who is on earth—all of them...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 17)?

They claimed that Allah is ‘Isa (Jesus) the Messiah, son of Mary; and this was a calumny against the status of divinity, which is too great to be compared and too great to indwell in anything. These noble words tell these people that no one could have prevented Allah from destroying ‘Isa, his mother and everyone on earth, for Allah is the Truth, the Sovereign Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that dwells within them, and He creates what He wills as He wills. If Allah *Glorified is He* created the Messiah with no father, we have been told before that He created Adam with neither father nor mother and created Eve with no mother; in His Awesome Power and Might, nothing is beyond His Ability. ‘Isa *peace be upon him* was a mortal man like any other.

‘...For to Allah belong the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them; He creates what He wills...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 17) Allah mentions the heavens here to represent all that is high, and the earth to represent all that is low, and He says: ‘He creates what He wills’ to respond to this confusing matter with precise brevity: ‘He creates what He wills’ because the confusion arose from the fact that ‘Isa *peace be upon him* was created in a unique manner which was not the usual way people are created. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* clarified, ‘Do not think that when I create men I am obliged to do this by means of male and female parents; for were this the case, then this confusion should already have arisen before ‘Isa *peace be upon him* being directed, rather, at the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* for he was created with neither father nor mother’. That is, those who were afflicted by doubt and consequently misguided by the fact that ‘Isa (Jesus) was born from a mother without any father should have been taken aback more by the creation of Adam, for he had neither father nor mother. Allah clarifies to them, ‘Allah creates what He wills; it is not completely necessary for there to be two parents, or only one father, or only one mother.’

Our Lord *Glorified is He* has the absolute power to create what He wills, and He has created men in all the four logically possible ways: Either from both father and mother as in the normal case for all of us, or with neither as in the case of Adam *peace be upon him* or from a male but not a female as in the case of Eve, or from a female but not a male as in the case of ‘Isa *peace be upon him*. That is, Allah created men in all the four logically possible ways so that you would not think that our Lord *Glorified is He* has to create in certain ways; rather, He creates what He wills. The proof of this is that both potential parents may be present together, yet they might not conceive a child—and is there any further possibility aside from all these?

‘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...’ (*ash-Shura*: 49-50).

Clearly, our Lord *Glorified is He* is not compelled to create by means of certain elements; the Will of the Creator, not the elements of the creation, is

what matters: ‘...He creates what He wills...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 17), and Allah’s Will is absolute and His Power is unlimited; for this reason, it is inevitable that He then says: ‘...and Allah has power over all things!’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 17)

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ نَحْنُ أَبْنَاءُ اللَّهِ وَأَحِبُّهُ ۖ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ
بِذُنُوبِكُمْ ۖ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ
مَلِكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

The Jews and the Christians say, ‘We are the children of God and His beloved ones.’ Say, ‘Then why does He punish you for your sins? You are merely human beings, part of His creation: He forgives whoever He will and punishes whoever He will. Control of the heavens and earth and all that is between them belongs to Him: all journeys lead to Him’ [18] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 18)

Did all the Jews say, ‘We are Allah’s children’? Or did all the Christians say, ‘We are Allah’s children’? No; some of the Jews said that ‘Uzair (Ezra) was the son of Allah, and some of the Christians said that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was the son of Allah; and Musaylima the Liar claimed to be a prophet, and all of his family claimed to be prophets as well, meaning that prophethood was in their stock; even the followers of ‘Abdullah ibn Az-Zubayr Abu Khabib called themselves the ‘Khubaybites’ ascribing themselves to Ibn Az-Zubayr who was the father of Khabib; they would all ascribe to themselves something which was an attribute of someone else. As such, the meaning of: ‘We are Allah’s children ‘is’ We are the devotees of ‘Uzair (Ezra), who was the son of Allah’, and ‘We are the devotees of ‘Isa, who was the son of Allah’. We can derive evidence for this from the Quran; we know the story⁽¹⁾ of the believer from the family of Pharaoh: ‘At that, a believing man of Pharaoh’s family, who (until then) had concealed his faith, exclaimed, “Would you slay a man because he says, ‘Allah is my Lord’ –when he has indeed brought you clear (signs) from your Lord? And if he be a liar, his

(1) The story of the believer of the people of Pharaoh

lie will fall back on him; but if he is a man of truth, something (of the punishment) of which he warns you is bound to befall you: for, verily, Allah will not grace with His guidance one who has wasted his own self by lying. O my people! Yours is the kingdom this day, (and) you have the upper hand in the land...” (*Ghafir*: 28-29).

Were all the people of Pharaoh Kings? No, only Pharaoh was king. But as long as Pharaoh was king, all those who followed him and supported him were also kings because they all lived under the care and patronage of the king. And Allah *Glorified is He* also said to the Jews that He: ‘...made you your own masters (*muluk*)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 20) (*‘muluk’*, singular *‘malik’*, which literally means ‘king’). The scholars have tried to determine what the meaning of the word *‘malik’* is here: some say it means the man who owns a large house through which water flows; others say it means the man whose life is orderly and has servants to attend to him so that he does not have to serve himself in his own house, but when he is outside his house he serves himself; others say it means the one who is wealthy and does not need to work. And Sheikh’ Abd Al-Jalil’ Isa said about this, ‘Do not find this strange, for even illiterate people say in their dialect that so-and-so is the “king of his time”, meaning that he is a wealthy man of means who does not need to undertake hard work’. Consequently: ‘Allah’s children’ does not necessarily mean that they are all His children, and therefore Allah told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say in response to them: ‘...Why, then, does He cause you to suffer for your sins? Nay, you are but human beings of His creating...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 18); and your forgiveness is subject to His Will: ‘...He forgives whom He wills, and He causes to suffer whom He wills...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 18). And you will always be subject to His Will to either forgive or punish: ‘...for to Allah belongs the dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, and to Him is the final end’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 18).

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* proclaimed the true doctrine He intends for man:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا جَاءَنَا
 مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

People of the Book, Our Messenger comes to you now, after a break in the sequence of messengers, to make things clear for you in case you should say, ‘No one has come to give us good news or to warn us.’ So someone has come to you, to give you good news and warn you: God has the power to do all things [19] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 19)

‘Our Messenger’ here means Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who has come first of all, O people of the Book, to tell you the truth about those things wherein you differ, and secondly those things which you must agree on; and as for those teachings which Islam added, it only added them because they were appropriate for the matters of life which man will face until the end of time. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent after a long period in which no Messengers appeared, meaning a time when the connection with heaven was suspended since no Divine Messages were revealed; this was the time between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his fellow Messenger, ‘Isa *peace be upon him*. People have estimated this span to be six hundred years, or five hundred and sixty years; but the number of years is not important; what is of paramount importance is that there was a lapse of time during which no Messengers were sent. There is, however, a question concerning Allah’s words: ‘And set forth to them a parable—(the story of how) the people of a township (behaved) when (Our) Messengers came to them. Lo! We sent to them two (Messengers), but they disbelieved in them; and so we strengthened (the two) with a third. Then they said, “Indeed, we are Messengers (sent) to you (by Allah)!” (The others) answered, “You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves; moreover, the Most Gracious never sends any (type of revelation). You do nothing but lie!” Said (the Messengers), “Our Lord knows that indeed we are most surely Messengers (sent) to you”’ (*Ya Sin*: 13-16).

Were these Messengers sent by Allah between Prophet ‘Isa and Prophet Muhammad? Were they sent before ‘Isa *peace be upon him* to the people of Antioch? At first, the people disbelieved these two Messengers, and therefore Allah supported them with a third.

And the people said to them: 'You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves; moreover, the Most Gracious never sends any (type of revelation). You do nothing but lie!' (*Ya Sin*: 15) The Messengers replied: '...Our Lord knows that indeed we are most surely Messengers (sent) to you' (*Ya Sin*: 16).

What is the difference between '...Indeed, we are Messengers (sent) to you...' (*Ya Sin*: 14) and: '...Our Lord knows that indeed we are most surely Messengers (sent) to you' (*Ya Sin*: 16)? Words are spoken in order to deliver a statement, and if the hearer is not acquainted with the topic, he can be addressed without any emphasis, but if he harbours a trace of doubt, he must be addressed with emphatic words, and the more his doubt increases the more emphatic the language must be. Allah *Glorified is He* sent two Messengers to the townspeople and they disbelieved them, and as a result, He strengthened them with a third, which was meant to add strength to their Message; after they had been two Messengers, Allah *Glorified is He* made them three, whereupon they said: '...Indeed, we are Messengers (sent) to you (by Allah)!' (*Ya Sin*: 14)

It is true that there is emphasis here because the sentence begins with 'Indeed', which is emphatic. And when they gave them the lie and said: '...You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves; moreover, the Most Gracious never sends any (type of revelation)...' (*Ya Sin*: 15), which was even more persistent denial on their part, what did the Messengers say? Would they say: '...Indeed, we are Messengers (sent) to you' (*Ya Sin*: 14), as they did the first time? No, for the denial had become even more pronounced and flagrant, and for this reason Allah placed an even more emphatic phrase into the mouths of the Messengers: '...Our Lord knows...' (*Ya Sin*: 16) which is akin to an oath, and is the first emphasis, while the second emphasis is: '...that indeed we are mostly surely Messengers (sent) to you' (*Ya Sin*: 16).

As we know, the Arabic particle 'inna' (translated here as 'indeed') is emphatic, and then the letter 'lam' (translated here as 'most surely') in front of the word 'mursulun' (Messengers) gives further emphasis.

We continue by saying when a word has many meanings, the meaning which links them all is the root meaning. In the case of the word '*fatra*' (a long time), it basically means 'ending' or 'ceasing'. Here, (*fatra*) means 'ceasing'; and there was a time when revelation ceased to come and no Messengers were sent. This meant that the period of heedlessness was lengthened, and Allah's

Way was not clear for a long time and the people of goodness lived in dire need and longing for the revelation of a new Divine Way. Hence, when a Messenger finally did come, the people should have hastened to hear what he had to say. This is why Allah *the Exalted* tells us that He sent a Messenger after a long time during which no Messengers came; so if you are truly people of goodness, you should follow the way of guidance Allah *Glorified is He* brings and hasten to listen to what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has to say in order to hear his Message and his Mission.

Allah *Glorified is He* sent them Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after a long suspension of Messengers in order that they will no longer be able to argue and proffer the excuse: ‘...No bearer of glad tidings has come to us, nor any warner...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 19); for now, indeed, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner had come to them. The bearer of glad tidings is the one who brings news of something which will come in the future; and as long as the one who comes is a bearer of glad tidings, he encourages the people to follow Allah’s Way of life in order that they might attain goodness. There must be a period of time in which the people can practise the guided codes of Allah’s Methodology; and there must likewise be a period of time wherein the misguided can drown more in their malicious unorthodox ways and thus bring evil to themselves.

This is like the teacher saying, ‘Give those who study the glad tidings that they will succeed’, whereupon those students who wish to succeed will study; that is, there must be a period of time for the glad tidings to be attained. And likewise, when a warning is given, there must be a period of time wherein one can avoid all that will bring him evil.

‘...Now, after a long time during which no Messengers have appeared, there has come to you Our Messenger to make (the Truth) clear to you, lest you say, “No bearer of glad tidings has come to us, nor any warner...”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 19). The words ‘lest you say’ show that there is no longer any opportunity to offer the excuse: ‘...No bearer of glad tidings has come to us, or any warner...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 19).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...for now there has come to you a bearer of glad tidings and a warner—since Allah has the power over all things’

(*al-Ma'ida*: 19). Allah *Glorified is He* is All-Powerful. He brought mankind into a universe which was precisely ordered and contained all the means to goodness and life in the best possible and organised way before man came to it. And once man had come into all this goodness, would his Creator leave him without any guidance? No; for He *Glorified is He* was well able to bring all His creatures into existence and give them all that preserves their life and their species. Furthermore, would Allah *Glorified is He*, not also give them all that preserves their moral values?

He *the Exalted* is well able to provide us with both material as well as moral sustenance and to give generously to His creatures in every way; and sending the Messengers was one of the techniques by which *the Almighty* provided for mankind for them to preserve their values.

Allah *Glorified is He* then turns again to the people of Musa (Moses), but this time Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* was the speaker:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ ۖ يَتَقَوَّمُوا أَدْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ
 أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَءَاتَاكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُوْت أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

Moses said to his people, ‘My people, remember God’s blessing on you: how He raised prophets among you and appointed kings for you and gave you what he had not given to any other people [20] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 20)

When you hear the Arabic word ‘*idh*’ (take heed and remember), know that it implies an adverb of time meaning ‘when’, as though Allah is saying, ‘Take heed and remember when Musa (Moses) said to his people: “...Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you...”’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 20) Allah *Glorified is He* said this to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a reminder to aid Prophet Muhammad to endure the hardships he incurred in communicating the Divine Message, whether from the atheists or from the people of the Book.

When Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Take heed and remember (that), Musa (Moses) said to his people...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 20), it is a reminder to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his followers or whoever reads the Quran, that Musa *peace be upon him* said to his people: ‘...O my people!

Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 20) And Musa *peace be upon him* would not have said: '...O my people! Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 20) had he not seen them act in a way that does not match the blessings bestowed on them. Allah is far Exalted above any comparison, but an example to illustrate this point, which is only for clarification, is when one of us scolds an ungrateful son, 'Remember all that your father has done for you'. No one says this unless the son has committed inapposite acts that are not suitable for the large amount of favours given by his father. It is as though Musa's people had subjected him to much toil and woe to the point that he said this to them in order to rebuke them and make them come to their senses and remember the blessings Allah *Glorified is He* had given them; and to remember blessings means to follow Allah's Methodology by obeying His commandments and steering clear of all that He forbids.

'Take heed and remember (that) Musa (Moses) said to his people, "O my people! Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you..." (*al-Ma'ida*: 20). We know that the word '*ni'ma*' (literally 'blessing', in the singular) means 'blessings' as a class, meaning all blessings in total; or it may be that each individual blessing in itself was worthy and deserving of remembrance and gratitude. The proof that the word '*ni'ma*' can mean all blessings in total is that Allah says: '...and should you try to count Allah's blessings (*ni'ma*), you will never be able to count them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). As long as the blessings are countless, this must mean that they are many, which means that the word '*ni'ma*' here means all blessings as a class. 'Take heed and remember (that) Musa (Moses) said to his people, "O my people! Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you..." (*al-Ma'ida*: 20). To remember blessings means to be grateful to the Bestower, and also to be ashamed to disobey Him or make use of any of these blessings in a prohibited way that will bring about Allah's wrath. 'Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you', and there are many blessings which you enjoy. Did Allah not part the sea for them: 'Strike the sea with your staff' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 63). And when he struck the water with the staff: '...it parted, and each part appeared like a huge mountain' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 63).

The flowing water became like a mountain. And he struck the rock for them and, by Allah's Command, water flowed from it: "...Strike the rock with your staff!"—whereupon twelve springs gushed forth from it...' (*al-Baqara*: 60).

There were many miracles which manifested the Powerful Ability of the Supreme Creator, and this Powerful Ability is illustrated in many different ways. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the sea and it parted, each side becoming like a great mountain, as though the water were rock; and Musa *peace be upon him* struck the rock and water gushed forth from it. These were wonders that resulted from Allah's Powerful Ability. And did He *Glorified is He* not shade you with clouds? Did He not send down to you manna and quails in the midst of the wilderness? And do these blessings not behove that you remember Allah and give thanks to Him, and be ashamed to disobey Him or persecute Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who has come to guide you?

All of these blessings merited gratitude, and gratitude means remembrance. '...Remember the blessings which Allah bestowed upon you when he raised up prophets among you, and made you your own masters...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 20). Whenever they were overcome by heedlessness, Allah sent them a prophet as a role model. He *Glorified is He* did not get infuriated with them and say: 'I sent them a Messenger, and then two, three, and four, but they have chosen not to be guided'. Rather, every time they disobeyed Allah *the Exalted* and their ailments aggravated, He sent another Messenger to guide them. They are like the sick person whose family does not suffice with one, two, three, or four doctors, but rather, every time they see something wrong, they call another doctor for him. This was a great blessing, for Allah *Glorified is He* sent them many Messengers, but they should have realised that their ailments had become manifold and that their disease was terminal; for had it not been terminal, they did not need all those doctors and prophets.

Interestingly enough Allah *the Exalted* did not only raise prophets from among them, but as He *Glorified is He* says He also: 'made you your own masters' ('*muluk*', which literally means 'kings'). This does not mean that they all became kings, but rather that, some of them were kings. The word '*malik*' has come to have the political meaning of a 'king': but generally speaking, every man is the owner (*maalik*) of what is in his possession; the

owner of his clothes, the morsel of food he eats, and the house in which he sleeps—and the '*malik*' (master) is the one who possesses (*yamlik*) and rules (also '*yamlik*') over others who possess as well.

So everyone who has the ability to possess something and to rule over others who possess things is considered a 'master'. A man who has shepherds working for him to tend his livestock, people who serve him in his house, people who farm his land, more than one driver, many people who obey his orders and only come to him when he permits, but when meeting them, he does not experience any trouble or exert any effort—such a man is certainly a 'master'. Allah, indeed, bestowed them in abundance.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* specified what it means to possess abundance according to the standards of a true believer, saying, 'If one wakes in the morning to find himself safe, healthy and having enough provisions for his day, it is as though he has been given the entire world.'

As long as he has been given the entire world by possessing these things, he is a master; and since Allah *the Most High* gave them these things, He made them masters.'...And (Allah) granted to you (favours) such as He had not granted to anyone else in the world' (*al-Ma'ida*: 20). That is, Allah *the Exalted* gave them that which none of their contemporaries were given, and continued to give it to them. Did He not give His prophet Solomon, who was of the children of Israel, dominion which was never given to anyone else after him? Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not mention this fact here, since it did not happen until ten generations after his time.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

يَقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا
تُرْجِعُوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنْقَلِبُوا خَاسِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

**My people, go into the holy land which God has ordained
for you — do not turn back or you will be the losers' [21]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 21)**

Musa *peace be upon him* was conveying here what Allah had revealed to him; and when did this take place? We know that the children of Israel had

had a connection with Egypt since the time of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and that Yusuf *peace be upon him* brought his father and brothers to live in Egypt, and from them were formed the Tribe of Israel. Allah *the Exalted* miraculously extended Yusuf's hegemony over the land so that they dwelled there for a time. It is amazing how precisely the Quran relates these historic events even though we did not come to learn about them until the French military campaign came to Egypt. The French came with a scientific delegation, and this delegation uncovered archaeological information which briefed them much on the ancient Egyptian civilisation and the advances which the Arabs had made many centuries before Europe; and Europe gained many sciences and arts from this at the very time the Arab world was falling into decline and ignorance.

The Muslim Arabs had invented things which astonished the Western world; history tells us how one of the Arab kings⁽¹⁾ sent the French king Charlemagne a gift of a clock, and the French people thought that there was a demon in the clock. The way the clock worked was amazing as the scientist who invented it placed a tube of water inside it which had a small hole from which drops fell onto something resembling the hand of a clock, which caused the clock to advance by a single minute. The clock was thus powered by water droplets and it was extremely accurate, and when the people in Charlemagne's court saw it, they thought it had demons inside it. This is one single example from many other examples which are beyond counting, all of which manifest Allah's words:

'In time we shall show them our signs (through what they see) in the utmost horizons (of the universe) and within themselves, until it becomes quite clear to them that this (Revelation) is indeed the Truth...' (*Fussilat*: 53).

And when the French came to Cairo, they brought with them this scientific delegation together with a printing press. Those scientists gave a presentation of a magic lantern and made simple people marvel at their scientific advancement; but this campaign was hidden behind displays which were more like 'acrobatics'. The job of the scientists was to investigate the secret of the Egyptian and Islamic civilisations; for they knew that the Islamic

(1) The story of the clock offered by the Arab king to the French king, Charlemagne

civilisation had been transferred to Egypt and the ancient Egyptian civilisation was also once established there.

They would exhibit their scientific displays and conjuring tricks at Darb Al-Gamamiz, with the intention of causing the people to marvel at the French civilisation. At the very same time, their scientists were unravelling what was carved on the Rosetta stone, a stone which was inscribed with hieroglyphics and whose mysteries were uncovered by a young Frenchman named Champollion. Champollion was able to identify the names in the hieroglyphic text and thus to decipher the alphabet of the language; it is as though Allah wanted to use those who disbelieve in His religion to serve His religion.

In language, the pronunciation of proper nouns is fixed; that is, if a man or a prince has a name, this name is composed of unchangeable letters. Let us consider an example in the English language: there was once an English prime minister named 'Churchill', but if we were to translate this name literally into Arabic it would no longer refer to this man and would not indicate his identity to us; what we actually do is leave the name as it is and transliterate it by writing it with Arabic letters instead of Roman ones. To conclude, the pronunciation of proper names is fixed.

Champollion discovered that there were unchanged letters on the Stone. In this way he was able to decipher the hieroglyphic alphabet and thus to read what was written on the Rosetta Stone, and then present to us the first discoveries of the history of ancient Egypt by reading what was written on the Stone.

Moreover, we can see the magnificence of the Quran when it relates the stories of historic figures: it relates the civilisations of 'Ad, Thamud, and Pharaoh in the chapter of *al-Fajr*; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'I swear by the daybreak, and the ten nights! By all that is even and all that is odd! And by the night as it runs its course! Is there (not) in all this evidence for those endowed with reason (that Allah is able to punish the ungodly)? Are you not aware of how your Lord has dealt with (the tribe of) 'Ad, (the people of) Iram, the nation of lofty pillars' (*al-Fajr*: 1-7).

Iram, the nation of lofty pillars, dwelled in the Arab Peninsula. They have still not been discovered, and until now we know nothing about them; Allah

the Exalted says about the pillars: 'the like of which has never been created in all the lands' (*al-Fajr*: 8). And Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of Pharaoh: 'and with Pharaoh (lord) of (many) stakes' (*al-Fajr*: 10). The pyramids indeed were built with the use of stakes, as were the ancient Egyptian obelisks and temples, and the other wonders which have amazed people across the ages. 'The like of which has never been created in all the lands' (*al-Fajr*: 8).

And Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of the civilisation of Thamud: 'and with (the tribe of) Thamud, who hollowed out (huge) rocks in the valley' (*al-Fajr*: 9). We have seen this civilisation wherein the people hewed their dwellings out of solid rock, just as we have seen the civilisation of Egypt. The civilisation of 'Ad is the one which, to this day, we have not seen; it must lie buried beneath the earth.⁽¹⁾ We know that in these places a single sandstorm can bury an entire caravan, so we can imagine what the long centuries which have passed, and the thousands of sandstorms which have blown, must have done. We will surely have to dig very deep to unravel the civilisation of 'Ad. Allah called the ancient Egyptian civilisation: '...Pharaoh (lord) of (many) stakes' (*al-Fajr*: 10); and when Allah *Glorified is He* spoke about Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* He also spoke about his contemporaries, among whom were the Pharaohs. And He *the Exalted* said to Musa and his brother Aaron *peace be upon them*: 'Go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh: for, verily, he has transgressed all bounds!' (*Ta Ha*: 43)

As a result, Musa *peace be upon him* went to Pharaoh to free the children of Israel from his tyranny; but why did Pharaoh wreak tyranny upon them? We know that every new regime tries to annihilate the one which ruled before it and punish those who supported the old regime, and this is clear to us when we look at the world. The matter becomes clear to us when we remember the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* who became a minister to the ruler of Egypt and who brought his parents and his tribe to settle there; and the story of Pharaoh was not mentioned in the chapter of Yusuf.

When the Quran speaks of the ruler of Egypt at the time of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*, it says: 'And the King said, "Bring him to me..."'

(1) From the proofreader: The location of the city of 'Ad has since been discovered by photographs taken from the NASA Space Shuttle in 1990.

(*Yusuf*: 54). Allah *Glorified is He* does not call the ruler 'Pharaoh': even though He used the word 'Pharaoh' to refer to the ruler at the time of Musa. In the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* does not say 'Pharaoh', but rather, He mentions 'King'. When the Rosetta Stone was discovered, we found out that at the time when Prophet Yusuf *peace be upon him* was in Egypt, the land was ruled by the so-called 'Shepherd-Kings', the Hyksos who invaded Egypt and seized it from the Egyptians and became their kings; and their dynasty was called the 'Dynasty of Kings'.

The Quran relates, 'the King said, "Bring him to me"' (*Yusuf*: 54), and does not call the ruler 'Pharaoh'. For this reason, when the Pharaohs reclaimed their rule and expelled the Shepherd Kings from the land, the Pharaohs sought to exterminate those who had served the kings, namely the children of Israel. The precision of the Quran can be clearly seen by how it calls the ruler at the time of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* 'Pharaoh', yet calls the ruler at the time of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* 'King'. These are things which have only recently been discovered, but the Quran told us of them; such matters needed to be discovered, and they are some of the innumerable signs of which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'In time We shall show them Our signs (through what they see) in the utmost horizons (of the universe) and within themselves...' (*Fussilat*: 53).

Then, after He *Glorified is He* aided Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* with His signs and drowned Pharaoh, Musa *peace be upon him* said to them: 'O my people! Enter the holy land which Allah has promised you; but do not turn back (on your faith), for then you turn back as losers!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21)

The mission to free the children of Israel from Pharaoh had been accomplished, and the Egyptian people got rid of Pharaoh; and now the children of Israel were bidden to enter the Holy Land. The word for 'land' in Arabic is '*al-ard*', and if this word is used in a general sense it means 'the earth', as in the name for the entire planet earth. The word '*al-ard*' is used many times in the story of the children of Israel, in many different circumstances.

Allah *Glorified is He* says at the end of the chapter of *al-Isra*': 'and after that we said to the children of Israel, "Dwell now securely on earth..." (*al-Isra*': 104).

Is it possible to dwell anywhere but on earth? No one says 'Dwell here' unless he is referring to a specific place on earth because all dwelling takes place on earth; so how could Allah *Glorified is He* say: '...Dwell now securely on earth...' (*al-Isra'*: 104)? The usual thing is to say, 'Dwell in such-and-such a place', such as Al-Mansura, Jericho or Jerusalem. Allah's Command: 'Dwell now securely on earth' is a subtle eloquent point that Allah uses in the Quran; and as long as Allah *Glorified is He* did not specify a particular place on earth, it is as though He is saying, 'Disperse on earth, for you have no homeland; wander the earth and settle nowhere', that is, never settle in one place, but rather wander the earth, dispersed. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'And we dispersed them as (separate) communities throughout the earth...' (*al-A'raf*: 168).

When the Quran states a certain point, we should investigate its conformity to worldly matters. What the Quran states here is that the children of Israel would disperse throughout the earth in separate communities, i.e. they would be divided and scattered. Allah *Glorified is He* did not say 'We integrated them (with other societies)' but rather: 'We dispersed them', i.e. He kept them connected to one another, but in groups dispersed through the lands. When we look at any place where they have settled, we find that they always have their own quarters, that they never integrate with the inhabitants of the land, and that they have their own independent means of living. It is as though they are dispersed and scattered throughout the earth; they are still communities, and there are 'ghettos' or special places for Jews in every land.

This happened after the time of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* but what were they commanded to do at the time of Musa? Allah *the Exalted* said to them: '...Enter the holy land which Allah has promised you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21) That is, now that you have escaped from Pharaoh, go to the land which Allah has appointed for you. We may observe here that the words 'the holy land' serve to specify and identify the land in question.

But what does 'holy' mean? The word in Arabic is '*muqaddasa*' the root of which is (*q-d-s*) is connected to the notion of purity and purification. The verb '*qaddasa*' means 'to clean and purify', and '*muqaddasa*' means 'cleansed'. When words are derived from a single root, they all have interconnected meanings; and when we say '*muqaddasa*', this means 'purified'.

One of Allah's names is *Al-Quddus* (The All-Holy), and the phrase '*quddisa Allah*' means 'Allah is beyond all likeness': Allah's Being is not like man's being, and His attributes are beyond any resemblance to your attributes; He *Glorified is He* has actions, but in His holiness and purity His actions are beyond any resemblance to your actions. Allah's Being is Necessary, while man's being is only possible because man's being was preceded by non-existence and will be followed by non-existence; Allah's Being is Necessary in Itself, while man's being is only necessary because Allah *the Exalted* has made it like this, and He is well able to end it. Allah has life and man has life, but is your life like Allah's? Certainly not!

Allah's life is beyond any resemblance, and His Being is not like yours, and nor are His attributes. You have limited power, while Allah *Glorified is He* has Omnipotent Power; He hears, and His slave hears, but man's hearing is limited, while His hearing is unlimited.

His Attributes are holy, and when you hear that Allah *Glorified is He* hears and knows, His Hearing is not like our hearing, and His Actions are not like our actions. When Allah says that He acts, His Action is beyond any resemblance to human action; for man is Allah's Creation, and human actions require time and effort, having a beginning, middle, and end and taking up a certain amount of time. We carry things over periods of time, and those who carry them must have strength; but Allah's Actions are unique, for He acts by saying 'Be!' He *the Most High* says: 'And we have indeed created the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in six periods, and no weariness ever touched Us' (*Qaf*: 38).

That is, Allah *Glorified is He* is absolved of ever experiencing tiredness, for He needs only say 'Be!' –and it is. Therefore, when we give the account of the Night Journey, we must ascribe this event to Allah, not to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order for it to be clear that those who disbelieved Prophet Muhammad concerning the matter of the Night Journey were wrong. They said, 'We flog our camels for a month to reach it, and you claim to have gone there in a single night!'

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not claim this for himself, and he did not say, 'I went from Mecca to Jerusalem' which would

have given them cause to say 'We flog our camels for a month to reach it, and you claim to have gone there in a single night!' Rather, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I was taken'. That is, he was not the one who made it happen, but rather, Allah *Glorified is He* made it happen. And as long as it was Allah's Action, it did not require any time at all, and therefore they should have understood exactly to what they were objecting. But we know that Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to understand it like this because certain so-called intellectuals have emerged in our times who say, 'The Night Journey was only in spirit'. To them, we say, 'By Allah had Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to the Arabs, 'I went in spirit alone', would they have disbelieved him? It is just like when someone says, 'I was in New York last night: I saw it in my dreams'. Would anyone disbelieve him? No. The Arabs did not believe him because they understood that he was claiming to have been 'taken' according to the complete meaning of the word: by body and spirit together. This is proved by the fact that they compared one action to another and one event to another and one journey to another, and they said what we have just quoted. Consequently, this matter served to aid Islam.

So the word (*Quddus*) means 'purified and far removed from any imperfections'. Whenever you see something which seems unbelievable, judge it according to Allah's action *Glorified is He* not your own action as a human being; for actions are proportionate with the power of the one who performs them. If the one who performs the action possesses great power, then it will take less time. For example, consider moving a certain amount of wheat from one place to another: if the one who lifts the wheat is a child, he will have to move it one sheaf at a time, whilst if he is a full grown man, he will move it one bale at a time and if he is especially capable, he might carry it all in one trip. So the time an action takes is inversely proportionate to the power of the one who does it: the greater the power, the less time is needed. So if an action is performed by Allah Almighty's Omnipotent Power, it will take no time at all.

So Allah *Glorified is He* is Sacred in every way; and this was what the True Lord willed, just as He willed that a certain place on earth be the Inviolable Sanctuary, wherein it is forbidden to hunt, cut trees, or harm people. The

point is to determine whether this is a natural law or a legislative law? 'Have they not seen that we made (Mecca) a safe sanctuary?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67) If it were a natural law, then it would have never been violated and no one would ever have harmed anyone else. So what is the difference between a natural law and a legislative law? Natural laws exist because nothing can stop the inevitable. The True Lord might want one person to be tall, and this is a natural law in which the person plays no part; but if the True Lord wants you to be obedient and to pray, this is a legislative law. The legislative law of Allah *Glorified is He* covers those things wherein man has free will and can choose whether to obey or not. Natural law, on the contrary, covers those things wherein man has no free will and which inevitably befall him whether he likes it or not.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants the Sanctuary to be secure, which is a legislative law because there have been occasions when people have been attacked therein and their security has been violated. Had it been a natural law, this would have never happened. Therefore, it is a sacred law, and if we obey our Lord we will make the Sanctuary secure, but if we do not obey Him, those who disobey will assault people therein and terrorise them. Allah's Will, as a commandment of legislative law, is that the Sanctuary be made secure.

'O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21). So the question is, did Allah *Glorified is He* promise this land to them as a natural law or as a legislative law? If it was a natural law, then they would have inevitably entered it; but He said: 'it is forbidden to them.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 26)

So it was a commandment of legislative law, not a declaration of natural law. If they were to obey the commandment of Allah Almighty, find their courage to enter the holy land, then they would take it, otherwise it would be forbidden. So there is no contradiction between His promise to give them the land and making it forbidden to them. He promised it to them as a commandment of legislative law which would have been achievable had they entered it boldly without fear of those within it, trusting that they had the support of Allah *the Almighty*; but since they had not done so, it has been made forbidden to them.

‘O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you and do not turn back (from fighting in Allah’s Cause) and (thus) become losers.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 21) That land is mentioned more than once: ‘And We said after Pharaoh to the children of Israel, ‘Dwell in the land.’ (*al-Isra*’: 104)

We have already seen what these words meant. The precision here is that He *Glorified is He* commanded the children of Israel to dwell anywhere on earth and it was their destiny to be scattered and dispersed. ‘And when there comes the promise of the Hereafter, We will bring you forth in (one) gathering’ (*al-Isra*’: 104) That is, He will gather them from every land, after which the second promise will be fulfilled, as it was stated at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Isra*’: ‘And We conveyed to the children of Israel in the Scripture that, ‘You will surely cause corruption on the earth twice, and you will surely reach (a degree of) great haughtiness.’ (*al-Isra*’: 4)

For when the True Lord said: ‘Glorified is He who took His Servant by night from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* to *Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing.’ (*al-Isra*’: 1) This entails that by this verse, He *Glorified is He* includes the Aqsa Mosque among the holy sites of Islam. And the True Lord clarified to them: ‘O Jews, you shall live in a certain place and make a treaty with My Messenger, but you will corrupt the place in which you live and the people will bear you once or twice, after which Allah shall unleash His servants upon you; and they shall go amongst your houses and banish you from this land.’

And the True Lord tells us that He informed the children of Israel in their scriptures of what would happen to them when Islam came: ‘And We conveyed to the children of Israel in the Scripture that, ‘You will surely cause corruption on the earth twice, and you will surely reach (a degree of) great haughtiness. (4) So when the (time of) promise came for the first of them, We sent against you servants of Ours – those of great military might, and they probed (even) into the homes, and it was a promise fulfilled. (5)’ (*al-Isra*’: 4-5)

Some people say that this refers to the days of Nebuchadnezzar, but we say to them: You must understand the words of The True Lord when He says: ‘So when the (time of) promise came for the first of them’ correctly. The word ‘promise’ does not refer to something which happened before one

spoke, but rather, it refers to something which will happen after speaking. So this does not refer to the time of Nebuchadnezzar and the 'time' at the start of the sentence refers to something which will happen in the future, i.e. after these words are spoken. Moreover, was Nebuchadnezzar one of the servants of Allah *Almighty*? The words of The True Lord 'servants of Ours' mean the forces of faith, and Nebuchadnezzar was a Persian Zoroastrian.

These wise words actually refer to the first troubles the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* experienced when they broke the treaty he had made with them, so he banished them. And was this the end of the matter?

We might ask: Did the children of Israel only spread corruption on earth twice? No, compared to what they actually did, two is only the least. The corruption they spread on earth which is mentioned here must refer to what they did in the land ruled by Islam. And He *Glorified is He* says: '...We sent against you servants of Ours – those of great military might,' so as long as there are Allah's 'servants' who have true faith and make proper preparations, the promise of Allah *the Almighty* will inevitably come true; but if the people fall short of this description, then those who suffer the corruption of the children of Israel will encounter the truth of Allah's words: 'Then We gave back to you a return victory over them.' (*al-Isra'*: 6)

So they will not be allowed to prevail once again unless the believers do not live up to their faith. And if some people ask, 'Why, O Allah, would You allow the children of Israel to prevail once again?' The answer is: because you people have fallen short of the requirements of true service to Allah *Glorified is He*. As long as we are not true servants to Allah *the Almighty*, we will inevitably have to experience the long history of transgression of the children of Israel with which we are all familiar. Now we are facing the Jews in the midst of the manifestation of Allah's words 'Then We gave back to you a return victory over them.' And if we are true servants to Allah *the Almighty*, they will not be able to harm us. And also for pilgrimage and also for pilgrimage Were life to continue without the Jews being allowed to have the upper hand over us, even though we had lost our way and all started following our desires, this would mean that what the Quran said was not correct. But of course, life's continuum inevitably came to show that the Quran indeed is

correct. This is why when the news that the Jews had entered Jerusalem reached one of those who has sound knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* and whom we hold to be close to Allah Almighty, he prostrated to Allah Almighty. We said, 'Are you prostrating to Allah *Glorified is He* because the Jews have taken Jerusalem?' He said: 'Yes, for our Lord spoke the truth when He said: 'to enter the temple in Jerusalem, as they entered it the first time.' (*al-Isra': 7*) Could they enter it a second time if they had not been expelled from it a first time? This man who had sound knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* praised our Lord because real-life events confirmed the truth of the Quran.

Allah Almighty says: 'and made you more numerous (than ever).' They (the Jews) are rich because they control most of the economic movement in the modern world. All of them are military reserves. This is what 'and made you more numerous (than ever)' means. The Jews are not powerful because of their state alone, but because they are supported by the most powerful nation in the modern world. In short, what Allah Almighty said: 'Then We gave back to you a return victory over them. And We reinforced you with wealth and sons and made you more numerous in manpower,' proved true.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* pronounces His final verdict and says to the Jews: (And said), 'If you do good, you do good for yourselves' (*al-Isra': 7*) And will they continue to prevail, O' Lord? No, because the True Lord says: 'and if you do evil, (you do it) to yourselves. Then when the final promise came, (We sent your enemies) to sadden your faces.' (*al-Isra': 7*) It is as though the True Lord is giving us the glad tidings that we shall be victorious, as long as we fulfil Allah's requirement that we be true servants to Him, whereupon He will ease the fulfilment of His promise to the Jews: 'to sadden your faces.'

The noblest part of a man is his face. When we are true servants to Allah Almighty, we shall 'mar their faces'. There is even more: 'and to enter the temple in Jerusalem, as they entered it the first time and to destroy what they had taken over with (total) destruction.'

The True Lord had not mentioned the Temple up to this point, but rather, this is what He said: 'And We conveyed to the children of Israel in the Scripture that, 'You will surely cause corruption on the earth twice and you

will surely reach (a degree of) great haughtiness. (4) So when the (time of) promise came for the first of them, We sent against you servants of Ours – those of great military might and they probed (even) into the homes and it was a promise fulfilled. (5)' (*al-Isra'*: 4-5)

So the True Lord did not mention the Temple here at first; so how will we enter it? We entered the Aqsa Mosque for the first time when Islam spread under the rule of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab. During his caliphate, the Aqsa Mosque was not under Jewish control, but rather, under Byzantine control; so the first time we entered the mosque, they were totally out of the picture. But here the True Lord speaks of the second time now that the Mosque is under the control of the children of Israel. So we shall be true servants to Allah Almighty, of great prowess in war and we shall enter the Aqsa Mosque as we entered it before. The True Lord speaks of the Mosque here because the first time we entered the Mosque it was not an abasement of the Jews, but rather as we said, it was under the control of the Byzantine Empire. The True Lord then adds: 'and to destroy what they had taken over with (total) destruction.' In order to destroy what they raised, there must first pass some time for them to build giant buildings.

In the verses of the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* which we are currently examining, the True Lord tells us some of what He told *Musa* (Moses) to tell his people after they came out of Egypt: 'O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you and do not turn back (from fighting in Allah's Cause) and (thus) become losers.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21)

The True Lord's words 'but do not turn back' explain to us the natural human impulse which comes into effect when one must face the enemy. When a man faces his enemy, he must turn his face towards theirs. When the enemy flees, he turns his back. A man turns his back in battle for one of two reasons: either to go and join another troop to boost their strength and aid them in defeating the enemy; or to make some kind of ruse with the intention of returning to fight the enemy; or else he turns his back to flee, which is blameworthy and considered one of the deadly sins. Concerning this, the True Lord says: 'And whoever turns his back to them on such a day, unless swerving (as a strategy) for war or joining (another) company, has certainly

returned with anger (upon him) from Allah and his refuge is Hell – and wretched is the destination.’ (*al-Anfal*: 16)

To turn one’s back in battle is not blameworthy if one intends thereby to make a ruse or to ambush the enemy. If this is the case, there is nothing wrong with turning one’s back – but otherwise, it is blameworthy. Does turning one’s back mean to move backwards, whilst still keeping one’s face turned towards the enemy? Or does it mean to turn oneself around and flee from the enemy? Both are possible. The children of Israel were commended not to flee and to enter the land. How was their response given that this promise was a legislative law?

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنَدْخُلُهَا حَتَّى يَخْرُجُوا
مِنْهَا فَإِنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

**They said, ‘Moses, there is a fearsome people in this land.
We will not go there until they leave. If they leave, then we
will enter’ [22] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 22)**

How could they openly rebel against the commandment of the True Lord in this way? And how did they know that ferocious people dwelt in this land? We should remember that the True Lord said before: ‘We delegated from among them twelve leaders.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 12)

So the leaders went first, scouted, spied, and learned information about this holy land. They learned it and contained the huge giants (Amalekites) of Canaan; and when they saw these people, they said to themselves: ‘Could we possibly fight these people? This is impossible; we shall not enter the land as long as they are there.’ So they capitulated and turned their back and fled.’ They said, ‘O Musa (Moses), indeed within it is a people of tyrannical strength’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 22).

The Arabic word for ‘tyrannical’ is (*jabbar*) and this is an abstract concept derived from a concrete root. The root word (*jabbara*) means a date palm the fruits of which are too high for a person to pick with his hand stretched out, when the palm’s fruits are within the reach of one’s hand, whilst when they are too high to reach, it is called (*jabbara*). This word (*jabbar*) was then taken

to refer someone who cannot be defeated. It can also mean someone who practices coercion but for a good cause. For example, the Egyptian title for the person who sets broken bones is (*mujbirati*) because he forces the bones to go back to their normal places; and this might cause the patient pain, but it is good for him.

And (*al-Jabbar*) ('The All-Compelling') is a Name of Allah Almighty because He conquers all and cannot be conquered and He might force us to do something for our own good. He tests us with trials in order to purify us and give our lives balance. So (*al-Jabbar*) is one of the True Lord's attributes of perfection because He uses His power of compulsion for good and vanquishes the evildoers, the haughty, and the arrogant, which benefits those who are good and righteous. And He *Glorified is He* cannot be vanquished; so those on his side cannot be defeated by anyone. But if a human being is a (*jabbar*) (tyrant), this is blameworthy because his claim of invincibility has nothing to back it up, like a hollow building. The one who makes a show of invincibility might get something as small as a headache and be forced to lie down because of the pain. We see examples of this in our lives. We find that a person who acts as though he is invincible might have a heart attack and be taken to hospital. Another might get a stomachache and runs off holding his belly so that even children laugh at him. They might say to him: 'Go away, you are not invincible or strong or anything for that matter!' If someone really wants to be invincible, he should be so at all times so that you never see him act in any other way; and endless strength and invincibility belong to none but Allah *Glorified is He*.

The True Lord continues: 'we will never enter it until they leave it.' When you hear the word 'never' coming before a verb, you know that this is forever, at which case they have decided that they will never enter that land. Yet, when attached with 'until' it becomes conditional, at which case their entrance is happening provided that the tyrannical people leave.' But if they leave it, then we will enter.' If a nation inclines towards evil and indulges in it, does this mean there cannot be any good in it? No, because the True Lord preserves some elements of goodness so that it cannot be completely snuffed out; and the True Lord makes it clear that this was the case with the children of Israel, for when they said this to Musa (Moses), two men among them demurred:

قَالَ رَجُلَانِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ
فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمُوهُ فَإِنَّكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ غَالِبُونَ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Yet two men whom God had blessed among those who were afraid said, ‘Go in to them through the gate and when you go in you will overcome them. If you are true believers, put your trust in God’ [23] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 23)

They were two men who feared to disobey Allah *Glorified is He*, whilst the rest of the children of Israel, as a group, did not understand Allah Almighty properly. Had they obeyed the commandment of Allah *Glorified is He* to them in the Holy Land without disobeying it, Allah Almighty would have allowed them to enter successfully. But none of them understood the will of Allah Almighty properly except for two men, who were named Caleb and Joshua, son of Nun. One of them was from the tribe of Judah and the other from the tribe of Ephraim, both of whom were sons of Joseph *peace be upon him*. These two men said: ‘As long as Allah Almighty has promised us that you will enter, He is only asking us to strive a little.’

When Allah Almighty commands one to do something, it is enough for him to begin this work with a sound intention and then Allah Almighty will help him with it. Allah *Glorified is He* says to His servant: ‘I am as my servant thinks of me, and I am with him when he invokes me. If he invokes Me to himself, I invoke him to Myself; and if he invokes Me in a gathering, I invoke him in a better gathering; and if he draws a hand’s span nearer to Me, I draw an arm’s length nearer to Him; and if he draws an arm’s length nearer to me, I draw a fathom’s length nearer to him; and if he comes to Me walking, I go to him at speed.’⁽¹⁾

So, if it is tiresome to walk, Allah Almighty does not want those who walk for His sake to become weary. He sends His grace and mercy to them at speed; for the first priority is that the deed be yours, O servant of Allah. One of the wonders of Allah Almighty’s grace is that He does the deed and then ascribes it to you and He rejoices to see His servant come to Him. Let me give an example to illustrate this – and Allah Almighty is beyond compare –

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*.

suppose you want to hold a sword: why do you not analyse the matter? The sword which you grasp is made of iron and you got this iron from within the earth. The True Lord said: 'And we sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people' (*al-Hadid*: 25).

The True Lord is the One who sent down iron. He is the One who taught us how to melt it and shape it with fire: 'And we taught him the fashioning of coats of armour to protect you from your (enemy in) battle.' (*al-Anbiya*: 80)

I would like the physiologists to tell us: when a man grasps something, say a sword, what muscles does he use to do this? And how does he tell his muscles to do this? And how many muscles and nerves are involved in this action? Despite all this, all a man has to do to grasp something is to make the intention and desire to grasp it and he will do so. And when a man takes a single step, which muscles initiate this step?

When a person moves a mechanical arm on a machine, tonnes of cables, tools, and electric circuits are required to move this mechanical arm. So how many muscles move in a person's body when he takes a single step? A great many parts of the human body act when it takes a single step – indeed, a great many parts of the human body react simply because he wills them to do so! So if a man's mere will causes action, whether his will is to grasp a sword, take a step, or hold a pen in his fingers and write, he should be aware that his will is a gift from Allah *Glorified is He*; and if a human being cannot specify the part of his body which contains his will, then what do we think about the True Lord when He wills something?

Let us return to the verse which we are currently examining. Allah *Glorified is He* blessed these two men with sound understanding of His will, so they said to the children of Israel: 'Help yourselves by entering this land and Allah will succour you.' These two men were like the mother whose son asks her to pray for his success, so she says to him: 'I will pray for you, but you must help the prayer by studying hard.' It is as though fear of disobeying Allah Almighty was a blessing for these two men and as though it is a blessing to understand the words of Allah Almighty properly.

'Enter upon them through the gate, for when you have entered it, you will be predominant'. (*al-Ma'ida*: 23) It is as though as soon as they enter the

gate, they would defeat the giant Amalekites; Allah Almighty did not ask them to fight the Amalekites, but rather as soon as these ferocious men saw them enter the gate, they would suddenly be filled with dread.

Regarding this story, one of the legends says that a giant Amalekite named 'Awj ibn 'Inaq went out to his orchard outside the city to gather some fruits for his chief and took two of these people and hid them in his sleeve. He then threw them down before his chief as he gave him the fruits, saying: 'These are two of the people who wish to enter our city.' Such was the level of exaggeration that their fear of the Amalekites had aroused in them, despite the fact that two men among them had understood the intentions of Allah Almighty correctly and thus said, 'Enter upon them through the gate.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 23) This was the will of Allah Almighty, which would have guaranteed victory for them had they followed it.

Some of the exegetes have said that the two men in this verse were not actually from the children of Israel because they understand that 'two men from among those who feared' means 'two men from amongst those whom the children of Israel feared'. And they said to the children of Israel: 'Do not be struck with fear and dread because of the size of these people's bodies, for Allah's forces will grant you victory': 'And none knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31).

The True Lord ends this verse by saying: 'And upon Allah rely, if you should be believers.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 23) Do not put all your faith in calculations of numbers versus numbers and resources versus resources, but rather judge the matter according to faith, for Allah Almighty is with you: If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you' (*Muhammad*: 7). And He says: 'And (that) indeed, Our soldiers will be those who overcome.' (*as-Saffat*: 173) The one who believes in Allah *Glorified is He* must draw strength from this belief; and if those children of Israel who were commanded to enter the land were true believers, they would have placed their trust in Allah Almighty. So how did they respond?

قَالُوا يَمُوسَى إِنَّ لَنَا نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ
 أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَتِلَا إِنَّا هَهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

They said, ‘Moses, we will never enter while they are still there, so you and your Lord go in and fight, and we will stay here’ [24] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 24)

It is as though the core of what they said to Musa (Moses) was: ‘Do not bother with us and save your efforts; for we shall never enter this land as long as these giant Amalekites are there. And if you insist on us entering the land, then you go first with your Lord and fight and we shall stay here and wait for you.’ Their fear was so strong that they went as far as to mock Musa (Moses) and his Lord; their mockery reached such a despicable level. And this was not even new on their part, for they had said before: ‘Make us see Allah face to face.’ (*an-Nisa*: 153) Before that, they had worshipped the golden calf. So what did Musa (Moses) say?

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لَا أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِي وَأَخِي فَافْرِقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

He said, ‘Lord, I have authority over no one except myself and my brother: judge between the two of us and these disobedient people’ [25] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 25)

Aaron was Musa’s (Moses’s) brother and a fellow messenger. So it is as though Musa (Moses) was announcing that he had no trust in those people to whom Allah Almighty had sent him as a messenger, as well as Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun. But did he have mastery over his brother’s soul? Or did he mean: ‘I am master of none but myself and likewise my brother is master of none but himself, but You have heard, Lord, how the rest of them say that they will not enter the land as long as the Amalekites are there. My brother and I are on one side and the rest of the people are on the other. So draw a dividing-line between us and these disobedient folk!’

The True Lord put these words into the mouth of Musa (Moses) that perchance the heart of one of Musa (Moses)’ followers might incline to him. He says to Musa (Moses), ‘I am with you!’ Therefore, Musa (Moses) said: ‘so part us from the defiantly disobedient people.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 25) As we know,

the meaning of 'disobedient' is 'outside faith', just as the fresh date breaks free from its shell when it ripens. It is as though faith is like a skin or a shell which covers a man. When he breaks free of his faith, he removes himself from the rules which guarantee his proper maintenance. Likewise, the children of Israel broke free of their faith and therefore the True Lord said:

قَالَ فَإِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً يَتِيهُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

God said, 'The land is forbidden to them for forty years: they will wander the earth aimlessly. Do not grieve over those who disobey' [26] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 26)

Was the period of prohibition meant to last for forty years? Or did He say 'it is forbidden to them' without any further discussion because they firstly refused to enter it? Therefore, none of those who said: 'we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it' (*al-Ma'ida*: 24) would live to enter this land; and after this, the following was decreed: 'or forty years (in which) they will wander throughout the land.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 26) Are these two parts interconnected or are they separate?

Both meanings are possible. 'Wander' means to travel without any guidance, so one does not know where he is from or where he is going. When a person enters a place where there are many different paths and roads leading different ways and does not know how to get out of it, this is the meaning of 'wandering.' But how wide was the wilderness in which they wandered? The scholars say that it was only eighteen miles; but how could they get lost in such a small area of land?

Allah *Glorified is He* willed that every time they became weary of travel and slept, they would awaken in the morning to find themselves back where they started; and they would set up markers to show the way and every morning they would find that the markers were gone. They continued to wander like this for as long as forty years of wandering. When Allah Almighty wishes to chastise a sinner, He makes sure he has the provision and sustenance he needs to stay alive, even if he is a disbeliever; for He is the One

Who called them into existence. He did not abandon them in the wilderness forever just as He does not abandon those who do not believe in Him.

So the preservation of life is essential. When someone commits a grave sin against society, we put him in jail, but we give him food and drink. When society advances, it gives convicts jobs which allow them to use their talents while still preventing them from moving freely in society. The convicted prisoner remains in jail, but he eats, drinks, sleeps, and works. The difference is found in the most important aspect of life, which is freedom of movement. So what do we think Allah Almighty did when He imprisoned them in the wilderness? Allah *Glorified is He* gave them food and drink and sent down to them manna and quails.

Someone might say: 'Did Allah Almighty send manna and quails down to them so that they could live a life of laziness, arrogance, and delusion?' We say: No, the wisdom behind this divine decree was that it made the period of their wandering lengthy; for had He made them farm for their food, they would have been occupied with the affairs of daily life. But the True Lord wanted them to be well aware of how long they spent wandering. There is not only food and drink, but there is also the matter of dignity, which is more important than food and drink.

We can see this when we consider the example of some of those who were jailed for crimes against society and whom the authorities permitted to have food brought to them from their homes. This made these convicts ever more aware of the discomfort of having their freedom taken from them. So the True Lord wanted to punish them severely during their period of wandering; and therefore we find that some people calculate the period of time they spent wandering and then recall that the True Lord said: 'And We made an appointment with Musa (Moses) for thirty nights and perfected them by (the addition of) ten; so the term of his Lord was completed as forty nights. And Musa (Moses) said to his brother Aaron, 'Take my place among my people' (*al-A'raf*: 142)

And after Musa (Moses) had left the people, they worshipped the golden calf which Musa, the Samaritan, made for them. When Musa (Moses) returned to them, he rebuked his brother Aaron harshly; and their Lord

punished them for their unbelief for forty years. It is as though every day they spent worshipping the golden calf was punished by one year of wandering. Because He is a Merciful Lord, He did not leave them without giving them the sustenance they needed to stay alive. Was Musa (Moses) with them in the wilderness or not? Did he die with them whilst they were wandering, or not? These are questions which do not concern us, even though some of the scholars have occupied themselves with them; for these are matters which bring neither benefit nor harm. What is important is that the children of Israel had not entered Jericho until forty years later, under the command of Joshua son of Nun.

It is possible for us to read the verse in the following way:’ (Allah) said: ‘Then indeed, it is forbidden to them.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 26) If we pause here, this would mean that the land was forbidden to them forever, after which Allah Almighty decreed that their punishment would be to wander for forty years: ‘for forty years (in which) they will wander throughout the land. So do not grieve over the defiantly disobedient people.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 26)

But if we read it so it is all connected as follows:’ (Allah) said, ‘then indeed, it is forbidden to them for forty years (in which) they will wander throughout the land. So do not grieve over the defiantly disobedient people.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 26) This would mean that the punishment of these disobedient folk would last for forty years wandering, after which they would enter Jericho.

And the True Lord commanded *Musa* (Moses) not to grieve for these disobedient folk; for when Musa (Moses) prayed to Allah to ‘so part us from the defiantly,’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 24) he felt somewhat uncomfortable after making this supplication and said to himself: ‘Why did not I pray for their guidance instead of praying for their separation?’ Therefore, the True Lord said to him: ‘do not grieve over the defiantly disobedient people.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 26) Do not grieve for them because they deserve to be punished for their iniquity and disobedience.

The True Lord then says:

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ
يُنْقَبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ ۖ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

[Prophet], tell them the truth about the story of Adam's two sons: each of them offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one and not the other. One said, 'I will kill you,' but the other said, 'God only accepts the sacrifice of those who are mindful of Him [27] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 27)

A story is an important piece of information. It is not just for any piece of information, but also for those which are particularly noteworthy. When we hear the words 'in truth, 'we should be aware that this is something which has been revealed from on high by the True Lord and which cannot be altered or replaced. Therefore, He said: 'And with the truth we have sent the Quran down and with the truth it has descended.' (*al-Isra*': 105)

That is, what Allah *Glorified is He* has sent down has not been adulterated by any other speech. It has been sent down with the fullness of truth, commanding what is good and forbidding what is evil. When Allah *Glorified is He* says 'And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 27) He is telling a factual story that relates a true incident. And as long as Allah Almighty is the One telling this story, He will tell it in a way which most perfectly imparts its truth and its beneficial lessons; this is why He calls it 'the true narration': 'Indeed, this is the true narration.' (*Al-'Imran*: 62) And He says: 'We relate to you, (O Muhammad), the best of stories.' (*Yusuf*: 3)

We know that Adam was the first human being. The exegetes tell us that the sons of Adam were named Cain and Abel. Each of them offered a sacrifice (whose aim is to draw nearer to Allah *Glorified is He*. Did the two offer one joint sacrifice or did each of them offer their own individual sacrifice? As long as the True Lord accepted from one of them and not from the other, this means that each of them must have offered his own individual sacrifice.

We know that Adam was the first human being and Eve was made for him in order to allow procreation to take place because procreation needs the presence of both male and female: 'And of all things we created two mates.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49)

So when the True Lord wishes for a being to procreate, He creates it in pairs.' *Glorified is He* who created all pairs – from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' (*Ya Sin*: 36)

We see this when we cross-pollinate female date palms with males. There are some creatures in which we do not observe male and female elements; this may be because the male is not visible to our eyes, but exists at a distance and is transported by the wind, such as pollen: 'And We have sent the fertilising winds and sent down water from the sky and given you drink from it. And you are not its retainers.' (*al-Hijr*: 22) So the wind transports pollen from place to place so that plants are fertilised. Or otherwise, it is because the male and female elements exist together in the same place such as is the case with maize stalks wherein the male and female elements exist alongside one another. The top of the stalk contains the male elements and from the cob protrude delicate silk fibres which are the female elements. The wind causes the male pollen to fall from the top of the stalk onto the female silk fibres and every fibre takes enough pollen to allow the seed to germinate. When the leaves of the cob stick together and do not allow the female silk fibres to protrude from the ear, the pollen cannot reach them and so the cob does not germinate and no seeds grow on it. And when you take a corncob and open it, you may find that some of its seeds are dead; these are the ones which no pollen reached because they did not have silken fibres to catch the pollen as it fell, and if a maize seed does not have a silken fibre protruding from it to catch the pollen, it will not germinate. So everything has its male and female elements. And He says: 'And it is He who creates the two kinds – the male and the female.' (*an-Najm*: 45)

Everything which can be called a 'thing' has its male and female elements. Even rain must be seeded and if it is not seeded with atoms, then rain does not fall. And even stones contain positive and negative atoms. And when we discovered that electricity has positive and negative charges, we were able to harness it. The True Lord says: 'And of all things we created two mates; perhaps you will remember.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49)

And this was the first knowledge ever to come to the Arabs for until the Quran was revealed, they had no knowledge; and the Quran imparted such knowledge to the Arabs that they surpassed all others when they utilised the

means Allah *Glorified is He* gave them. But when they became lax and others began to utilise the means in their stead, many discoveries were made. Now we find that all of these discoveries were alluded to in the Quran: 'Glorified is He who created all pairs – from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know.' (*Ya Sin*: 36) So whenever new things are discovered which contain positive and negative (or male and female), they are included in the words: 'and from that which they do not know.' (*Ya Sin*: 36)

Man, the master of existence, must be composed of male and female, not in order to exist, but in order to procreate. As for the existence of man, he was made by Allah Almighty who creates everything from nothing. When Adam and Eve were made and procreation began, the population of the earth began to grow; and if we were to follow the chain of procreation in the whole world back to its origins, we would find that the population would get smaller every generation until we reached Adam and Eve. For example, if we travelled one hundred years back, we would find that the population of Egypt was no greater than five million at most, and if we went further centuries back, we would find the population smaller still, all the way back until we arrived at the first man whom Allah Almighty created, Adam from whom He created Eve. So man as a species did not come into existence by means of procreation.

When we count the population of the earth, and then follow it back in time, we will eventually come to the first man. Everything procreates, whether animal or plant. And when we follow the population count forward in time, we see that it increases and the steps it traverses are huge. And when the True Lord tells us that He created us from a single soul from which He made its mate and that from these two He caused many men and women to arise; statistics bear this out. Increase can only come by procreation and Adam and Eve were the first to procreate. The True Lord willed to give Adam twins so that each twin would pair with a twin of the opposite sex from another set of twins born separately; that is, the male would mate with the female who was not his own twin.

Our Lord told us this story to impart unto us the origin of procreation in a symbolic way. He made it clear that there was still distance between the partners, but it was a relative distance. It is true that the partners were brother and sister, but because the girl was born with a male twin and then the boy

was born separately with a female twin, there was a relative distance between them. The girl from one set of twins would mate with the boy from another set and vice versa. This was the only relative distance which was possible at that time because the human race was still in its infancy.

We can see this concept at work in the countryside when one farmer says to another, 'Your maize crop has failed.' He replies: 'I take the seeds from the land where the maize grows and give the seeds to the crop: I sowed a field of maize from which I took a few bales to use as seeds to sow, but the crops come up weak.' So the experienced farmer says to him: 'Take some seed from your neighbour.' This is because there is some distance between my crops and my neighbour's crops; and once the two crops have become too closely related, the experienced farmer says: 'Take some seed from the next town' and so on and so forth. How did breeding and reproduction develop? And from where do we get the seeds? Every time we get them from outside, the result is stronger.

The same is true of human procreation so that it will result in more diverse talents. An Arab poet became aware of this in ancient times and it is amazing that this uncultured nomadic Arab, who knew nothing of education or learning, was guided to this fact in such a way that he presented it as a matter of innate natural disposition. He wanted to praise a man for his chivalry, so he said:

He was not born by his father's cousin,
For inbred youths may be scrawny;
How did this poet know this fact? And after this, he said:
I gave up my uncle's daughter, though I loved her,
For I feared that any child we had would be scrawny.
That is, he loved her but let her go lest their children are born weak.
And another poet said about this:
I advise those who have high aspirations:
Wed not your sons to their cousins,
For they will not evade weakness and sickness.

How did the Arab poet who did not belong to a cultured community and who knew nothing of breeding or anything else, know this? He either was

guided to it by experience, seeing that the marriage of relatives produces weak offspring or else this was a leftover fragment of the ancient religions and admonitions of which man had still retained some vestiges. When Allah *Glorified is He* first willed that procreation begins, brothers had to marry their sisters; but He wanted us to have some distance, and hence He decreed that twins could not marry each other. So when they came to study the story of Adam's sons Cain and Abel, they differed in some aspects. For example, there is the book of Genesis; and we can accept things from the book of Genesis despite the changes made to it because no changes about this matter would have been mad, since the only changes that were made were those relating to things such as references to the Prophethood of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Other things were not important to them, yet they likely changed much of them too.

They say that Abel was the first victim of murder in human history, and that Cain murdered him. Some stories say that he did not know how to kill him or make him die, so Satan showed him how by taking a bird and crushing its head between two rocks to kill it. Thus he taught him how to kill; and this is similar to how the raven later showed him how to dig. We are not told how he killed him, but we are told how he buried him: Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother. He said, 'O woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?' And he became of the regretful.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

This was the first person to kill and cause death; but why do they say that he did not know how to kill until Satan came and taught him how to kill his brother? We say that they did not pay close enough attention; for the True Lord says:

لَئِنْ بَسَطْتَ إِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِي مَا أَنَا بِبَاسِطٍ يَدِيَ
إِلَيْكَ لِأَقْتُلَنَّكَ إِنِّي أَخَافُ اللَّهَ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ

**If you raise your hand to kill me, I will not raise mine
to kill you. I fear God, the Lord of all worlds [28]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 28)**

So Cain knew about killing. It is not true that he had to be taught how to do it; although it is true that the matter of burial was new to him. This story

came to tell us how procreation began, and how Allah *Glorified is He* brought spouses together who had a relative amount of distance from one another because nothing more than a relative distance was possible at that time. According to their standards, the male of one set of twins and the female of another set of twins were not close kin and this remained the case until there were more people, whereupon the law was decreed that brothers and sisters of any kind were completely forbidden to wed. After this, things became even more comprehensive and the laws about unmarriageable kin by blood and suckling were fully developed. This story had an origin: they decided to offer a sacrifice, but why?' When they both offered a sacrifice (to Allah), and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 27)

Why did they want to offer a sacrifice? They say it was because Cain's twin sister was very beautiful, whilst Abel's twin was not and because of the law of distance in marriage, Abel was obliged to marry Cain's sister and Cain was obliged to marry Abel's sister. But Cain envied his brother and said: 'Why should he take the beautiful one? I have more right to my sister than he does.' Adam had only recently begun to receive revelation, so he said: 'Each of you offer a sacrifice and see.' This is because he knew well that the sacrifice would be offered in a way which preserved the necessary distance of matrimony. Some of the exegetes say: 'By Allah we do not know how it was accepted'; and we say to them: Let us look for the word 'sacrifice' in the Quran and determine exactly what it means. This word appears in the Quran more than once.' (They are) those who said, 'Indeed, Allah has taken our promise not to believe any messenger until he brings us an offering which fire (from heaven) will consume. (*Al-'Imran*: 183) And the True Lord responded to them: 'Say, 'There have already come to you messengers before me with clear proofs and (even) that of which you speak.' (*Al-'Imran*: 183) And what exactly was 'that of which you speak'? (*Al-'Imran*: 183) It was an offering which fire consumes. So the concept of an offering or sacrifice was known and if fire came and consumed the offering, this was a sign that the Heavens had accepted it and that the one who offered it had succeeded in drawing nearer to Allah *Glorified is He*. The reason Cain and Abel offered a sacrifice was to determine which of them would marry the beautiful woman; and Allah Almighty accepted Abel's offering. But was the loser content with this? No;

rather, he was envious and this was the first time anyone had objected to the True Lord's Will and His commandments. 'I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28) We are told that Abel kept livestock and so possessed milk, cheese and butter, whilst Cain was a farmer. It is said that Cain offered the worst of his yield, whilst Abel offered the best of his livestock for the offering. An offering was accepted, as Allah *Glorified is He* says 'one of them' (*al-Ma'ida*: 27) without specifying whose offering. Then one said: 'I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28) Who said this? It was the one whose offering was not accepted because he has not achieved his purpose.

'He (Cain) said: 'I will surely slay you.' The other (Abel) said: 'Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous (who fear Him).'

 (*al-Ma'ida*: 27) Is this an appropriate response to: 'I will surely slay you'? (*al-Ma'ida*: 27) Yes it is, because the reason he wanted to kill him was: 'The offering you sacrificed was accepted, whilst mine was not.' So he responded: 'And what did I have to do with that? I have no say in whether an offering is accepted or not, but it is up to Allah *Glorified is He*'. The Lord did not accept yours because He only accepts from those who are conscious of Him and He knows that you are not conscious of Him. The offering you sacrificed will never be accepted as long as you rebel against the law of Allah *Glorified is He* which was to intermarry between twins of separate births. 'This was the first rebellion against Allah's Way and His decree. Therefore, Abel said: "Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous (who fear Him)'. (*al-Ma'ida*: 27) And: 'If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to kill me, I shall not stretch forth my hand towards you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28).

The word '*basata*' (to stretch forth) is the opposite of '*qabada*', (to contract). The word '*basata*' can be used with the preposition '*li*' (to) or (for) to mean: one thing and with '*ila*' (towards) to mean another. When it is used with '*li*', it means that the stretching of the hand is for the welfare of someone, as in the following verse: 'And if Allah had extended (excessively) provision for His servants....' (*ash-Shura*: 27) Here we notice '*basata*' (extended (excessively)) and '*li*' (for). He did not say 'towards His servants', but rather 'for His servants' (*ash-Shura*: 27) which means that this use of

'*basata*' implies something good coming from the subject to the object of the verb. The Lord, in this verse, does not say '*ila*' (towards) which is only used to indicate something bad, as we have seen before when the True Lord says: 'when a people determined to extend their hands (in aggression) against you....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 11)

So the one who stretches out his hand to you gives you benefit and the one who stretches it towards you intends to take benefit from you for himself. 'If you will stretch forth your hand towards me to kill me, I shall not stretch forth my hand towards you to kill you....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 28) The words 'to kill me' explain the intention behind 'towards me' and the reason he did not respond was not that he lacked the power to do so, but rather that he feared Allah Almighty; it was not that he was remiss in defending himself, but rather that he wanted to cause his brother's heart to soften so that he would come to his senses. When someone shows that he intends to kill another and that other responds by saying, 'By Allah Almighty, I shall not fight you because I fear our Lord', he thereby made it plain that his fear of Allah *Glorified is He* was so firmly established in his consciousness that it overrode even his instinct of self-preservation. He may have also recognised this in his heart because his brother was well able to defend himself powerfully. He referred the matter back to the Supreme Truth, Allah *Glorified is He*. So, do not say that Abel was passive. No, he consigned the matter to *the Almighty*.

The True Lord then, says:

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ تَبُوءَ بِإِثْمِي وَإِثْمِكَ فَتَكُونَ مِنْ أَصْحَابِ النَّارِ وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

and I would rather you were burdened with my sins as well as yours and became an inhabitant of the Fire: such is the evildoers' reward' [29] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 29)

The word '*tabu'a*' (here means: to bear) literally means: I want you to return from the bargain of killing me with bearing the sin of such a deed and obtaining its punishment. 'And your sin...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 29), i.e. and likewise the sin for which you committed this murder; for you rebelled against Allah's Way when our Lord did not accept your offering and you sinned by not

accepting the distance of kinship which is obligatory for marriage. So you have committed two sins: the first is that you refused to accept Allah's decree, for reason of which Allah *the Exalted* did not accept your offering and the second is that you murdered me. And I have nothing to do with this, for the evildoer must take his requital.'

When Abel said, 'Indeed I want you to bear (thereby) my sin and your sin...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 29), he was not wishing for his brother to sin, but rather, he was saying that if he were to sin, he would bear the burden of this sin and its punishment. He wished that he would be punished if he committed the sin and he wanted him to refrain from doing it. 'Indeed I want you to bear (thereby) my sin and your sin so you will be among the inmates of the Fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdoers.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 29) The recompense of wrongdoers is a prompt punishment which prevents their tyranny from continuing; for were the True Lord to leave them until the Hereafter, evil would become prevalent and those who do not believe in the Hereafter would excessively engage in evil-doing. Therefore, we said before, that the True Lord propounds a parable for us in the chapter *al-Kahf* when He tells us the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn, whom Allah Almighty granted means of access to everything and so he followed a course and utilised those means. Then, the True Lord showed us what the purpose is of those who are given and made use of the right means and told us how He placed them on earth in order to make the world thrive, to rectify it and to give security to society. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(And he marched westwards) until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it (as if) setting into a black sea...' (*al-Kahf*: 86). This is how it seemed to his eye; for, when you are at sea, the sun appears to set in the water. Of course it does not actually do so, but it seems to do so because the water is as far as you can see. '(And he marched westwards) until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it (as if) setting into a black sea and he found near it a people. Allah said, "O Dhu Al-Qarnayn, either you punish (them) or else adopt among them (a way of) goodness."' (*al-Kahf*: 86)

So the Lord gave him the choice: do this, or do that. 'He said, "As for one who wrongs, we will punish him. Then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with a terrible punishment."' (*al-Kahf*: 87) This is the rule

by which society must be run: so that those who do not believe in Allah Almighty or the Hereafter are not left to continue unabated into evildoing, they must be punished in this world. 'And indeed, for those who are bent on doing evil, there is suffering in store (even) closer at hand than that, but most of them do not know.' (*at-Tur*: 47) That is, they will be punished before the Hereafter. Therefore, when the people see an evildoer die or meet with misfortune and failure, they take admonition from this. And our generation has seen a great many evildoers who have been one another's downfall; and even if those they oppressed were allowed to have vengeance on them, they would not have done as much to them as they did to one another. The True Lord wanted their punishment to take place before our eyes so that things would be made clear.

'He said, "As for one who wrongs, we will punish him...."' (*al-Kahf*: 87) And this is not all; for to whom would he be referred after this? To Allah Almighty, 'Then he will be returned to his Lord, and He will punish him with a terrible punishment.' (*al-Kahf*: 87) The first suffering here is that of this worldly life which will be bearable because it is inflicted by the power of temporal incapable beings; as for the suffering of the Hereafter, it is inflicted by the power of the All-Powerful.

'But as for one who believes and does righteousness, he will have a reward of Paradise and we will speak to him from our command with ease.' (*al-Kahf*: 88) This is the task which Allah the Strong and Steadfast has appointed to Himself: He deters those who do evil and gives incentives to those who do righteous deeds. And the True Lord says in the verse which we come to next:

فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهُ نَفْسُهُ قَتْلَ أَخِيهِ فَقَتَلَهُ، فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**But his soul prompted him to kill his brother: he killed him
and became one of the losers [30] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 30)**

You do not say that you 'facilitate' something unless this thing is resistant to what you want to do with it; you do not facilitate twisting water, but you might facilitate twisting iron.' And his soul facilitated to him the murder of his brother' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30). So, will his soul perform the killing in addition

to facilitating such a deed? We should be aware here that within a man there are two dispositions: a natural disposition which loves truth and goodness and a disposition which inclines to desires; and these two dispositions are in a constant struggle.' And his soul facilitated to him the murder of his brother' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30). It is as though the evil and passionate side of the soul overwhelmed the good side and it is as though they pulled back and forth, struggled and jostled, For a man does not like to have evil done unto him though he might well consent to do evil unto others.

'And his soul facilitated to him...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 30). There was still a remnant of Prophethood in his soul because he was Adam's kin and there was still an inner struggle within his soul. Evil wanes in good people and deepens in evil people; if you rile a good man, he says, 'If I see him, I will shoot him, or strike him, or scold him', whilst an evil man will say, 'By Allah Almighty, if I find him, I will spit in his face, or strike him, or shoot him.' So evil deepens in an evil person and he finds that the first response is not enough to slake his anger so he must increase its severity. The good man's soul, on the other hand, vents his anger and relinquishes it with a simple word. Therefore we may observe that the story of our master Joseph *peace be upon him* says: 'When they said, 'Joseph and his brother are more beloved to our father than we, though we are a (stronger) company. Indeed, our father is in clear error.' (*Yusuf*: 8) It is curious that their argument was actually against them, which shows you that passion, anger, hatred and envy upset a person's judgement. They said 'though we are a (stronger) company' (*Yusuf*: 8), which shows that they were strong; and this is exactly what made their father, Jacob's heart incline towards young Joseph *peace be upon him*. You say that 'Joseph and his brother (Benjamin) are more beloved to our father than we are' (*Yusuf*: 8); yes, indeed this is the case because he is the youngest. An Arab was once asked, 'Why do you love your youngest son?', and he replied: 'Because he has spent fewer days with me. My first born has been with me for a long time, so I am compensating the youngest with love and affection for the days which he has missed.' So when they said 'though we are a (stronger) company' (*Yusuf*: 8), this was actually an argument against them. This shows that when a man's moral standards of judgement are impaired he will make an argument which is against him and imagine that it helps him! After this, they said:

‘Indeed, our father is in clear error.’ (*Yusuf*: 8) They agreed on this argument and then started to suggest: ‘Kill Joseph.’ (*Yusuf*: 9) Then they said: ‘or cast him out to (another) land....’ (*Yusuf*: 9)

And because they were the sons of Jacob *peace be upon him* and descended from a household of Prophethood, they relented from the ideas of killing or banishing and one of them said: ‘Do not kill Joseph but throw him into the bottom of the well; some travelers will pick him up – if you would do (something).’ (*Yusuf*: 10)

Does anyone plan for the rescue of someone he hates? It is as though there was still goodness in their souls. At first they said, ‘Kill Joseph,’ (*Yusuf*: 9) and this was at the height of their anger; then they said ‘or cast him out to (another) land;’ (*Yusuf*: 9) where he might be eaten by wild predators; and then one of them said ‘but throw him into the bottom of the well; some travelers will pick him up – if you would do (something).’ (*Yusuf*: 10) So, good people relent.’ And his soul facilitated to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 30)

We know well what loosing means in terms of business wherein there is profit and loss: profit means you have made back your capital and more and loss means: your capital has decreased. Why did Cain slay his brother, when his brother was the only person in the world with whom he could find solace? This all happened because of his desire for the girl and when they both offered sacrifices and his was not accepted his enmity deepened and he killed his brother. So he lost his capital after intending to make profit: ‘and became among the losers.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 30) The True Lord then says:

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهُ كَيْفَ يُورَثِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ قَالَ يُوثِقُ
أَعْرَجْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِثْلَ هَذَا الْغُرَابِ فَأُورَثِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِي فَأَصْبَحَ مِنَ النَّادِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

God sent a raven to scratch up the ground and show him how to cover his brother's corpse and he said, ‘Woe is me! Could I not have been like this raven and covered up my brother's body?’ He became remorseful [31] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 31)

The word ‘saw’a’ (here translated as dead body), which literally means ‘what the soul abhors’, is derived from the verb ‘sa’a’ which means (abhor);

and we call the private parts of the body 'saw'a 'because revealing it is abhorred.' Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31). Did Allah Almighty send the crow so that He could show Cain how to bury Abel's body or was the crow the one that will say this to Cain? It is the same either way since our Lord is the One Who sent it. If you focus on the direct means, it was the crow; and if you focus on the means of the sender, it was Allah *Glorified is He*. So it all goes back to Allah *Glorified is He* and when you try to attribute the means to an entity, you will find out that they are all provided by Allah Almighty.

'He (Cain) said, 'O woe to me!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) When you hear the words 'ya waylata' (O woe to me), know that this expression is used for two different meanings. The basic meaning of 'wayl' is (perishing) and if we want to make it more intense, we add the suffix *-(ah)* so it becomes (*waylah*), since the suffix 'ah' can often add emphasis to a noun in Arabic. - So 'wayl' means 'perishing' and so does 'waylah'; and what does 'ya waylata' mean?

We know that 'ya', in Arabic, expresses a call; so why would one call woe and death upon himself? And can other than a sensible being be called? Yes, it can, because as long as 'woe' means 'perishing', it is as though you are saying, 'I cannot take this discomfort and anguish any longer and nothing can rid me of it save death; O death, now is your time to come to me!' So 'O, woe to me' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) means 'O death, come to me'. The poet Al-Mutanabbi said of this:

It is sufficient ailment for you to see in death a cure

And it is enough of deaths to be wished for desires

What a grave ailment it is to which one says, 'O Lord, give me peace and let me die!' The person who wishes for death must be experiencing something even worse than death. So the first meaning of 'O, woe to me' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) is that you call for death to come and therefore the True Lord says: 'And the record (of deeds) will be placed (open) and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it and they will say, "Oh, woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great except that it has enumerated it?" And they will find what they did present (before them). And your Lord does injustice to no

one.' (*al-Kahf*: 49) They wish for death; and likewise Cain said, 'O, woe to me!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) Did death come to him when he called for it? No, for the deed was already done and he had murdered his brother.

The second possible meaning of 'O, woe to me' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) is to express amazement at something which could not possibly have been caused by means. There is a difference between what means give and what the Supreme Causer gives. If what means give is the sole governor of natural law, this would mean that the True Lord had practised his authority over His dominion only once, and it is as if He created the means and natural laws and left them to govern on their own. But we say no: He created the means with His omnipotent power and they exist to manifest the independent and all-encompassing nature of His power – but the True Lord can command means to cease functioning whenever He wills.

So there are means and there is the Supreme Causer; and amazing events cannot be given by the means. When means do not affect, man is amazed and he therefore refers the matter back to the Origin, for which nothing is amazing. When the guests came to our master Abraham *peace be upon him* and he offered them food and saw that their hands did not stretch out to it, he was distrusted them and felt from them apprehension and was filled with disquiet and fear of them. The True Lord says of this: 'And he felt from them apprehension. They said, "Fear not" and gave him good tidings of a boy who would be endowed with deep knowledge. Thereupon, his wife approached with a cry (of alarm) and struck her face and said,' (I am) a barren old woman!' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 28-29)

And the True Lord also says about this: 'And his Wife was standing and she smiled. Then We gave her good tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, Jacob.' (*Hud*: 71) The wife of our master Abraham *peace be upon him* said: 'Woe to me! Shall I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? Indeed, this is an amazing thing!' (*Hud*: 72) That is, there were no means that could give such a thing.' They said, 'Are you amazed at the decree of Allah' (*Hud*: 73) You might well be amazed at the means when they were defied, but when you remember that means come from Allah Almighty, there is nothing strange at all.

Our master Zechariah *peace be upon him* said something similar to this. He had taken custody of our Lady Mary *peace be upon her* and would bring her all her life's needs; and he was amazed to see that she had with her provisions of food and fruit and asked her: 'He said, 'O Mary, from where is this (coming) to you?' (*Al-'Imran: 37*) Why did he say this? He must have seen that she had something which he did not bring her; and she responded to his amazement and alerted him to the eternal truth: 'She said, 'It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account.' (*Al-'Imran: 37*)

The True Lord willed that our Lady Mary *peace be upon him* say this, whilst she was still young; as we said before, it was as though she was saying this as a foreshadowing of how she would later experience something which only The Supreme Cause could make happen. She would bear a child without a father and this is an amazing thing and therefore she would surely have understood it and applied to it her own words: 'It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account.' (*Al-'Imran: 37*) It is as though the True Lord wanted to implicitly tell her that should remember that she herself was the one who said these words because in the future something would happen to her which would require her to remember them; and she herself reminded our master Zechariah *peace be upon him* of this truth. Let us observe the precision of the Quranic allusion to the circumstance wherein Mary *peace be upon him* reminded him of this truth: 'There, Zechariah called upon his Lord, saying, 'My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring.' (*Al-'Imran: 38*)

It is as though when he heard this, he decided to make his supplication to Allah *Glorified is He* right there in the sanctuary. And was our master Zechariah *peace be upon him* unaware of this fact? He was aware of it, but there is a difference between a notion which lies in the margins of the consciousness and one which lies at the forefront of the consciousness. And when Mary said to Zechariah *peace be upon them* 'It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account' (*Al-'Imran: 37*), this truth moved from the margins to the forefront of his consciousness.

'There, Zechariah called upon his Lord' (*Al-'Imran: 38*). Why did he not pray unto his Lord in the first place? Our master Zechariah *peace be upon him*

was going on his life amidst the means and the monotony of the means may distract from the Supreme Cause; and when he heard Mary *peace be upon her* say: 'Allah provides for whom He wills without account' (*Al-'Imran*: 37), he wanted to experience this for himself, so he prayed unto his Lord. And the True Lord gave him tidings that He would grant him a child, whereupon Zechariah was amazed once again, describing his condition: He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when I have reached old age and my wife is barren?" (*Al-'Imran*: 40)

As long as you have prayed to Allah Almighty, O Zechariah, to give you a child and you have moved the matter of Allah Almighty's provision from the margins of your consciousness to its forefront, then Allah Almighty has made His decree: 'Thus (it will be); your Lord says' (*Maryam*: 9). So do not investigate means and causes, for it is a matter of Allah's will. And Allah Almighty explains the findings on which the following saying is based: 'Allah provides for whom He wills without account' (*Al-'Imran*: 37) and can grant you a son, when he says: 'It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing'. (*Maryam*: 9)

These were all portents for our Lady Mary *peace be upon her* and our master Zechariah *peace be upon him* her guardian, for our master Zechariah *peace be upon him* would be a witness when she bore a child without any father and as her guardian, he would be involved in this matter.

But why was all this foreshadowing necessary? It was necessary because usually when natural laws and conventions are broken, it does not threaten anyone's reputation, but in Mary's case *peace be upon her* her reputation would be threatened and reputation is the most sacred thing a woman possesses. Therefore, all this foreshadowing was necessary and although it was a strange thing, it was not strange for Allah *Glorified is He*.

Here, Cain says: 'O woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow...?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) Cain only said this after becoming aware of a harsh psychological reality which disturbed his emotions greatly. It is as though the crow's actions showed Cain that he did not know something which the bird before him did know: here is something that even a crow can do, but you, Cain, cannot do it. You had the power to murder your brother, but you cannot

even conceal his dead body like what this crow did. So, Cain became filled with remorse: 'And he became of the regretful.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

We should be aware that there are different kinds of remorse. For example, suppose that a man violates Allah's law by drinking wine which he buys with the money he should have used to buy food for his family. When he gets home and finds his family waiting for their food, he regrets that he drank the wine – Does he feel remorse for disobeying Allah *Glorified is He* or for not buying food for his family? He feels remorse for not buying food for his family and this remorse is unacceptable because it is not true repentance. This wine-drinker might put on his best clothes, go off to drink wine and then fall on the ground, and thus feel remorse because the wine he has drunk has led him to this situation. Does he feel remorse for disobeying Allah *the Almighty*? Or does he feel remorse because he looks silly in front of other people? This was the nature of Cain's remorse: he felt remorse because of his failure as he did not know what the crow knew. The True Lord then says:

مِنْ أَجْلِ ذَلِكَ كَتَبْنَا عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَنَّهُ مَن قَتَلَ نَفْسًا بِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ
أَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَكَأَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَمَنْ أَحْيَاهَا
فَكَأَنَّمَا أَحْيَا النَّاسَ جَمِيعًا وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ ثُمَّ
إِنْ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

On account of [his deed], We decreed to the Children of Israel that if anyone kills a person – unless in retribution for murder or spreading corruption in the land – it is as if he kills all mankind, while if any saves a life it is as if he saves the lives of all mankind. Our messengers came to them with clear signs, but many of them continued to commit excesses in the land [32] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 32)

The True Lord says that He ordained all that this verse states as a plain law, because the words '*min ajl*' mean 'because of' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32); and the word '*ajl*' can be derived from '*ajal*' which means to cause evil for someone, meaning 'to commit a crime', in which case it means 'because of this crime...' It could also mean, 'On account of this crime', we decreed this law:

‘Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) So, when you hear the words (*min ajl*), know that they mean ‘because of’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) or ‘on account of’ or ‘because of this crime’.

Was this decree for the children of Israel alone? Some of the scholars say that the two ‘sons of Adam’ here do not mean literally the sons of Adam *peace be upon him*, but rather, the descendants of Adam *peace be upon him* from the children of Israel. To this, we reply: First of all, who is this ‘Israel’ to whom the children of Israel are ascribed? He is Jacob son of Isaac, son of Abraham *peace be upon him*, who descended ten generations from Noah *peace be upon him*, who descended from Seth, the son of Adam *peace be upon him*. Was it possible that all these generations had no knowledge of how to bury their dead until the children of Israel’s time? Of course, it was not, and as long as the True Lord states that He sent a crow to dig in the earth to show Cain how to bury his brother’s body, this proves that Abel was the first human being to be buried. It is therefore unacceptable to say that humanity did not know how to bury their dead until the time of the children of Israel and that they were the ones to teach this to humanity!

So, why does the True Lord mention the children of Israel here? It is because the children of Israel did not only dare to take lives, but they even dared to take the lives of those who were sent to guide them, meaning those who were sent as prophets and messengers – and this is why they were singled out for mention here. They slew the Messengers who were sent to them bearing Allah’s Way of guidance in its practical form; for prophets come as role models who put Allah’s Guidance into practice to show people the true way to follow it. Prophets, then, do not bring new divine laws, but they follow the laws of those who came before them. And why did the children of Israel kill some of their prophets? It was because they bore a grudge against those prophets.

We know that when a good person does something good and is seen by an evil person who is incapable of doing good, the evil person comes to bear a grudge against the good person and hates and envies him; and the more good the good person does, the more the evil person feels offended. And so

the evil person tries to get rid of the good person. The Messengers were role models of good conduct; and the True Lord says of the children of Israel: 'Then why did you kill the prophets of Allah before, if you are (indeed) believers?' (*al-Baqara*: 91)

The True Lord says 'before' (*al-Baqara*: 91) here for a wise reason: The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was at odds with the Jews and they would conjure evil plots to assassinate him and indeed they made attempts to do so. For example, they tried to drop a boulder onto him and to poison him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* said 'before' (*al-Baqara*: 91) as if to say: Your ability to slay the Messengers was from the past; as for Prophet Muhammad, the chosen one *peace and blessings be upon him*, you will never get him. Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'Because of that, we decreed upon the children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) This manifests the True Lord's will to establish a union of faith which would make a firm bond in faithful society, as the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* elucidated when he said, as Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari *may Allah be pleased with him* narrates: 'A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other.'

Beware of seeing someone wrongfully harm someone else without doing anything to prevent him, for the unity of faith makes the believers like a single body: when one part of it aches, the whole body responds to it with sleeplessness and fever. If one man kills another and the faithful society stands idle, this will cause corruption on earth; and so society must treat this action not as the slaying of one individual, but as though it is the slaying of all mankind – unless his killing of that person is a punishment for murder or for spreading corruption on earth.

And the True Lord then gives the other half of this doctrine: 'And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) This is the unity of faith; if someone transgresses against an innocent life it is as though he has transgressed against all humanity and if someone saves a life in peril it is as though he has saved all humanity. And when Allah *Glorified is He* ordains a regulation of this nature, there is always a practical application for

it. The one who takes an innocent life incurs the curse and wrath of Allah Almighty and He will punish him, and it will be as though he has killed all humanity; and if we consider it from the perspective of the requital, he will be requited with the same requital as would be given for this: 'And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) The Almighty wants a faithful society to stand in the way of the one who dares to behave unjustly as one united society and not to leave the victim to stand alone; for the thing that encourages evildoers is that some people say, 'What does it have to do with me?' These words 'what does it have to do with me' provide encouragement to evildoers and therefore you should read the story⁽¹⁾ of the three bulls: There was a black bull, a red bull and a white bull. A lion made a deal with the red and black bulls, who allowed him to eat the white bull. Then, the lion made a deal with the black bull, who allowed him to eat the red bull. Then the lion came for the black bull who said to the lion: 'I was doomed to be eaten the day you ate the white bull!' It is as though the black bull realised in the end that his 'what does it have to do with me' attitude caused his demise, but had the three bulls stuck together in the beginning, they could have killed the lion.

And the Noble Hadith (Prophetic saying) gives us a parable of the one who upholds Allah's boundaries and the one who transgresses them: An-Nu'man ibn Bashir *may Allah be pleased with him* related that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'The likeness of the man who observes the limits prescribed by Allah and that of the man who transgresses them is like the people who get on board a ship after casting lots. Some of them are in its lower deck and some of them in its upper (deck). Those who are in its lower (deck), when they require water, go to the occupants of the upper deck and say to them: 'If we make a hole in the bottom of the ship, we shall not harm you.' If they (the occupants of the upper deck) leave them to carry out their design they all will be drowned. But if they do not let them go ahead (with their plan), all of them will remain safe.'⁽²⁾

(1) The story of the three bulls

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad

This is the parable of the one who upholds Allah's boundaries and the one who transgresses them. It is as though the True Lord is says to us: Do not consider that one person has wrongfully killed another, but consider that he has killed all humanity; for all people have an equal right to life. And as long as the killer has dared to kill one person, he might dare to kill anyone, or his action might be an example for others; and as long as this behaviour has been established, you will find that whenever someone becomes angry with someone else he will kill him and other murders will follow in succession. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'He who introduced some good practice in Islam which was followed after him (by people) he would be assured of reward like one who followed it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who introduced some evil practice in Islam which had been followed subsequently (by others), he would be required to bear the burden like that of one who followed this (evil practice) without theirs being diminished in any respect.'

Circumspection, precision, and restraint are manifested in the words, 'whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32); for had this been a human legislation and had these caveats been left out, they might have been amended later with a commentary or alteration; but the Supreme Lawgiver cannot be corrected.

'Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) imply that those who kill others in retaliation for murder or the spreading of corruption on earth are not deemed to have slain all of mankind, but rather to have saved all mankind. This is because when an action is criminalised, this means that there must be a text which clearly announces that this act is a crime, after which we assign a punishment to it. You cannot say to someone who has committed an action, 'I shall detain you and punish you for this' if there is no text which states this action to be criminal. Therefore, there is a legal principle which states that 'there can be no criminalisation without a text and no punishment without criminalisation.' That is, we assign punishments to crimes, or when an act is criminalised the punishment for it is specified at the same time. Is the purpose of this to punish criminals? No, the purpose is to deter the crime by making the prospective

criminal think of the punishment before he commits it; the purpose is to prevent the crime. Therefore, the common aphorism says: 'The best way to prevent killing is killing.' And of course this aphorism is not as sublime as the True Lords' words: 'And there is for you in legal retribution (saving of) life, O you (people) of understanding...' (*al-Baqara*: 179).

We might ask: What kind of killing prevents killing? We see that the meaning of the aphorism is not aggressive acts of murder, but rather, the just retribution of the death penalty. Thus, we see that the human expression falls short of the sublime exhortation against murder which is found in the True Lord's words: 'Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) The word 'saves' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) (*ahya*) here has more than one meaning and specifically it has two meanings: The first meaning is to preserve the spirit which controls the body and the second meaning is to give life to the faithful spirit, as is the case when the True Lord says: 'respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you the life.' (*al-Anfal*: 24)

We may observe here that the True Lord also declares that spreading corruption on earth also deserves the death penalty. 'To corrupt' means to disrupt the soundness of what is sound, whilst our faith requires us to preserve the soundness of what is already sound; if we are able to make it better, then we should and if we cannot, then we should at least leave it as it is.

So why does the True Lord state that this is a punishment for spreading corruption on earth? The meaning of 'land' (earth) is the place wherein the True Lord made man His vicegerent. And when the True Lord says; 'or for corruption (done) in the land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32), this means that all corruption affects everything which the earth contains; and the primary thing which earth contains or earth's master, is man. And to corrupt man is to kill him.

So, this 'corruption' must refer to other things, namely other beings or species: animals, plants, and minerals. To corrupt these things is to remove them from the property of those who possess them, such as if a group of people seize the goods of another man or if someone steals someone else's crops or if someone steals the steel of a factory or iron products or the like.

There are two kinds of corruption. Corruption on earth is related to the things which the earth contains, which primarily is man, the master of the earth; and to corrupt man is to kill him or threaten his personal safety and causing him to feel panic and fear. We can observe that the True Lord told Quraysh of how He blessed them by giving them food against hunger and making them safe from danger.

So it is a kind of corruption to frighten people and terrorise them and this takes two forms: you might frighten someone with whom you are at odds and with whom you hold a mutual grudge; or you might frighten someone with whom you have no connection and who have not done anything to you. If someone transgresses against someone when there is a history of hatred and enmity between them, we do not say that this person violates the Sacred Law by claiming his rights; but he cannot take the law into his own hands. Rather, this must be done by the authorities so that it is carried out properly and fairly. He only violates the Sacred Law when he transgresses. But if he transgresses against people without any provocation, this is called *hiraba* (robbery with violence and sometimes translated as warmongering). An example of this is the one who commits highway robbery and strikes fear into everyone he meets, causing them to feel panic and terror for their lives and their belongings; and their belongings could be animals, plants, or minerals. This is what the Sacred Laws calls *hiraba*, and there will presently come a verse devoted to it.

So, to spread corruption on earth means to disrupt the soundness of what is sound on earth, which primarily means man the master of the earth and to corrupt him means either to kill him, attack him, or terrorise him, or to transgress against the things he owns of the lower species such as crops, plants or animals. So it is as though those who spread corruption on earth deserved to be killed.

‘Whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption (done) in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 32) That is, killing someone who has not spread corruption on earth is an offence which must be punished, but to kill someone who is guilty of spreading corruption on earth is another matter; for to kill someone in order to exact lawful retribution for

murder or in order to carry out Allah Almighty's law, is a different matter. And even if the family of the victim forgive the murderous warmonger or highwayman, this does not avail him or excuse the punishment for his crime because his crime has been committed against all of society. Allah *the Exalted* continues: 'And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, (even) after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 32) A transgressor is the one who goes too far, the one who does not act within the confines of his own status and position in existence but rather attempts to violate the bounds of his capabilities in the universe.

An example of this is the man who tries to usurp the rights of other people, going beyond the limits of fairness and not being content with his own rights alone. This is like highway robbers and thieves who steal the fruits of other people's labours and become accustomed to and comfortable with living like this. This problem does not affect the highwayman alone, but it also affects society, and it is said, 'So-and-so sits in his house all day in comfort and one hour a night spent in robbing people is enough for him.'

The matter is not limited only to that one person, but it affects others as well. All those who own wealth live in fear and when they have their excess wealth stolen from them they will lose the desire to do enough work to earn extra wealth because they will not feel safe and secure. When this happens, those who are unable to work in society will lose the aid and support of those who used to work and earn a lot. So it was in His mercy that Allah *Glorified is He* gave mankind the opportunity of ownership, as long as it is sought in lawful ways.

Let us give an example to illustrate this – and Allah Almighty is beyond compare: if a man gives a needy person a usurious loan of one hundred pounds, how can he ask for an increase from someone who cannot even meet his life's basic needs? In doing this, he is forced to give the wealthy person more than he took from him, despite his poverty and incapacity. This is the very essence of transgression.

The True Lord then says:

إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا
 أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِّنَ
 الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

Those who wage war against God and His Messenger and strive to spread corruption in the land should be punished by death, crucifixion, the amputation of an alternate hand and foot, or banishment from the land: a disgrace for them in this world, and then a terrible punishment in the Hereafter [33] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 33)

The primary motive of war is appropriation; when a people wage war on another, its aim is to take over the riches or possessions of the other side. So how could anyone make war on Allah Almighty when He is beyond perception? The first way in which people wage war on Allah *the Almighty* is to attempt to usurp His authority, meaning His Law. When man tries to make laws which are contrary to the way of Allah *Glorified is He*, he thereby desires to usurp Allah's Right as Lawgiver; and this is the first way in which people wage war on Allah Almighty.

Do those who make war on Allah Almighty desire to usurp His domination? No, because Allah's dominion over everything is timeless and will last forever and He *Glorified is He* will never relinquish it to any of His servants. So what exactly do they wish to usurp? They wish to alter Allah's laws and regulations, although Allah Alone is truly the Lawgiver. As we said before, laws are like rules for the maintenance of a product. Why then, should we not leave it for the Creator of man to set the regulations which maintain man? So the first mistake people make is to make laws for themselves because the rules for man's maintenance can only be set by his Creator. If anyone comes along with the intention of making rules of maintenance for mankind – of which he himself is a member – we say to him: You seek to usurp Allah's Right.

And how do they wage war on the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*? We know that the Messenger, *peace and blessings be upon him*, has two different positions: Allah *Glorified is He* is unseen to us (beyond perception), but the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* dwelled among us in plain sight for a

period of time, wherein people waged war on him with the sword. And when the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* passed on to the Supreme Companion, the war waged on him became like the war waged on Allah *the Almighty*, meaning that they attempted to usurp his lawgiving authority, the second source of law and they said, 'We shall set laws for ourselves and we do not need this messenger.' Or, those of a particular system said, 'we shall only base our laws on Allah's Book' and this notion has spread in certain lands. If we ask every one of these people if they pray, they will say yes; and if we ask them how many cycles there are in the sunset prayer, they will say three; and if we ask them how they know this, even though the Noble Quran does not state it, they will have no answer.

If we ask them how to calculate '*zakat*' (the poor-due alms), they will say it should be 2.5% on money and trade, for example. But how do they know this? And how do they know how to perform the pilgrimage? So the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* had a mission and to wage war on him *peace and blessings be upon him* is to abstain from following his instructions whether it is a saying, a deed or a resolution.

An example of this is those who say that there are too many Hadiths (Prophetic sayings) for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. To them, we say: The message of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* lasted twenty-three years and everything He *peace and blessings be upon him* said was a Hadith. Every word which came from his lips was a noble Hadith; and if we were to only count the words he spoke, it would still fill countless volumes. And then everything he *peace and blessings be upon him* heard someone else say and approved is also a Hadith and everything anyone ever did in front of him to which he did not object is also a Hadith; so how many Hadiths of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* must there be? And how can some people object to the number of Hadiths which have been related to us, even after their authenticity has been so rigorously ascertained? They explain this by saying, 'It is better to deny something that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* actually said than to claim he said something which he did not.' They claim that what they are doing serves to protect Islam, but they forget that Allah *Glorified is He* protects His own religion and that the

Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* ordained the rules for screening and classifying Hadiths when he *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Whosoever deliberately tells a lie about me, let him take his seat in the Hell-fire.'⁽¹⁾

Imam Al-Bukhari *may Allah be pleased with him* narrated from those who both lived at the same time as the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and were known to have met him, whilst Imam Muslim considered that to have lived at the same time as the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sufficient because it makes it likely that a meeting took place; and each one of them was extremely precise in his investigations. If a person had a defect in his behaviour, they would not accept his narrations. Therefore when some people try to attack the Prophetic Hadiths by saying, 'It is enough for me to say there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He*', I wondered why they do not also remember that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah Almighty? How do such people make the call to prayer? And how do they perform the prayer itself? And how does he understand the True Lord's words: 'And whatever the Messenger has given you – take; and what he has forbidden you – refrain from' (*al-Hashr: 7*)? This is a clear declaration that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is authorised by Allah *Glorified is He* to legislate.

The same is true of those who impropriety attempt to discredit the great Imams; first they dared to criticise the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, then, they tried to bring the entire religion crashing down. The True Lord says about them: 'The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land...' (*al-Ma'ida: 33*) meaning that they take what is inherently sound and try to make it unsound, thus corrupting it. The recompense is that they be killed or crucified and the phrasing of the words 'they should be murdered or crucified' (*al-Ma'ida: 33*) is meant to give emphasis and strengthening so that the entire faithful society works to apply this commandment and the legal authorities implement it on behalf of all people. The public prosecutor acts on behalf of the people when he prosecutes; this prevents people from taking matters into their own hands and executing others without understanding the law properly.

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi and Al-Hakim on the authority of 'Ali

‘They should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides that they be exiled from the land.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 33) Is the use of the word ‘or’ the words of the verse (*al-Ma'ida*: 33) here meant to imply choice or do these words apply respectively to the words which preceded them? In Arabic rhetoric there is something called (*laff* and *nashr*), which mean ‘furling and unfurling’, i.e. ‘contraction and expansion’. For example, a poet said:

My heart, my eyelid, my tongue and my Creator...

He mentioned several nouns all at once, but no description of any of them; this is called (*laff*) or ‘furling’ because all the subjects are drawn together without any of their predicates being mentioned. The (*nashr*) or ‘unfurling’ is when the predicates are given together in the same order when the poet continues:

Are content, weeping, grateful and forgiving

So when we read the two lines together, they say:

My heart, my eye, my tongue, and my Creator

Are content, weeping, grateful and forgiving

And the True Lord says: ‘And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and (by day) seek from His bounty and (that) perhaps you will be grateful.’ (*al-Qasas*: 73)

His words “that you may rest” therein refer to “night” and His words “and (by day) seek from His bounty” (*al-Qasas*: 73) refer to “day”. So first comes the furling, and then the unfurling.

Corruption, as we know, has many forms. To corrupt a man might mean to kill him, or to kill him and take his possessions or to usurp his possessions without killing him or to terrorise him without killing him or taking his possessions. It is as though the word “corruption” incorporates all the different modes of corruption: killing and stealing, stealing without killing, terrorising and intimidating.

The True Lord says: ‘or that they be exiled from the land’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 33). To exile means to expel and cast out; and only someone who is settled somewhere can be banished and only someone who is resident can be cast

out. We call this a 'residence' or a 'homeland' meaning a place where a person lives and settles. The meaning of his being 'settled' there is that he moves within its circles but has a place to which he always returns to on a regular basis. Therefore it is called a 'residence' because he resides there after having moved in various circles. The meaning of 'banishment' is to take a person out of his residence and the place he calls home and the place wherein he spread corruption. But where do we send the person whom we banish? Someone might say that if you take him out of one place wherein he has spread corruption and send him somewhere else, he will continue his corruption there! No, because banishment does not give him the opportunity to indulge in this corruption because in his original homeland he was familiar with the geography and with those whom he terrorised and he knew the behaviour of his neighbours and knew how to frighten certain people, how to steal the goods of others and so on. But when he is banished to an unfamiliar place, he will need a lot of time to become familiar with the geography of the place, the people's positions there and their weak spots. Because of this, banishment is an effective way to bring an end to the corrupt person's corruption.

When Allah Almighty says; 'or that they be exiled from the land' (*al-Ma'ida*: 33), we know that we use the word 'land' *'ard'* nowadays to mean planet Earth. In the past, they understood this to mean the dry land and the water which covers the planet; once we became aware of the atmosphere, the earth's atmosphere became considered part of the earth. Therefore, we said that in the case of sacred sites, the atmosphere above a sacred site is considered to be part of it and to share its sanctity. The air above the *Ka'ba* is part of it. This is proved by the fact that, if someone prays on the third level of the Sacred Mosque, he is still facing the *Ka'ba*, even though he is higher than its building because he faces the air above it. And if someone on a plane wants to pray, he can face towards the air above the *Ka'ba*. And when more and more people began to perform pilgrimage and the area between Al-Safa and Al-Marwah became too small to accommodate them all, they made a second level so that people could pass between them there. So the ground between the two sites is not the only place where the rite can be performed, but the air above it is also sacred; and however many levels we build, they will still be fit for the ritual.

So the earth's atmosphere is part of the earth in every way. Because of this, and before there were Muslim pilots, they would not allow any non-Muslim plane to fly above the Sacred Mosque because a non-Muslim pilot would not be permitted to enter the *Ka'ba* and the Sacred Mosque; and as long as he would not be allowed to enter the *Ka'ba*, he should not be allowed to fly over it either.

This is because the air above a sacred object shares in its sanctity and the air is part of the earth; and we know that the atmosphere turns as the earth turns. From this, we can recognise the wonders of the Quran which were placed in it by its Speaker, the Creator of the universe. As long as the Quran is the speech of the Creator of this universe, there cannot be any contradiction between scientific facts and Quranic facts. Contradictions can only occur in two instances: we either consider a mere theory to be fact even though it has not actually been proven fact or else we erroneously attribute something to the Quran which it does not actually say. If something is truly a scientific fact and truly a Quranic fact, there will be absolutely no contradiction. A proof of this, for example, is that the True Lord says: 'and knows what is in the wombs.' (*Luqman*: 34)

And now modern science has come up with ways of investigating and analysing so that some superficial people say, 'No, science can tell us what is in the womb and whether it is male or female.' To this, we say: We do not dispute that because it is a scientific fact; yet it does not contradict a correct understanding of the Quranic fact given here. But let us ask: when do the scientists know this? They do not know it until a certain amount of time has passed, but the True Lord knows it before any time passes at all. And anyway, who said that by 'what is in the wombs' (*Luqman*: 34) The True Lord meant the gender of the baby only? Do these words only mean one thing? No, they mean many things: no one knows whether what is in the womb will grow to be tall or short, intelligent or not, happy or sad, forbearing or quick-tempered or whether its life will be long or short. Why should we take the word 'what' to refer to the gender of the baby alone?

He *the Exalted* knew the future from pre-eternity before any scientist knew it and before the scientist can take any sample. Moreover, does every pregnant woman go to a doctor to be examined to see what she is carrying in her

womb? Of course, she does not, and we do not know what her womb contains; but the Supreme Creator knows. Moreover, do all the pregnant women in the world go to the same doctor? Of course, they do not, but the Supreme Creator knows what is in every womb.

Therefore, there is no Quranic fact that contradicts any scientific fact; the contradiction only occurs when we erroneously understand the Quranic fact on Allah's Knowledge of what is hidden in the womb. (*Luqman*: 34) We misunderstood this verse thinking that it refers only to the question of gender.

There is another instance which is misinterpreted by people, that is, when Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has spread the earth out wide (*al-Hijr*: 19). Some people, wrongly and incorrectly, understand these Words of Allah *Glorified is He* and think that they mean that the earth upon which man dwells is flat. It has been proved as a scientific fact that the earth is spherical by some evidence as the voyage of Magellan, the special rules for building pillars and the fact that the upper parts of things appear first as you move towards them and so on; in our age, satellites have allowed us to witness such evidence by our own eyes. So this is a scientific fact which does not need further discussion; therefore, the mistake was made through misunderstanding the meaning of the Quranic facts as a result of the false assumption that the earth should be flat. Accordingly, the correct meaning of this Quranic fact is that wherever we go, the earth is there before us, without an end or edge. Allah *Glorified is He* spread out the earth before man so that wherever he goes, he will find the earth expanded before him and this could only be the case if the earth was spherical. So we see that the mistake was made in the understanding of the Quranic fact because contradictions only occur if something is believed to be a scientific fact, while actually it is not or when a Quranic fact is misunderstood. They can never truly be contradictory, for the one speaking is the Creator Himself. Therefore, we have recently learned that the atmosphere is part of the earth and that it turns with the earth's orbit. We used to say that we travel 'on' the earth, but Allah *Glorified is He* says; 'Say, Travel throughout the earth' (*al-An'am*: 11).

He previously knows that the atmosphere is part of the earth; so however far a man travels on land, the atmosphere remains above him which means

that he travels *in* the earth, not *on* the earth. Only when he goes above the atmosphere does man go above the earth.

Now we return to Allah's saying '...or banishment from the land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 33). We know that banishment means expulsion and exile from land, but from which land are they banished and to which land are they sent? No one can be banished except someone who is currently settled. Thus, we sensitively have to differentiate between two opposite words; *Nafi* (Negation) which is equal to banishment and (Affirmation) which is equal to settlement. When we take water from a well, we lower a pail on a rope to collect it. And when we bring the pail back up from the well, it carries as much water as it can hold according to its size and volume. But is there a stable process by which we can ensure that the pail is filled up exactly to its brim so that water does not spill? Of course, this is not possible and a little water always spills from the brim of the pail and in Arabic, this spilled water is called (*Nafi*). We cannot get the pail out of the well when it is filled to the brim with such stable motion that no water spills from it at all.

Water, as we know, flows very easily with only the subtlest of inclines so that people use spirit levels devices that measure how perfectly horizontal a surface is. Many other words are derived from the root word (*Nafi*), such as (*Nifaya*) which means 'excess'. So, how can someone be banished (*Nafi*) from the land? Should we understand the word 'land' in its general or specific meaning? Does it refer to the land wherein the highwaymen operate?

If we understand it according to its specific meaning, then it means that they are to be banished to any other land; and if we understand the word 'earth' according to its general meaning, then how can they be banished? We may observe the meaning that Allah *Glorified is He* has intended in light of another verse of the Quran whereby Allah *Glorified is He* ordered the children of Israel to dwell in the land after Pharaoh had died. (*al-Isra'*: 104)

Of course, they would dwell on the land, but these words are used to impart a particular meaning. We know that we only speak of habitation when we specify a particular place on earth in which we dwell, such as if someone says, "Dwell in the US," or "Dwell in the UN." Therefore, the meaning intended here is that Allah *Glorified is He* is telling us that He would disperse

them throughout the earth in such a way that they would never settle together in one place. This affirms what Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere that He has ordained on the children of Israel to disperse on the earth as separate communities. (*al-A'raf*: 168) So, they had no homeland of their own and were to be dispersed on the earth and this was what actually happened.

Did the children of Israel ever settle together in one homeland? No. Allah *Glorified is He* never changes His Decree even in the case of the country they were established in because of the Balfour Declaration; Allah *Glorified is He* has fulfilled His promise to the believers that they will enter the Mosque as soon as they made their best effort to restore it. Furthermore, the Jews actually remain, according to their nature, dispersed all over the earth and in every country they have their own special quarters and every group of them preserves its own identity and does not integrate with those amongst whom they live. Allah *Glorified is He* informs us concerning the last stance of the children of Israel that when the promise of the Hereafter shall come to pass, they would be gathered in one place after their dispersing in the land. (*al-Isra'*: 104)

When Allah *Glorified is He* brings them forth at the onset of the Last Day, they will be gathered together because when Allah *Glorified is He* gives the community of the believers the strength to deal the final blow to those people, they must all be gathered together. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to have this 'nation-state' so that they would gather therein and thereupon He will rain down His final blow upon them, having gathered them to the assembly of all people. So, we should not grieve because they have a state, for He has brought them to the assembly of all people.

Now, we return to the verse under discussion; how is this banishment from the earth to be undertaken? When Allah *Glorified is He* wants to specify a place, He says for example: '...Enter the holy land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21). In doing so, He has negated all other places. And He also says that 'He means to drive you out of your land!' (*al-A'raf*: 110) Here, Egypt is meant.

If we consider the word "earth" in its general meaning, it will share the same meaning with the following verse '...Dwell on earth...'. Banishment is one of the punishments for spreading corruption and there are four kinds of spreading corruption on earth: murder, theft and frightening and the

Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* also added something which can be learned from his biography, wherein he alerted us to another form of corruption of which the scholars should be aware. The first banishment which took place in Islam occurred when the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* banished Al-Hakam ibn Abu Al-‘As from Medina to At-Ta’if because Al-Hakam had – Allah forbid – imitated ironically the way in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to walk. When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to walk, he would stride as though he were descending a steep hill and thus, he had a unique way of walking. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* learned that Al-Hakam had been mockingly imitating the way he walked; when he noticed this suddenly one day, he banished him from Medina to At-Ta’if. Al-Hakam remained there until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away and then when Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* became the caliph, Al-Hakam’s family went to him to ask him to allow Al-Hakam to return to Medina, so Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* said: “I would never remove a decree which the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* issued.” So they went to ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab after he became the caliph and likewise he refused. Also when ‘Uthman ibn Affan *may Allah be pleased with him* who was a shy and coy man, became the caliph, he said: “I heard something from the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* which may have indicated that Al-Hakam should be pardoned”; so ‘Uthman *may Allah be pleased with him* pardoned and permitted him to return to Medina.

During the lifetime of Al-Hakam in At-Ta’if, he owned a few sheep and goat which he would tend to foster in the hills of the city; and this matter had repercussions that will affect thereafter. As you know, Mu’awiya’s son Yazid became a caliph after him and after Yazid, the caliphate passed on to the family of Marwan, the son of Al-Hakam.

Khalid ibn Yazid, the one who passed the caliphate on to Marwan, was a great chemist, and had a brother named ‘Abdullah, who owned horses for racing. One of ‘Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan’s sons also owned horses, which he raced against ‘Abdullah’s. And when ‘Abdullah’s horses were about to win the race, a dispute broke out between him and ‘Abd Al-Malik’s son and

'Abd Al-Malik's son chided 'Abdullah harshly. So, 'Abdullah went and complained to his brother Khalid who went to 'Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan and said, "A dispute has arisen between your son and my brother."

At that time, Abd Al-Malik was known amongst the Arabs for his eloquence, and they had never heard him make a grammatical error and he had raised his children to never make mistakes in their Arabic. However, he had a son named Al-Walid who was incapable of speaking the language correctly without any grammatical mistakes. So, when Khalid went to 'Abd Al-Malik, he wanted to find a way to criticise him, but 'Abd Al-Malik said to Khalid, "Do you dare to speak to me about 'Abdullah when he came to me just now and spoke without grammar?"

So, Khalid said to 'Abd Al-Malik, referring to Al-Walid: "By Allah's eloquence impresses me! 'Abd Al-Malik replied: "If Al-Walid makes mistakes in his speech, then his brother Sulaiman never does!" So, Khalid said: "And if 'Abdullah makes mistakes in his speech, then his brother Khalid never does!" "Be quiet, man!" 'Abd Al-Malik said, "for you were not part of the Caravan or the troop!"

Now 'the Caravan' originally meant the caravan of goods which Abu Sufyan was bringing from the Levant when the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to seize it, but Abu Sufyan escaped. And 'the troop' originally meant the people whom Abu Sufyan called forth from Mecca for support because he feared the Muslims. The 'Caravan' was led by Abu Sufyan and the 'the troop' was led by 'Utba ibn Rabi'a; 'Utba was Khalid's maternal grandfather, while Abu Sufyan was his paternal grandfather. So Khalid replied: "and who is more closely connected to the Caravan and the troop than me? My grandfather, Abu Sufyan, was the leader of the Caravan and my grandfather 'Utba was the leader of the troop. Mockingly Khalid said, "But perhaps you had better spoken about the little flocks of sheep and goats and hills of At-Ta'if in which your grandfather was confined – and may Allah *Glorified is He* have mercy on 'Uthman who let him free! And with these words his opponent fell silent."

So, banishment was the first punishment that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* carried out, but was what Al-Hakam did a form of corruption?

We say that all corruption is lesser than that which is directed against the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and Al-Hakam was mocking the way the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* walked.

A lawmaker might say that prison fulfils the same function of banishment, but we say: No, for today, the prison has many comforts and in the past prison was much harder than it is today. The purpose of prison is to remove the criminal from society so that his/her evils are prevented, even if he/she is not actually taken from the land in which he/she lives. This is up to the discretion of the ruler who can apply it however he/she wishes, especially if there were no longer several Islamic lands so that he/she could banish the criminal from one land to another.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: ‘...A disgrace for them in this world and then a terrible punishment in the Hereafter.’ These words refer to the aforementioned prescribed punishment for those who spread corruption in earth and wage war against Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* which should be punished by death, crucifixion, the amputation of an alternate hand and foot, or banishment from the land and these punishments are a disgrace for them.

The Arabic word *khizi* (disgrace) has two meanings; it may refer to ‘scandal’; the verb with the verbal noun (*khizi*) means ‘to be exposed’, whereas the verb with a verbal noun (*khazaya*) and (*khaza*) mean ‘to feel ashamed’. These two meanings are related to each other, for when a person’s secrets are exposed, he/she feels ashamed. These actions are ignominious, such as the one who commits highway robbery; and we say to those who do such deeds: “Your power is not intrinsic, but rather ephemeral; for if it were intrinsic, you would be able to escape when they came to kill you, crucify you or cut off your hand and foot. And you chose to assault those who were unarmed and thus, unable to defend themselves and this is also ignominious and disgraceful for you, especially when you see those who used to fear you, while you are being punished. Furthermore the ignominy you suffer now is but a prelude to another great suffering in the Hereafter, wherein you shall undergo a yet more a painful and great punishment.” Allah *Glorified is He* says that there will be disgrace for them in this world and then a terrible punishment in the Hereafter. Requital in

this worldly life is limited to man's power to punish; but what will happen when they are given over to the ultimate Power of Allah *the Almighty*?

Then, the Justice of Allah *Glorified is He* is manifested, for He gives those who commit sins and act wrongly against themselves the chance; first to repent, for if Allah *Glorified is He the Dispenser of Mercy* to His servants were to punish every man for a single crime or sin he/she committed without any possibility of forgiveness, the world would be filled with the corruption of everyone who commits sins because they would despair of Allah's Forgiveness and sink further into sin and iniquity. Allah *Glorified is He* has opened the door of repentance for all those who act wrongly against themselves and if there were no repentance, then every sinner would lose hope. So, suppose that one of the people guilty of these crimes regained his/her conscience: if he repents before you catch him, then there is a ruling for this situation; but if he/she repents after society catches him/her, then his/her repentance is worthless. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

**unless they repent before you overpower them – in
that case bear in mind that God is forgiving and
merciful [34] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 34)**

As long as the one who deserves such penalties repents and turns himself/herself in before he/she is caught by society, he/she has the right for his/her repentance to be accepted. We must understand that Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy are related to His Right; but the families of the victims are entitled to demand the punishment of the assaulter.

If they repent before the society overpowers them, then Allah *Glorified is He* will accept their repentance. The Quran combines all the different aspects of the way of faith into a single unit and divides different matters into different sections, in the way that human legislation is arranged into chapters. Therefore, we find that the Quran treats issues as though they are opportunities for the soul to wake up and come to its senses, so Allah *Glorified is He* directs the soul methodologically to follow instructions, and finally becomes obedient.

We gave an example before on how the Quran speaks about family issues in the chapter *al-Baqara* where Allah *Glorified is He* says that the husband should give half of the bride-gift to the wife if he divorces her before consummating the marriage yet after fixing a Bride-a gift for her, unless they waive their right, or unless the one who holds the marriage tie waives his right. (*al-Baqara*: 237)

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* turns to the issue of prayer in the two verses that follow the previous verse when He commands us to take care when offering the prayers and to do them in the best way by standing before Him in devotion. If we are in danger, we can pray when we are out walking or riding, but when you are safe again, we should remember Allah *Glorified is He* for He has taught us what we did not know. (*al-Baqara*: 238-239)

Allah *Glorified is He* placed the issue of prayer in between two issues related to the family, since after speaking of the importance of being mindful of the prayers, even in times of war, He said that those who may die and leave wives should make a bequest for them: a year's maintenance and no expulsion from their homes during that time. But if they leave of their own accord, they will not be blamed. (*al-Baqara*: 240)

He mentioned the issue of prayer between two issues of familial relations in order to show that the religion is a single unit and also because the soul which is filled with hatred and the woes of the contentious issues of marriage; inheritance and divorce is calmed when it performs the prayer. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is an excellent example for us: when something occupied him and seemed difficult to him, he would pray.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* does not present the different facets of the religion in separate chapters; one chapter for prayer, another for fasting, and a third for *zakat*, the poor-due; no, rather, He mixes all this together into a single blend. Therefore, when He has decreed that spreaders of corruption and those who wage war against Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* are to be killed, crucified, amputated or banished, this was meant to inspire awe and dread in the human soul; and once that dread was awakened in the human soul, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ
وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

You who believe, be mindful of God, seek ways to come closer to Him and strive for His cause, so that you may prosper [35] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 35)

We now come out of a stern atmosphere and talk of punishments and penalties and turn to having piety and being mindful of Allah *Glorified is He*. Piety -as we have come to know- means to place a protective barrier between oneself and all that might harm one.

We know that Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded us to be mindful of Him and also to be mindful of fire. (*al-Baqara*: 24) Furthermore, we know that fearing Allah *Glorified is He* and piety mean that we must place a protective barrier between Allah's Punishment and ourselves. And when someone says that Allah *Glorified is He* tells us to adhere to His Path and to always be under His Care, we should place a protective barrier between Allah's punishment and ourselves, one of which is the fire of hell.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* commands the believers to be mindful to Him, which means that we should have awe of His Attributes of Majesty; and hell-fire is one of the creations of Allah *the Exalted* and one of His soldiers.

He *Glorified is He* then commands us to seek ways to come closer to Him, that is, we should search for the intermediary means which will bring us closer to His obedience, pleasure and love. And is there any way of drawing closer to Allah *Glorified is He* other than doing what He has ordained? Can a man draw closer to any being except by those things which he knows that this being loves?

On the human level, we find that someone might ask, 'What does so-and-so like? 'When they tell him that so-and-so likes neck ties, he gives him a gift of some ties. And if they tell him that so-and-so likes good quality rosaries, he gives him a lovely rosary. So people always draw near to others by means of what they love – so how do we think we should draw closer to Allah *Glorified is He*? He explains to us what He loves in a Qudsi Hadith: The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah said, 'I will declare war against he who shows

hostility to a pious worshipper of Mine; and the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me, is what I have enjoined upon him; and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing *Nawafil* (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory) till I love him, so I become his sense of hearing with which he hears, his sense of sight with which he sees, his hand with which he grips and his leg with which he walks; and if he asks Me, I will give him and if he asks My protection (Refuge), I will protect him, (i.e. give him My Refuge).⁽¹⁾

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* shows His servant the right way saying in this a Qudsi Hadith; ‘...and My slave keeps on coming closer to Me through performing *Nawafil* (praying or doing extra deeds besides what is obligatory)....’ That means the servant seeks closeness to Allah *Glorified is He* with those things which He has not obliged him to do, yet which are from the same type of actions as those which He has made obligatory; for it is not correct to invent new ways of worshipping. So to seek to come closer to Allah *Glorified is He* means to obey Him and adhere to His Path, manifested by His words ‘Do’ and ‘Do not do.’

The word (*Al-Wasila*) is also the name of one of the levels of paradise. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* advised us to call Allah *Glorified is He* to give him (*al-Wasila*) virtue when he says: ‘When you hear the *Adhan* (the call to prayer), repeat what the *Mu’adhdhin* (the one doing the call to prayer) says. Then ask Allah to exalt my mention because everyone who does so will receive in return ten rewards from Allah. Then beseech Allah to grant me *al-Wasilah*, which is a high rank in paradise, fitting for only one of Allah’s slaves; and I hope that I will be that man. If any one asks *al-Wasilah* for me, it becomes incumbent upon me to intercede for him....’⁽²⁾

We do not wish to enter here into a discussion of the practice of taking the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or the pious worshippers of Allah (‘*Awliya*’) as intermediaries between us and Allah *Glorified is He* because it is not something which should cause any dispute. Some people have even

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

(2) Narrated by *Muslim*

declared that those who do such a practice are unbelievers; and to those who say this, we say:

You must subject this statement to a little refinement because statements such as this are the result of the lack of understanding. Those who take the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* or a *Wali* of Allah *the Exalted* as an intermediary between them and Allah *Glorified is He* do so because they see that he has a high rank in Allah's sight. Does anyone believe that the *Awliya'* could flatter him by giving him something which is not one of his rights? Of course not, and there are people who say, "It is fine to use living people as intermediaries, but not dead people." To them, we say: You are restricting something which is broad because a person's being alive does not have anything to do with their being taken as an intermediary. If you seek to take the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* as an intermediary between you and Allah *Glorified is He* the basis of your endeavour is the love you feel for one whom you know to be closer to Allah *Glorified is He* than you are; your love for him is what intercedes. Also do not think that this will get you anything you do not deserve.

To those who say, "We cannot seek to use the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* as an intermediary between us and Allah *Glorified is He* because he has passed away", then we say: Wait a moment, and think about what 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said: "At the time of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when the rains failed, we would seek his intermediation and pray for rain. But after the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, we would seek the intermediation of his uncle Al-'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him*. 'So they will ground their proof by saying,' if seeking the intermediation of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* after his passing were permissible, then 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* would not have stopped seeking his intermediation after he passed away and would have sought the intermediation of his uncle instead. But we ask: Did 'Umar supplicate to Allah *the Exalted* saying, "We used to seek the intermediation of Your Prophet, but now we seek the intermediation of Al-'Abbas to draw closer to You?" Or, did he say: "We seek to draw closer to You by the intermediation of Your Prophet's uncle?" So those who declare this to be forbidden only serve to restrict themselves even further because we

are not only able to seek the intermediation of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*, but we can also seek the intermediation of anyone who has a connection with him. When you seek the intermediation of someone to draw closer to someone else, this means that you believe that the one whose intermediation you seek cannot do anything for you; the reason you seek his intermediation is that you know that he alone cannot meet your need. So let us distance the concept of 'associating partners with Allah *Glorified is He*' from this matter, so we say: We seek his intermediation because we know that the One to Whom we seek intermediation is All-Powerful, whilst the one by whom we seek intermediation is powerless – and this is the very ultimate degree of certitude and faith in Allah *Glorified is He*.

But the one whose intermediation is sought might benefit or might not. When 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* sought the intermediation of Al-'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, he did this to seek rain and in such a circumstance, rain would not have benefited the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. So it is as though 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* brought forth one of the Prophetic family and said, "O, Lord, Your Prophet's uncle is thirsty, so for his sake, we seek rain."

So the intermediation which 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* sought from the Prophet's uncle is evidence against those who say that it became forbidden to seek the intermediation of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* when he passed away. In order for us to avoid dispute, we say that the good deeds embodied by 'Do' and 'Do not do' are the purest form of intermediary; and in this way, we will avoid getting caught up in disputes.

Allah *Glorified is He* commands the believers to be mindful of Him, to seek ways to come closer to Him and to strive for His cause. So that they may prosper, we consider the faithful altruism through which Allah *Glorified is He* wants to instil fear in the soul of the believer by means of Allah *Glorified is He*, which means to steer clear of what He forbids and by his seeking to come closer to Allah *Glorified is He* by following His Commandments.

The religion did not come only for your own sake, but rather, your faith is not complete until you love for your brother what you love for yourself. And if you love for yourself to be guided on the right way, then you should do

your best to ensure the same for your fellow men. And your fellow believers are not the only people who live with you now, but also the people who might come afterwards; therefore you must strive in Allah's Cause to establish His religion. In this way, the aspiration of faith widens; it does not only apply to the believer or his contemporaries. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* makes a straight Path for us and shows us where it leads.

The beginning of the Path was that when the believer was convinced that Allah *Glorified is He* will give him a pleasure and reward in the Hereafter better than what he seeks in the worldly life, he sacrificed his life and was martyred for His cause. Therefore a great Companion said, 'Does nothing lie between me and paradise except that I enter this battle, and either kill the enemy or die at their hands?' The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Indeed, this is so.' So the Companion threw down the dates which he had been eating and entered the battle.

He must, therefore, have known that the life which awaited him was better than the life which he was living. Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* has not made struggling in His cause a means of drawing closer to Him in the beginning; rather, He kept commanding them to wait and have patience until He had moulded those who would bear His Message. He did not want to make it a suicide mission.

And after that, we see that as the Islamic Mission continued on its journey, a Companion might grieve because during a battle 'Amr ibn Al-'As and Khalid ibn Al-Walid escaped from him so that he was not able to kill them. Yet the passing of time confirmed that the people had been unaware that Allah *Glorified is He* saved Khalid and spared him from the blade of the Companion in order to later make Islam victorious by means of Khalid *Allah be pleased with him*. And likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* saved 'Amr ibn Al-'As *may Allah be pleased with him* so that he too would give succour to Islam.

So the struggle in Allah's Cause assures the believer that the Path of Allah *Glorified is He* in which he believes will continue until the end of time and this can only be attained if the Message is allowed to be spread to the whole world. Furthermore, when the believing soul is prepared to struggle in Allah's Cause, this means that the altruism of faith must be placed in it and that it

knows that it has chosen the best faith. It loves to pass it over to others and it does not accept that it takes the goodness of faith and deprives those who live alongside it in the non-Islamic lands from its goodness and that it is keen that the whole world embraces faith. If we consider this matter, we find that it represents a deep understanding of the meaning of life. If people are good, then man will benefit from all their goodness; and if they are evil, then man will suffer from their evil.

So it is in the interest of the good person to pass his goodness on to others, because if his goodness spreads then he will expect to benefit from this goodness in turn; for people trust the good man and no evil comes to them from him because he loves for all people to be good and to be on the side of faith; for if they are on the side of faith the good man will benefit from their goodness. But if people continue to do evil, whilst the good man continues to be good, then they will continue to benefit from his goodness, whilst he suffers from their evil. So it is part of the wisdom of faith for one to pass on his good to others. And if the believer wishes to call to Allah's Cause and spread His Path, he must be prepared for this before he meets the enemy in battle. So before meeting the enemy on the battlefield, one must be prepared; and when the believer prepares himself, he finds that all the motions of life are with him. To call to Allah *Glorified is He* requires good conduct and good conduct spreads among people and when this happens, the forces of faith become stronger and improve both in conduct and in action. And when the forces of faith become stronger, they can extract the treasures of the earth and defend the abode of faith by means of industrial, scientific, and military progress. Allah *Glorified is He* says that He has sent Iron on earth with both; mighty strength and benefits for mankind. (*al-Hadid: 25*)

He sent down the Quran and He also sent down iron. He also continues to say that He makes evident those who support Him and His messengers though they cannot see Him. This refers to the attribute of 'great might' and this is the second means concerning which Allah *Glorified is He* counselled us: Do not consider that the way of Allah *Glorified is He* is confined to Do's and Don't's, but also consider Allah's *Glorified is He* Path to incorporate everything that protects Allah's way such as scientific progress, through extracting the treasures of the

earth like iron and using them in manufacturing. Just as Allah *Glorified is He* has sent down the Quran to convey His Path of guidance, He also sent down iron and it is man's job to utilise iron and the other raw materials to manufacture scientific apparatus and build factories in which we make steel out of the iron and make armature out of the steel and produce the precise instruments which give the soldier the chance to attain victory. And we must also store up enough foodstuff to suffice us during wartime.

So all the motions of life are part of the struggle and you must not think of striving in His cause as applying only to the battlefield. Rather, you must prepare yourself for battle. Now if you are well prepared and your enemy sees that you have done so, he might refrain from attacking you. In our times, what prevents the world from entering into a vicious battle which would ultimately destroy it is the fear of the evenly matched forces, for each nation has prepared itself for war and were there only one power in the world everything would be destroyed.

We understand the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* 'strife (*jihad*) in His Cause' to refer to striving in the cause of Allah's Path that we must study and understand it and then strive in its Cause with words and if necessary, with arms, by the book and by the troops.

So Allah's Command to strive in His cause is meant to form a faithful and civilized so that we do not give the disbeliever the chance to utilise the means and secrets which Allah *Glorified is He* has placed in the universe. Those who worship Allah *Glorified is He* alone are entitled to the secrets He has placed in the universe more than others; and even if we suppose that war will not take place, but we still possess factories which produce and farms which suffice everyone, then we will truly have attained sufficiency, for what is not used in war can be used in the time of peace. You must understand that all of the inventions of modern life are first meant to be used in war and afterwards when people calm down, humanity uses these inventions for the good of peace.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ
لَيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَا تُقْبَلُ مِنْهُمْ وَهُمْ عَذَابُ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

**If the disbelievers possessed all that is in the earth and twice as much again and offered it to ransom themselves from torment on the Day of Resurrection, it would not be accepted from them – they will have a painful torment [36]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 36)**

Allah *Glorified is He* spoke before about punishments, retribution, killing and amputation; then He moved us from this topic and exhorted us to have Fear of Allah *Glorified is He* and to seek to draw closer to Him, and to strive in His Cause in order to attain to a happy state. It was, therefore, inevitable that Allah *Glorified is He* would then remind us of the contrary state. The punishments mentioned before, such as retribution and execution, are confined to this world; but what will come in the Hereafter, which is referred to in this verse, is even more severe and bitter.

We can imagine the disbelievers who hold themselves so lofty in this worldly life and wreak tyranny on account of their haughtiness –what will happen to them on the Day of Judgement? They used their power to oppress others, but this power will leave and desert them on that Day. They had power in this worldly life because of the means which Allah *Glorified is He* gave to them, and the natural order which Allah *Glorified is He* established did not prevent them from progressing. Allah *Glorified is He* has created this natural order and anyone who seeks to utilise Allah's means, will get the results of his effort. But on the Day of Judgement they will learn that these means were not intrinsically theirs and that their strength was only a gift from Allah *Glorified is He*. They will face this living reality and if they possessed all that the world contained, or even twice as much and sought to offer it as a ransom to save them from the torment of hell, Allah *Glorified is He* would not accept it. This is the ultimate disgrace and they will not be able to save themselves from the torment of hell.

This reality makes the soul conscious and well aware of the fact that this is not all a game or an amusement, but that it is as serious as can be. A man

must consider the punishment before he enjoys the crime; what makes people steep themselves in sin is that they separate the punishment from the crime. If before wronging himself, a man thought of the punishment for this crime, he would not commit it. The same is true of the one who is too lazy to obey Allah *Glorified is He*; if he considered what the reward for obedience is, he would be eager to obey. Let us give an example to illustrate this matter– and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond comparison: Suppose that a man in a desert sees a tree above the highest mountain and realises it is an apple-tree when he sees a rotten apple fall from it onto the ground. He says to himself, “I can see how people could die here: one might fall from the mountainside, another might be attacked by wolves, and a third might lose the way – all this because of their hope that the tree has fruit. I must, therefore, choose the safest way to the fruit.” The road which leads to the fruits of this world is that of obeying Allah *Glorified is He* – and it is also the road to the fruits of the Hereafter.

Another example is: A hard-working student gets up early and makes ablution and prays and then goes out to school in the cold weather to attend his lessons. He comes home to eat the food his mother has prepared for him, but his mind is engrossed in his studies. This young man bears in the mind what the result of this effort will be and therefore, all the hard work he does for his education is easy for him. Had he been neglectful and slept late, not getting up early for school but instead, going out to hang around in the street with others like him, he would not be thinking of the end to which this loafing was taking him. The problem with people is that they separate actions from their results, crimes from their punishments and obedience from its reward. If we were to consider consequences along with actions, no one would ever commit a sin, or fail to obey Allah *Glorified is He*.

We can imagine how the tyrants of this world will look in hell in the Hereafter. In this world they tyrannised and usurped; and even if we suppose that one of them owned everything in the whole world – even though this is impossible – and owned it twice over and then offered it as a ransom to save himself from the suffering of hell, Allah *Glorified is He* will reject it from him, and he will suffer a severe punishment. This is the ultimate disgrace which anyone must be at pains to avoid. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُخْرِجُوا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُخْرِجِينَ مِنْهَا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّقِيمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾

**They will wish to come out of the Fire but they will be
unable to do so: theirs will be a lasting torment [37]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 37)**

Every time the flames of the fire touch them, they will wish to come out of it. But how will they get the idea of coming out of the fire? It must be that as the Fire touches them and pushes them here and there, the flames will push them towards the exit so that they will imagine that their suffering is over. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a perfect image of the ferocity of hell when He says that if the wrongdoers ask for relief they will be relieved. (*al-Kahf*: 29)

This seems to suggest that mercy will be extended to them, but what comes next depicts the pure horror of the reality that they will be relieved with water like murky oil which scalds faces. This is the ultimate horror, imparted by the contrast between the early hope and the final despair.

For example, a thirsty prisoner might ask for a cup of water. The guard could simply say, 'No, there is no water'; but if he wants to torment the prisoner more than this, he would say, 'I will bring you water' and brings a cup of cool water and as the prisoner reaches out to take the water the guard throws it onto the floor. This is an example of early hope and final despair. The same applies to their desire to leave the hell; they would only have the desire to leave if they had thought that it is possible, as the flames will toss them here and there. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* also commands the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to give them glad tidings. (*Al- 'Imran*: 21)

The notions of the "glad tidings" gives the soul hope of mercy, so they will rejoice, but what comes next which is a glad tidings of severe punishment. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to be shocked by the pain of disappointment after having entertained with some hope. He says that they will wish to come out of the fire but they will be unable to do so and they will suffer a lasting torment. Afterwards Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَاءُ بِمَا
 كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾

**Cut off the hands of thieves, whether they are man or woman,
 as punishment for what they have done – a deterrent from
 God: God is almighty and wise [38] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 38)**

Allah *Glorified is He* previously speaks of the punishment for the highway robbers and spreaders of corruption and here He speaks of another matter by which He wishes to protect the fruits of the believer's work in his society; for faith wants the believer to work and if a person is to work, he must be sure that the fruits of his labour are secure. But if a man works and earns the fruits of his labour and then someone else seizes them, this will cause him to be averse to labour. Subsequently, the progress of the world comes to a halt. Therefore, it is in our interest that the motions of life continue, and the motions of life will not continue unless man feels secure about the fruits of his labour and unless his labour is compatible with Allah's *Glorified is He* Law. And when a man works in something which Allah *Glorified is He* has permitted and has a lawful source of income, no one has the right to interfere with this because this man's work benefits society whether he intends this or not.

We said before that the man who has a lot of wealth saved up, finds that Allah *Glorified is He* commands him to invest this wealth, as He commands the doors of goodness to open for the one who is wealthy; so He casts the idea of constructing a large residential building into the wealthy man's heart and the man says to himself: 'I have plenty of wealth saved up, so why do I not build an apartment for myself?' Allah *Glorified is He* beautifies this idea to the man and he thinks about building a ten-storey apartment block with four apartments on each floor and charging one hundred pounds a month rent for each apartment – and this is a fine monthly income. The man thinks about this without realising that Allah *Glorified is He* cast these thoughts into his mind and he eagerly buys some land, then brings an architect to design the building and construct it and spends the wealth he saved. Thus, we see that before the wealthy man benefits from his apartment, other people benefit from his wealth, even those from the poorest sectors of society – and all this happened

because of a thought. Everyone has his thoughts: the miser will have thoughts that make him spend some money and the generous man will have thoughts that make him save some money. Do not think that there is any motion in the world which is outside the Will of Allah *Glorified is He*.

He says, 'Except for those who repent after that and correct themselves....' (*Al-'Imran*: 89) They do this because they have sinned before, so they seek to expiate these sins by putting their deeds right. Therefore we find that much good comes from those who have sinned against themselves and now wish to put themselves to right and there is no one who can take anything from Allah *Glorified is He* without His permission. He clarifies this issue by saying that good deeds do away with evil ones. (*Hud*: 114)

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* drives people to do what He wants by mere passing thoughts. Indeed, He is the Unseen Sustainer of all existence and therefore, the way He manages the universe is also unseen. In our villages, they reserve one day for the market and on the morning of this reserved day we look at the marketplace and reflect on it and marvel at the wondrous creativity of the One Who moves the universe. In the morning, some men go to the marketplace carrying their canes and nothing else: they are going to buy what they need and others come driving cows or donkeys: they are going to sell their goods. We see women carrying different kinds of vegetables, so we know they are going to sell them at the market and we see others carrying empty baskets, so we know they are going to buy. At the end of the day, we see the reverse issue: those who were carrying things in the morning now are not and others are carrying what others brought. Who was it that cast the thought of selling into the minds of those who went to the market to sell? And who inspired the others to buy? It was Allah *Glorified is He* who provides those who wished to sell with people to buy from them and those who wished to buy with people to whom they sell. This is the arrangement of the Ever-Living and All-Sustaining. We hear people say, "We have brought twenty tons of tomatoes to market today and forty tons of zucchinis," and so on and as the day ends, we find that it has all been sold. These are the notions which Allah *Glorified is He* inspires in people to give balance to society. So Allah *Glorified is He* wants to protect the labour of those who work and He also

does not want people to take nourishment or amusement without any effort; for those who steal usurp the effort of others, and this makes others averse to working at all.

There is a principle in Islam which states that when unemployment is rife, do not give charity to people from your own money, but instead make a project, even if you do not really need it – for example, dig a well and then fill it again afterwards – and pay the workers their wages. People should not become accustomed to inactivity, but rather, you must make them accustomed to working; and those who are unable to work must be provided for. A man's provision is primarily assured by his labour and if he is unable to work, then he must be provided for by his family and relatives and if he has no family, then the people of his neighbourhood are responsible for him and if the people of his neighbourhood or village are unable to support him, then the treasury of the state must provide for the poor.

So the ground of faith urges us to make sure that people have work or to provide for their needs if they are incapable of working. The problem is that some people love certain jobs, and they want to be employed in jobs which involve no real work. To such people, we say: "The modern world has the crisis of unemployment; so learn a skill, for life and never deprive someone who wishes to earn a living of having work."

We have the excellent example in the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* when he held the first auction in Islam: "A man of the *Ansari* (Helpers) came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and begged from him. He (the Prophet) asked: "Have you anything in your house?" He replied: "Yes, a piece of cloth, a part of which we wear and a part of which we spread (on the ground) and a wooden bowl from which we drink water." He said: "Bring them to me." He then brought these articles to him and He (the Prophet) took them in his hands and asked: "Who will buy these?" A man said: "I shall buy them for one *dirham*." He repeated twice or thrice: "Who will offer more than one *dirham*?" A man said: "I shall buy them for two *dirhams*." He gave these to him and took the two *dirhams* and giving them to the *Ansari*, he said: "Buy food with one of them and hand it to your family and buy an axe and bring it

to me.”⁽¹⁾ The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the man to bring the piece of cloth he spread on the ground and a wooden bowl from which we drink water in order to tell him that he is trading with his property, not with what the people may give him. He then brought them to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* who fixed a handle on it with his own hands and said: “Go, gather firewood and sell it and do not let me see you for fifteen days.”⁽²⁾ The man went away and gathered firewood and sold it. When the fifteen days ended he had earned ten *dirhams*, then he came to him and bought a garment with some of them and food with the others. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* then said: “This is better for you lest that begging should come as a spot on your face on the Day of Judgement”⁽³⁾.^This is true education.

Therefore, it is a fundamental goal of Islam to protect the affairs of the members of society. If someone does not make a living, then we help him with advice, education, power and strength, for the best thing is for us to teach them to work for themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn which is full of lessons for us. Allah *Glorified is He* says that when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them people who could barely understand him. (*al-Kahf*: 93) That is, he could barely communicate with them. But they subsequently said to him that Gog and Magog are ruining this land, and they asked him to build a barrier between them and Gog and Magog. They offered a tribute to him if he did so. (*al-Kahf*: 94) So Dhu Al-Qarnayn made it clear that he was not in need of them, but nevertheless, he would give them tasks to ensure that their aim was fulfilled: he asked them to bring him lumps of Iron and when he had filled the gap between the two mountainsides, he ordered them to work their bellows. When he had made it glow like fire, he ordered them to bring molten metal for him to pour over it. (*al-Kahf*: 96)

It is noteworthy that when the Quran tells a story, it only does so for a particular reason. They asked Dhu Al-Qarnayn to build a barrier, but he suggested that he will make a rampart for them. What is the difference? Modern science

(1) Narrated by Abu-Dawud

(2) Narrated by Abu-Dawud

(3) Narrated by Ahmad and Abu Dawud

has proved that a barrier can be destroyed by being afflicted by a jolt on any part of it; whilst a rampart (*radm*) is jolted, and actually becomes firmer. Furthermore, Dhu Al-Qarnayn did not do the work for them; he taught them how to build the rampart so that they would not live with the feeling of impotence.

Thus, the Quran teaches us that a man must work – but what would happen if he steals? First of all, what does steal (*sariqa*) mean? It is to take the valuable property of another with stealth. If stealth is not employed, then it is usurpation (*ightisab*); and in Arabic, there are also the words (*khatf*) (snatching) and (*ikhtilas*) (embezzlement).

So there are different ways in which property can be taken. If a merchant is standing in his shop selling his goods and a child comes and snatches some candy and runs and the shopkeeper cannot catch him, this is (*khatf*) or 'snatching'. As for usurpation (*ightisab*), it means to forcibly seize something from its rightful owner; and embezzlement (*ikhtilas*) means that a person is given the responsibility of looking after some money, but he takes some of it for himself. As for stealing (*sariqa*) it means to take the valuable property of another with stealth from a secure place, i.e. from a place which by rights no one but the owner can enter unless they have his permission. But if someone leaves his door wide open or leaves his good son the street, he is at fault. Just as the Islamic Law commands us not to steal from one another, it also commands us not to be negligent; a person must first lock up his things and then trust in Allah *Glorified is He*; as a Just Lawgiver, Allah *Glorified is He* demands that both sides be aware of their duties. The Islamic Law defines the penalty for stealing in legal terms as applying to objects of one quarter-*dinar* (a gold coin) or more; and in those days, a quarter-*dinar* would be more than enough for a man to feed himself and his dependants; indeed even a *dirham* (a silver coin) would be enough to provide for family for one day at that time.

So how should we estimate the parallel value of a quarter-*dinar* in our time? If it is not enough to live on, then we must raise the minimum value to that which is enough to live on; and as long as in those days a *dinar* was made of gold, then the value of a quarter-*dinar* will have risen since then. In the past, a golden pound coin was worth ninety-seven and one-half Egyptian piaster, but today a single golden pound coin is worth more than two hundred and

seventy Egyptian pounds. A person might also steal because he is needy or hungry and therefore, the Islamic Law established a value beyond which a needy person would not need to go in order to provide for himself and his family, namely one *dirham*. To steal a *dirham* has no fixed punishment, nor is it a sin, as long as all the lawful means of earning a living are unavailable. We have just seen that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* gave the *dirham* to a man and said: 'Buy food with one *dirham* and hand it to your family' which means that, as we said, a *dirham* was enough in those days. Traditionally, a *dirham* is worth one-twelfth of a *dinar*, so one quarter-dinar is equivalent to three *dirhams* – and this *dirham* is equivalent in our time to more than twenty Egyptian pounds.

Superficial people say, "Umar *Allah be pleased with him* abolished the punishment for stealing during the year of drought." To them, we say: No, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* did not abolish the punishment; the punishment remained, but he did not consider that the event which occurred was worthy of the punishment. The event which occurred in the year of drought or the year of famine was a matter of doubt and because of his sagacity as Commander of the Faithful, he did not consider that the event which occurred was worthy of the punishment. When 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Hatib Abu-Balta'ah's slave-boys stole from him; what happened? The slaves said to 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*: "We were hungry, but the son of Abu Balta'ah did not give us any food. 'So 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* waived the punishment because of the doubt involved. So, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to protect the fruits of the worker's labour. Some superficial people might say as Abu Al-'Ala' Al-Ma'arri said:

A hand whose indemnity is five hundred golden pieces
wherefore cut off for stealing a quarter of a *dinar*
a contradiction that we have to keep silent about
and to take refuge with Allah from the hell-fire
So a faithful scholar replied to him:
Honesty made it valuable, betrayal made it cheap
So, mind the Wisdom of the Creator

We should be aware that these laws concerning crime and punishment are not human laws, but laws of its utmost precision. By Allah *Glorified is He*, if a mere lawmaker were to make laws for male and female thieves and male and female fornicators, what would the situation be?

The one speaking here is the Lord of the worlds, and He says: 'Cut off the hands of thieves, whether they are man or woman, as punishment for what they have done— a deterrent from Allah Who is Almighty and Wise.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38) Stealing is usually done out of need and it is mostly men who do it. When Allah *Glorified is He* proclaims His Laws, He does so with Wisdom. When He *Glorified is He* has enacted the issue of retribution, an occasion when the murdered victim's family tend to be enraged and emotional. He *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the culprit is pardoned by his aggrieved brother, this shall be adhered to fairly, and the culprit shall pay what is due in a good way.' (*al-Baqara*: 178) Notice the compassion implied by the word 'his brother'. We never see any legislation marked by compassion in this way except the legislations of the Lord Who created man and knows him best.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Cut off the hands of thieves, whether they are man or woman' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38). This is the final ordained punishment for stealing in Allah's *Glorified is He* Law; and in the days of Prophet Musa (Moses), a person who stole would have been slaved as punishment for his stealing. This is why we read the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph): Allah *Glorified is He* says that once he had given them their provisions, he placed the drinking-cup in his brother's pack. (*Yusuf*: 70)

The cup from which the king drank was known as 'The King's Chalice', and they would use it as a standard for measurement. After he put the cup in his brother's pack, what happened? An announcer called out, 'O, caravan, indeed, you are thieves.' They said while approaching them, 'What are you missing?' They said, 'We are missing the measurement cup of the king. For he who produces it is (the reward of) a camel's load, and I am responsible for it.' (*Yusuf*: 70-72) Then, the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) claimed that they had not come to spread corruption on earth, and so Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* let them decide how they should be punished if they were found to be guilty, and he did not apply the King's laws to them. The brothers said, 'Its

recompense is that he in whose bag it is found - he (himself) will be its recompense. Thus do we recompense the wrongdoers?' (*Yusuf*: 75)

He made them confess to this and treated them according to their own law since the law of the King stated that whoever steals something shall be fined double the stolen object's value.

This explains the meaning of the True Lord's Words: 'We thus planned for Joseph...' (*Yusuf*: 76). That is, it was a plan contrived to keep Yusuf's (Joseph's) brother with him. Had the Egyptian law of the time been applied, he would not have been able to keep his brother with him. So, this plan was for the good of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* which is what the word 'for' here implies. Also, Yusuf's (Joseph's) brothers added: 'They said, "If he steals - a brother of his has stolen before." But Joseph kept it within himself and did not reveal it to them...' (*Yusuf*: 77).

Why did they say this? The origin of this issue was that Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* used to stay with his paternal aunt. When he grew up and they wanted to take him, his aunt wished to keep him with her so she concealed in his pack a statue or a belt which she had inherited from her father Ishaq (*Isaac*) *peace be upon him*. Then, she claimed that she had found it to be missing. So, they searched the boy and found that he had the thing his aunt had claimed to have been stolen, so she kept him with her according to Israelite law. The Sacred Law's punishment for stealing used to be enslavement, and then this law was abrogated and the verse giving the punishment for stealing was revealed to affirm this abrogation. If it had not been abrogated already, then this verse heralded its abrogation:' (As for) the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent (punishment) from Allah. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38)

The Prophetic practice (*Sunnah*) is what prescribes for us the mode of this amputation: the right hand is the one to be cut since it is usually the hand used for this activity. During one of my trips to America⁽¹⁾, a Muslim member of

(1) The story of the American Muslim who asked Sheikh As-Sha'rawy about those who are born leftists.

the audience at one of my lectures said to me, 'we are supposed to use our right hand for everything, so why is it that some people eat with their left hands?' I replied that this is a natural phenomenon, which is proved by the fact that some people's organs are different; it is not a mechanical issue. Moreover, I added that one of the weaknesses of human inventions is that they do not make errors, such as the calculator. If they were able to evaluate and choose, then they would make errors. As for the mind, it knows how to evaluate. Then, I asked the questioner to stand up and walk towards me, and when he did so, he stepped with his right foot first. I commented that this is a natural phenomenon; and therefore if you have a son and his right hand does not work well, then you must not force him to use it, for the Creator wanted this to occasionally occur in man, in order to show His Power.

So there is no need to force a child to use his right hand if it does not function naturally since scientists say that the control centre is not in the hand but in the brain. The True Lord *Glorified is He* brought these things into existence in order that we understand that He did not create the universe and then left it to follow its natural laws. This is not the case since; He can break these natural laws whenever He wills. However, if someone were to refuse to use his right hand for eating, for example, when he is quite capable of doing so, he is thereby going against the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and violating man's natural disposition.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent (punishment) from Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38). The word for 'wrought' in this verse is *kasaba*, which literally means 'to earn', and to earn means to receive more than the capital you expend; the thief 'earns' his sin because he takes more than he needs. Also, the word *nakal* (deterrent) literally means a punishment or an admonition which deters the crime's occurrence, whether for those who commit the crime or for those who witness it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* orders us elsewhere to let a group of the believers witness their punishment: 'And let a party of the believers witness their punishment. (*an-Nur*: 2)

It is necessary to make the punishment of criminals in public in order to stand as an admonition and a warning. This law does not come from one

human being to another, but from the Creator to His creation. The Creator is the One Who made the product, so do not hold yourself to be more knowledgeable than He of the product. The *Shar'i* Law does not proclaim this punishment out of a desire to cut hands, but out of a desire to prevent hands from being cut.

Furthermore, if the law remains only on paper without being implemented, then it will not deter anyone. Also, to those who say that cutting off hands is 'brutal', we give the following reply, 'A single hand was amputated in Saudi Arabia, and all stealing crimes ceased. Also, if an execution prevents murder, then cutting hands prevents hands from being cut. As for the "mutilation" which they clamour about, a single car accident mutilates people, and a single gas explosion does even worse. Do not isolate the punishment from the crime which would spread through society otherwise.' The way that the judiciary slows down the process of punishment causes society to forget about the vileness of the crime so that by the time the villain goes to trial people feel mercy for him.

However, if a punishment was meted out immediately after the crime was committed, the issue would be stopped. Furthermore, when thieves hear that we are cutting hands, they will think well before they steal and will refrain from the crime. The purpose of the punishment is to act as a deterrent and an admonition, and is a way of educating and reminding man of what Allah requires of him when the heedlessness of life's affairs overcomes him. So, requital here is a *nakal* (deterrent) which means a punishment, and the word *nukul* means to be deterred from committing a sin. So, it is an admonition which deters the occurrence of a crime. It is as though the intention of the punishment for people to see those whose hands that have been cut off since they are deterred from doing anything that would cause them to suffer the same fate.

Or, it is a way to make the one whose hand has been cut off eager to preserve his remaining limbs since if after his right hand has been cut off, he may steal again, and then he will lose his left hand. Thus, it is a deterrent both to the one who sees the punishment implemented on a thief and to the thief himself when he sees that he has lost one of his limbs, making him eager to keep the others. The True Lord *Glorified is He* treats His Creation according to

a natural law of the universe which is that those who take the rights of others, their own rights must be denied. For example, when some of the children of Israel made lawful what Allah had forbidden, Allah punished them by removing some of their freedoms and forbidding them what He had previously allowed them: 'So, because of the transgression of the Jews, We forbade them pure things which had been allowed to them, and also because of their hindering many men from Allah's Way.' (*an-Nisa'*: 160)

Therefore, no one can deceive Allah or take what is not rightfully his. If someone takes too much, then Allah will deny him other things, and the time will come when He will deny him things which He had allowed him before. For example, when someone goes to excess by drinking alcohol or taking intoxicating drugs, the True Lord *Glorified is He* will subject him to trial by denying him other pleasures which He used to allow him. Also, if a man eats sweet things excessively, he will become ill, and Allah will prevent him from many things.

Likewise, if the one who commits sins against himself were to compare what he has been allowed to what Allah has prohibited for him, he will find that he has lost out. The person who indulges in unlawful excess by usurping the wealth of others will see his own wealth squandered before his eyes, and we have seen examples of this. In the old times, the wealthy men of the countryside would sift flour to a high degree until it became especially free of chaff, and they would call this kind of flour 'superior grade flour'. They would consume this kind of flour and leave the rest, adulterated with chaff, for the servants and the poor to consume. Then, a time came when physicians forbade them from eating this white flour, and they were only allowed to eat the inferior flour which they had disdained in the past. So, we should understand that this is an overriding natural law, and we should always be aware of Allah's Words that for wrongdoing on the part of the Jews: 'We forbade them pure things which had been allowed to them.' (*an-Nisa'*: 160)

Therefore, if you steal what another hand has earned, the True Lord *Glorified is He* prevents you from your hand, not your income. Also, if you steal again, Allah prevents you from another limb, and so on. This is a natural law which causes man's life to be balanced, especially in the case of those

who see the punishment of the Hereafter as being far-off and those who are tempted and deluded by how forbearing Allah is with them.

Also, if you look closely at the geographical area in which you live: your family, your neighbourhood, your town, or your community, you will find people who have prevented themselves from things with no prevention from others. One person might suffer – Allah forbid – from uraemia so that he is unable to eat even a piece of meat, while another might have diabetes so that he cannot eat a single sweet or a spoonful of honey. This is due to the fact that no one can take anything without Allah knowing about it, and He made it this way because He is *the Almighty* and the Invincible. So, do not think that you can take anything without Allah's Knowledge or that you can get around His Law, for He is the Almighty and the Invincible. In our lives, we see those who take wealth unrightfully in the form of bribes, theft or embezzlement, and we see that they spend these ill-gotten gains on things which bring them woe and misery. We find that what they take unlawfully ends up marring and spoiling what they earn lawfully. I would like all those who commit sins against themselves to make an account of their earnings, recording all their ill-gotten gains in one place and all their lawful income in another, and then bear in mind the trials with which Allah has afflicted them because of this. Invariably, they will find that in order to escape from these misfortunes, they should have neither earned nor spent their ill-gotten gains and even some of their lawful income. Therefore, the Hadith goes: 'When a man makes money by snatching it out of mouths, Allah will cause him to lose it in abysses.'

I used to know two men who each had a son in school, and I used to see one of them giving his son five pence, whereupon the son would say to his father, 'I still have my pocket-money from yesterday.' The other man would give his son ten pence, whereupon he would say, 'It is not enough to buy anything!' Allah willed that the three of us met together in the office of the Irrigation Ministry in Zaqaziq, and just as we were leaving, the president of that office came with a large yellow envelope stuffed full of things and gave it to one of these men. I asked him what it was, and he said it was some white paper, blotting paper, and pens for the children to do their homework. I said to him, 'This explains why your children are failing at their studies, why they

are so profligate, why you are buying them private lessons, which you cannot afford and why your son says to you, "Ten pence is not enough to buy anything!" As for the other man, his son would say to him, 'I do not need my pocket-money today because I still have my five pence from yesterday, and I do not want to take private studies because I prefer to rely on myself.'

Furthermore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* the Ever-Living and All-Sustaining, Who is overcome neither by slumber and nor by sleep, tells us of this. Abu Al-Jalad said that Allah Almighty revealed to one of the Prophets, 'Tell your people, "What is wrong with you, that you hide your sins from My creation but show them to Me? If you deem that I cannot see you, then you are guilty of associating partners to Me. Likewise, if you deem that I can see you, then why do you make Me the most trifling of all who can see you?"'

So, the True Lord's Words '...in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent (punishment) from Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38) are completely clear, and He follows them with the words: 'And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.' He *the Almighty* cannot be defeated by anyone, including the thief when he steals, for he is only stealing the provision which has been ordained for him. The scholars agree that stolen items are also deemed to be provision because they are benefitted from, so by Allah, had the thief simply been patient this provision would have come to him. Beware of trying to play games with Allah's Decree, for He is Wise in all that He ordains.

The word 'wise' has meaning for me in my own life. When I was still in my formal education, I loved literature and poetry. Once when I was reading the poet Al-Ma'arri, I found some verses which seemed almost atheistic, so I lost interest in him. In particular there were the lines:

The days destroy us, as though we are glass;

Yet once we are broken we cannot be remoulded.

I understood from this that he was denying the Resurrection, so I said, 'Allah suffices us of need for him!' However, my friend Sheikh Fahmi 'Abd Al-Latif *Allah rest his soul* saw Al-Ma'arri in a dream, and he loved his poetry. The next morning he came to see me in Zaqa'ziq and he said to me, 'O, Sheikh, I saw Al-Ma'arri in a dream last night, and he was angry with you

because you rejected him.' I said, 'I rejected him for (such-and-such), and you know why.' So, Sheikh Fahmi' Abd Al-Latif said, 'In any case that is what happened.' I said to myself, 'Perhaps, I should re-evaluate Al-Ma'arri', so I got copies of his books *Saqt Az-zand* and *Luzum ma la yalzim*, and I found that the man had excuses for the things he might be blamed for. The problem with the people who record the sayings of great thinkers is that they pick these sayings out of their historical context. Al-Ma'arri composed the verses which I disliked when he was still an immature young man, and when he had matured, he retracted it. Many great thinkers go through this kind of thing, such as Taha Hussayn and Al-'Aqqad, both of whom made statements during their youth which could be taken as being atheistic, but after they matured, they wrote poetry which bore the scent of true faith. Therefore, one should not judge them by their earlier writings, which they made when they still harboured doubts, for they later came to full certitude. So, I looked into the work of Al-Ma'arri, who said:

The days destroy us, as though we are glass;

Yet once we are broken we cannot be remoulded.

And I found that he was the same man who said, once his unstable ideas were behind him:

The doctor and the astrologer both claim

There is no resurrection; but I say:

If you are right, then I lose nothing,

But if I am right, then you are the losers!

It is as though he had returned to faith. And Al-Ma'arri also said:

If a hand is cut unlawfully, its penalty is five hundred,

But if it steals a quarter-*dinar* it is amputated:

And he followed these lines by saying:

This is a contradiction, for which we can only be silent,

And seek refuge in our Lord from the fire of hell.

I said to Sheikh Fahmi 'Abd Al-Latif, 'I think Al-Mu'arri had the right to object, so I shall try to revise his poetry and amend the lines which I find problematic.' When I came to this line, I said that it would have been better – with his permission – to say:

There is wisdom in this that we must accept,

And seek refuge in our Lord from the fire of hell.

Everything has its wisdom. When we see a doctor restraining a child whose heart cannot bear the anaesthetic during an operation, does anyone think that this doctor is exacting revenge on the child? Of course, he is not. No one thinks that. So, everything has its wisdom, and when we look at things, we must link them to their wisdom. Allah is Almighty, meaning He cannot be defeated or fooled by anyone, and He is Wise in the punishments He allots to crimes since He is allowing society to restore its balance thereby.

Furthermore, after this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* opens the door of repentance out of mercy for both of them, the sinner, and society, by saying:

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ

عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

**But if anyone repents after his wrongdoing and
makes amends, God will accept his repentance:**

God is most forgiving, most merciful [39]

(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 39)

A thief is a wrongdoer since he takes what rightfully belongs to others. However, if he repents, meaning that he regrets what he has done and intends never to do it again and his repentance is not merely verbal, but he actually makes amends for what he did, then his repentance will be accepted. So, how does he do this? If he still has what he stole, then he must return it to its rightful owner. If he has spent it, then he must go to its owner, seeking to make amends by saying, 'I was heedless and tempted by Satan, and I did such-and-such.' I believe that if someone steals from someone else, and then after some time has passed, he confesses what he has done to him and seeks

his pardon, I swear by Allah that he will pardon him gladly. Therefore, the thing he stole will be excused. What about the case when the thief does not know who the owner of what he has stolen is, such as those who steal from people on buses, for example? If he steals a wallet from someone and finds his address within, he can return the stolen money by sending an anonymous postal order for the amount he stole and ask the owner to forgive him. Yet, if he does not know from whom he stole, he must say, 'Allah knows best to whom it belongs; I will give it in charity for Allah's Cause and say, "Lord, give the reward of this deed to the rightful owner."' "

Thus, there are many ways to make amends. In the case that he is too ashamed to return the stolen property, he should say, 'To be exposed in this world is better than to be exposed in the Hereafter.' There are many verses in the Quran concerning repentance, such as Allah's saying that He turned to them so they could repent: '...then He turned to them with mercy that they might turn to Him. Surely it is Allah Who is Oft-Returning with compassion and is Merciful.' (*at-Tawba*: 118) It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is first ordains repentance, and then the servant repents. He *Glorified is He* also says: 'But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents...' (*Ta Ha*: 82).

As we know, repentance has three stages. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* established repentance, He first gave leave for it, thus, the servant repents, and then secondly, He accepts his repentance and erases his sin, and finally, He forgives when He accepts repentance. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* then says in this verse: '...indeed, Allah will turn to him in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 39)

Forgiveness and mercy in their absolute forms are possessed solely by Allah, and they are manifested by the criminal's repentance and the victim's mercy. The Words '...Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (*al-Ma'ida*: 39) explain to us that He *the Exalted* possesses the Absolute Power to forgive and show mercy. So, one should not say, 'So-and-so does not deserve forgiveness and mercy' since Allah *Glorified is He* possesses dominion over the heavens and the earth. Also, He gives human beings what they deserve because of the justice He has ordained for Himself, and He has absolute Power over everything in existence.

Therefore He *Glorified is He* then says:

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

**Do you [Prophet] not know that control of the heavens
and earth belongs solely to God? He punishes whoever
He will and forgives whoever He will: God has power
over everything [40] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 40)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses rhetorical styles to bring us out of our heedlessness. He did not say, 'Allah has dominion over the heavens and the earth;' had He said that, it would have been a statement on the part of the speaker here, who is Allah. However, He wanted the statement to come from of the one being addressed, as an acknowledgement from the servant himself. People do not form statements as questions unless they are completely sure that the answer will be to their advantage. For example, if someone were to come to you and says, 'You have ignored me,' you might reply, 'I have been kind to you.' However, if you intended to draw the statement from him, you would say, 'Have I not been kind to you?' You pose it to him as a question, and questions demand answers. It is as though when the one you ask thinks about this question, he will have no option but to say, 'Yes, you have been kind to me.' If you had simply said it yourself, it would be a claim, but when the latter is the one who says it, it is an acknowledgement.

Another example of this is found when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that not expand for you, (O Muhammad), your breast: 'In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful, have we not opened for you your breast.' (*ash-Sharh*: 1)

This is a statement on the part of the speaker and an acknowledgement on the part of the one being addressed. Someone might ask why Allah *the Almighty* did not say, 'Have We opened up your heart?' The True Lord *Glorified is He* could have said this, but He did not so that the question would not contain any hint of a positive response, rather it comes in a negative wording. Also, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth?

He punishes whom He wills and forgives whom He wills, and Allah has power over all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 40) We find that the wording of this verse

is not a claim made by the True Lord *Glorified is He* but a question posed to mankind for which they may think of an answer; they will not find any answer except to affirm that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: 'To Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in them, and He has power over all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120). This is a rhetorical style meant to provoke affirmation and acknowledgment from the servant, not a statement from the True Lord *Glorified is He*. 'Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 40) Someone might say, 'There are certain areas of the earth which are owned by human beings.' Our reply is that indeed, this is true that there are certain areas of the earth which are owned by human beings, but there is a difference between Allah's Dominion and man's dominion; man's dominion is over something which he cannot preserve, such as the ownership of his house or an allotment of land. In Arabic language, the word *milk* means the limited ownership of man, and *mulk* means the absolute Dominion of Allah Who is the Sovereign, *Al-Malik*. In this worldly life, everyone has some kind of ownership, but the earthly owner has dominion over all the possessions of his ownership. This is true in this worldly life where Allah has created means and causes, but in the Hereafter, all those means and causes will be annulled since power will be held only by Allah.' To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all)' (*Ghafir*: 16).

Therefore, no one will possess anything on the Day of Resurrection. 'Do you not know that to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He wills and forgives whom He wills...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 40). The one who reads carefully the Quran will find that it contains expressions that are the combination of two expressions: one of which comes first and the other comes later. In some cases, the two expressions are mentioned adversely. However, this is the sole case in the Quran wherein these two expressions come in this order, whereas in other cases of the Quran, forgiveness comes before torment, for as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in the Qudsi Hadith: 'My Mercy supercedes My Wrath.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Ahmad

So, why did He mention torment before mercy in this verse? ‘...He punishes whom He wills and forgives whom He wills...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 40). Is it merely a matter of artistic style? The answer is no since the majority of verses mention forgiveness first and then give the warning of torment for those whom He *Glorified is He* wills. Let us consider the context of this verse. First of all, He spoke of those who steal, be they male or female, and then He spoke of those who repent. Therefore, stealing deserves torment, whereas repentance deserves forgiveness; thus, the order here is logical.

We may also notice that these words follow a verse concerning stealing, and then a declaration of which Allah has dominion over the heavens and the earth. Therefore, the verse needed to be concluded with something that served both of these expressions, in order to affirm the supremacy of the Divine Power. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to have mercy on someone, this person who is subject to this mercy cannot say, ‘I do not want mercy.’ Likewise, when He punishes someone, this person who is subject to this punishment cannot say, ‘There is no need for torment.’ The supremacy of the Divine Power means that no one has the power to avoid the due punishment or mercy. This verse, then, serves several purposes that if we were to weigh it in the scale of events, then all Power belongs to the True Lord *Glorified is He*. However, what if we were to weigh it in the scale of time?

We know that the punishment for stealing has two parts: application of *Al-Had* (the legally prescribed punishment), and then the forgiveness in the Hereafter. So, the statement is logical and appropriate to its context. I always say that you should not be deceived by the claim that disbelievers and sinners do what they do without suffering punishment, for those who become accustomed to violating Allah’s Way by disbelieving or sinning will assuredly be punished. They rebel against His Way, but in no way they can rebel against Allah Himself.

A man might rebel against the Way of Allah not by negligence of belief or prayer, for no one has the power to rebel against Allah Himself. Furthermore, no one can stand in defiance of death, for it is one aspect of Allah’s Power. Allah *Glorified is He* ordains whatever He wills, and He willed that man be free in some things, while being compelled in others. So, those who have chosen to live in rebellion against Allah’s Way of Guidance, they may also feel

challenged to rebel against the owner of this way: Allah Himself. Yet, they have no power to do so, whether regarding their shape, colour, health or the time of their death. Therefore, everyone who used to rebel should listen carefully to these words and know fully that he can never rebel against the Owner of the Way: Allah Himself. Therefore, He *the Exalted* spoke the truth when He says: ‘Allah has power over all things.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 40)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* and then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزُنَكَ الَّذِينَ يُسْكِرُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ
وَلَمْ تُؤْمِن قُلُوبُهُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا سَمَّعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمَّعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ
آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُوكَ يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ يَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوتِيتُمْ هَذَا فَخُذُوهُ وَإِنْ
لَمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوا وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَنْ تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ
يُؤْمِرُوا أَنْ يُطَهَّر قُلُوبَهُمْ هُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خَرَىٰ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾

Messenger, do not be grieved by those who race to surpass one another in disbelief – those who say with their mouths, ‘We believe,’ but have no faith in their hearts, and the Jews who listen eagerly to lies and to those who have not even met you, who distort the meanings of [revealed] words and say [to each other], ‘If you are given this ruling, accept it, but if you are not, then beware!’ — if God intends some people to be so misguided, you will be powerless against God on their behalf. These are the ones whose hearts God does not intend to cleanse – a disgrace for them in this world, and then a heavy punishment in the Hereafter [41] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 41)

When we call someone, we use the word ‘O!’ starting with it before calling the name of the one we want in order to attract his attention so that he will come to us. Do we merely call him to only come to us, or do we have another reason for calling him? For example, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you.’ (*al-An'am*: 151) Therefore, the purpose of this call was to convey the religious responsibility to them. So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* calls the noblest of all those He calls, His messengers, we find that He called all of them by their given

names, as in 'O, Adam!' A given name is one which only describes a person's identity, not his attributes.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* calls Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* by that 'O, Abraham, You have fulfilled the vision.' (*as-Saffat*: 104-105) The True Lord *Glorified is He* addressed Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'O, Nuh (Noah)! Disembark in peace.' (*Hud*: 48) Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* called Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saying: '...O, Musa (Moses)! Verily, I am Allah.' (*al-Qasas*: 30) As for Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* the True Lord *Glorified is He* to 'Isa (Jesus), called him saying: '...“O, 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), did you say to the people...”? (*al-Ma'ida*: 116).

Allah *the Almighty* calls all the messengers by their given names which gave only their identity. However, as for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the Seal of the Messengers, Allah never calls him by his first name, rather, He calls him by his attributes, which gives extra meaning to his name. He says, 'O, Messenger' or 'O, Prophet!'

Of course, they are all messengers of Allah *Glorified is He* but He wants to inform and confirm with us that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the Messenger who came to replace all other messengers and who believed in all of them. Therefore, he deserved to be called by an attribute which gave extra meaning to his personal name: 'O, Messenger!' Furthermore, he would be the Messenger whose message would last until the coming of the Day of Judgment, and this is why we find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* would always address His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'O, Messenger!' or 'O, Prophet!'; this was a form of honouring.

Also, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'O, Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). What this really means is this: 'O, Messenger of Allah, do not be grieved by those who hasten into disbelief.' When the True Lord *the Exalted* tells His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* not to grieve, we should be note the cause of this grief. He *Glorified is He* clarified to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'Do not be grieved, for I am with you, and your enemies shall not harm you. Also, I would not choose you to be My Messenger and then leave you. They shall never harm you in any way.'

Or, the grief of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* might have been of a different kind; it might have been a compassionate grief of which the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes: 'So it may be you will grieve yourself to death sorrowing after them if they believe not in this Discourse.' (*al-Kahf*: 6)

Had the True Lord *Glorified is He* decreed that they all be believers, He would not have given them the ability to disbelieve.' If we willed, we could send down to them from the sky a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 4) However, does Allah *Glorified is He* really want necks? No, He truly wants hearts, for He has the power to do whatever He wills which is proved by having the sky, the earth, the mountains and all other created beings being subservient to Him, their Creator. Nothing in the creation can rebel against its Creator, and His Omnipotent Power means that He has authority, control, and domination over all His creation. However, Allah wants His servants to come by their free will to Him, their Master, with faith, for the first kind of faith is developed and built by compulsion and power, whereas the second kind of faith is developed and built by love.

Previously, we gave a clear and clarifying example of two hypothetical servants, one of which must be kept chained because if he were unchained, he would flee; when one wants him, he must pull his chain, and when he comes, he only does so because of the power one has over him that compels him to do so. As for the other servant, if one were to leave him free, he would come as soon as being called. Which one of them would one love more? One would undoubtedly love the one who comes out of conviction, not compulsion. Every being in the universe is subdued by Divine Power, but the True Lord *the Almighty* chooses to make man free. Therefore, He says: 'Verily, We have offered the trust of the Divine Law to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it. But man bore it. Indeed, he is capable of being unjust to and neglectful of himself.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

Therefore, every other being refused to bear the trust, out of their fear and worry that they would not be able to carry out the responsibility for it. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* 'not be grieved'; but if he is grieved due to his fear of being harmed adhering to Allah's Way, in which case the True Lord *Glorified is He* would support him

so they would not be able to harm him. Also, if he is grieved due to his fear concerning them, in which case he needed not be so since Allah *the Exalted* created man with free will, not forcing him to obey the teachings of His Way; He *the Almighty* wants to see who will come to Him out of love and goodness.

Also, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O, Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 41). This is a divinely worded expression because it uses the words ‘into’, even though we generally know that in Arabic we say *ila* (to), not *fi* (into). For example, the True Lord says: ‘And hasten to forgiveness...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 133).

However, in this verse, we find that He says: ‘...who hasten into (*fi*) disbelief...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 41). Had He said, ‘who hasten to disbelief’, this would mean that first they had faith, but then they turned to disbelief. This is not the case, for the True Lord *the Almighty* wants to clarify for us that they are hastening within the confines of disbelief, and that they started out in a state of disbelief and now they are hastening with one another in indulging further into it. We know that volumes could be written about the use of the Arabic preposition *fi* (generally it means ‘in’) in the Quran. We saw before that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘(O Muhammad) travel through the land’ (*Al-’Imran*: 137) and not ‘travel, then, on the earth’. Also, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And give not to those weak of understanding your property which Allah has made for you a means of support...’ (*an-Nisa*: 5). Then Allah says to provide for them: ‘but feed them therewith and clothe them and speak to them words of kind advice.’ (*an-Nisa*: 5)

The properties mentioned in this verse are not the possessions of those who are being addressed, but they actually belong to those who have weak judgment. However, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is telling us that those who have weak judgment cannot be trusted to look after their own property, and therefore, He commands the guardians and trustees of this property to consider it as though it is their own property so that they will guard it well. Likewise, He commands them not to hoard the money, but to allow its weak-minded owners to live off it; at the same time, the guardian should be careful that the property not run out as the weak-minded people consume it and pay the poor-due on it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And give not

to those weak of understanding your property which Allah has made for you a means of support (*an-Nisa*: 5).

He did not say *minha*, which literally meanst 'herefrom' since He *the Almighty* wants to tell us that the provision is contained within the capital, which must be circulated or invested so that it does not decrease as it is spent on provisions and the poor-due, and furthermore, when the weak-minded person reaches maturity, he should find that his wealth has increased. These are just some of the meanings we can derive from the word *fi*.

Likewise, there is also the verse which speaks of crucifixion: '...and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees...' (*Ta Ha*: 71). Some of scholars interpret this verse as 'I shall most certainly crucify on ('*ala*) trunks of palm trees', but we say that those who say this have not really explained this verse. What they should have said is this, 'I shall most certainly crucify you on trunks of palm-trees so firmly that your bodies will enter the wood itself.' For example, if you take a matchstick and tie it firmly to your finger with a fine thread; if it is tied very tightly, then the matchstick will be pressed so it will seem to be inside it. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...I shall most certainly crucify you in great numbers on (*fi*) trunks of palm trees...' (*Ta Ha*: 71), we should only understand this to mean that the crucifixion would be so severe that the crucified body would seem to actually enter the wood. This is why the word *fi* (in) is used, and not '*ala* (on).

The True Lord *the Exalted* says in this verse: '...O, Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). Those who hasten with one another either do so 'to' something or 'in' something. If they hasten 'to', this mean they move towards something which they were not in before they began to hasten, whereas if they hasten 'in', this means they go even deeper into something which they were already in before they began to hasten.

'...O, Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief of those who say, "We believe" with their mouths, but their hearts believe not...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). The seat of belief, or *iman*, is the heart, and the seat of self-surrender, or *Islam*, is the body. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The Arabs of the desert say, "We believe." Say, "You have not truly believed yet, "but rather say, "We have submitted" (*al-Hujurat*: 14).

They rush to join the first row of the communal prayer, and this is *Islam* (self-surrender), whereas *Iman* (faith) resides in the heart. So, those who say with their mouths, 'We believe' should know that faith does not dwell in the mouth but in the heart; they speak with their mouths about what is not in their hearts. Furthermore, as long as they claim to have faith with their mouths, but it is not in their hearts, they are hypocrites. This means that every day they would demonstrate things which would bring them deeper into disbelief, for, from the onset, they conceal their disbelief, and then they hasten with one another to indulge deeper into it.

'...Those who vie with one another in denying the truth, such as those who say with their mouths, "We believe," while their hearts do not believe; and such of the Jewish faith...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). Therefore, there are two kinds of people who vie with one another in disbelief: the hypocrites who say, 'We believe' with their mouths, and the Jews, whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes by saying that they are those who say, "'We believe" with their mouths, but their hearts believe not and from among the Jews.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41) Then, they are two classes who hasten into disbelief; the hypocrites who say we are believers by their mouths and the Jews. The True Lord says that they are avid listeners to falsehood'. (*al-Ma'ida*: 41) The Arabic root *s-m-* means that the ear hears a sound made by someone; and if a person is speaking words of truth, then the faithful ear will listen attentively, and this listening will be followed by acceptance. When a believer says: 'I listened *istama'a* to so-and-so', he does not only mean that he heard *sami'a* him, but that he intentionally listened to him and accepted what he said.

We know that many pious people hear lies, but the important point is whether these lies are accepted or rejected. What matters is not that a person hears, but if he believes what he hears. In our daily lives, we might see a person who wants to fix an item of his furniture, so he gets the necessary tools to do it. Such person is said to have 'engaged in carpentry', or *najir*, but we do not call him a 'carpenter' or *najjar* since a carpenter means someone whose profession is carpentry.

Thus, if one says that someone 'hears' (*sami'*) falsehood, it does not matter. However, if one says that he 'eagerly listens' (*samma'*), this gives the full

meaning, which is that he intentionally and wilfully listens. Also, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that they ‘... (They are) avid listeners to falsehood, listening to another people who have not come to you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 41), this means that they became accustomed to accepting falsehood. Also, how will the mood of someone who accepts falsehood be? It will surely be sick and abnormal.

What is meant by ‘falsehood’ in this verse, and who are those who ‘eagerly listen’ to it? It may mean rabbis and monks who told their followers things with no basis in reality in order to support their positions; otherwise, they eagerly listened to falsehood which does not benefit them; rather, it benefitted others such as the case of someone engaged in spying. Spying, as we know, is done with the eye or the ear; and in our times, these means have been advanced to the point that spying is conducted by means of sounds and images. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to tell us that they eagerly listened to falsehood for the benefit of other people; and those for whom they listened were those who were too arrogant and haughty to attend the gatherings of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, they could not bear to wait and wanted to know what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying. Thus, they would send spies to the Prophet’s *peace and blessings be upon him* gatherings to convey unto them what he said.

Therefore, those who eagerly listened to falsehood would also listen on behalf of those who were too arrogant to come to Prophet Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* gatherings. Likewise, these arrogant people were the leaders of the Jews, who would not go to Prophet Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* gatherings lest they lose their status with their followers. Also, when their spies passed on what was said at these gatherings to them, they would try to depict it in a way which served their own ends, which is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said of them that they ‘...They distort words beyond their (proper) usages...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). What this means is that after the words had been set in their proper places, they would remove them from there, neglecting and erasing them after Allah had put them there by changing His Laws. Furthermore, the True Lord *the Exalted* also said about them earlier: ‘...They distort words from their (proper) usages...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 13). What this means is that they would distort the words before they had even settled in

their proper places. Allah says: ‘...(They are) avid listeners to falsehood, listening to another people who have not come to you. They distort words beyond their (proper) usages, saying “If you are given this, take it...”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 41). They are those who say to their followers, who spied for them by listening to Prophet Muhammad’s *peace and blessings be upon him* gatherings: ‘...saying, “If you are given this, take it; but if you are not given it, then beware.”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 41) It is as they came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* after having been given those instructions so that if they could take any of his words and were able distort them, they would do so, and if they could not find anything to distort, they had to be on their guard.

By studying the history of manmade laws, we discover the meaning of temporal power. The laws, which people concocted to govern the order of life only appeared after the priestly system, wherein priests would claim they had a direct connection with Heaven and so they ruled. That is to say, the basis of law-making is the mandate of Heaven, and what made people resort to making their own laws is that their experience of the priests’ rule was the following: they would make a ruling on a given issue and then give a different ruling on a similar issue. The priests’ words were accepted when they claimed to have a direct link to Heaven, but when they have contradictory rulings, people stopped following them and rejected their rulings. Thus, they resorted to making their own laws for themselves.

Historical narrative⁽¹⁾ makes this clear to us. During ancient times, it was narrated that one of a kings’ followers committed adultery, and they wanted to punish him as the Torah prescribes, but the king said to the priests, ‘I do not want this man to be stoned, so seek out another ruling.’ The priests obeyed the king and said, ‘Let us blacken the adulterer’s face with charcoal, and make him ride on a donkey facing backwards for all to see, instead of stoning him.’ Thus, the temporal power gave the political power the command to change the law.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to Medina, they tried to take advantage of his presence by making laws which were flexible and lenient. Also, with this aim in mind, they presented certain issues

(1) The story of the Jew who committed adultery

to him. If his ruling was lenient, they accepted it, but if it was hard, they refused it. Likewise, the matter of adultery came up, and they tried to get a more lenient ruling from our master Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but he gave them the ruling which was mandated from Heaven: stoning. However, they refused stoning by saying that it was enough to give the guilty party forty lashes, blacken his face, and make him ride around on a donkey facing backwards. After this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked, 'Do you not have among you a righteous man who has knowledge of the scripture?' They were silent, so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Do you not know a white-faced, one-eyed, beardless young man who lives in Fadak, named Ibn Suriyya? 'Yes, 'they said, 'he is the most learned Jew on the face of the earth.' So the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* called for him to be summoned to declare the punishment for adultery prescribed by the Torah. The man came forth, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* encouraged him by saying, 'He besides whom there is no God, and by the truth of Him who sent forth Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and revealed to him the Torah, and by the truth of Him who cleaved the sea, drowned Pharaoh and shaded them with clouds (i.e. Allah).' He *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to disturb any falsehood that dwelt within the man, and incite him to obey Allah and speak the truth. Thus, Ibn Suriyya said, 'Indeed, we find that the adulterer must be stoned.' Upon hearing this, the Jews began to revile this righteous man.

They wanted to get a lenient ruling from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to save the adulterer of high social standing and the adulteress of noble lineage. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that they would say, 'If you are given this, take it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41) which means that the lenience you seek, 'accept it'; but if you find the punishment to be severe, then beware of it and do not accept it. So, they did not go to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in search of the truth, rather, they went to him in search of lenience. Also, if the ruling matched their desire, they would say, 'Muhammad is the one who gave the ruling!' It is strange that they were enemies to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and did not believe in him, yet despite that they sought his judgment.

Imam Muslim *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked to judge a Jewish man and woman who had committed adultery, so he went to a Jew and said, 'What does the Torah say about those who commit adultery?' They said, 'We must blacken their faces with charcoal, set them back-to-back on a mount and lead them around on it.' He said, '...O Muhammad, "So bring the Torah and recite it, if you should be truthful. "' (*Al- 'Imran*: 39) Therefore, they brought it forth and recited it. However, when they came to the verse about stoning, the boy who was reading covered the verse with his hand and read what came before and after it. So, 'Abdullah ibn Salam *Allah be pleased with him* who was with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at that time, said, 'Tell him to move his hand', so he moved his hand and the verse of stoning was there beneath it. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded that the two guilty parties be stoned, and it was done.' Abdullah ibn 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I was among those who stoned them, and I saw him protecting her from the stones with his own body.'⁽¹⁾

They wanted a lax and lenient ruling. Some say that the circumstance behind the revelation of this verse was the story⁽²⁾ of the retaliation meaning the lawful retribution. However, the story is narrated by Imam Ahmad, Abu Dawud and others on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* is that two groups of Jews, Banu An-Nadir and Banu Qurayzha, had waged war against one another during the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. Banu An-Nadir had been victorious. After that, whenever a member of Banu An-Nadir, the stronger tribe, murdered a member of Banu Qurayzha, the weaker tribe, they would not allow them to exact retaliation by giving up the killer to be executed; rather, they would only give them blood money as restitution. Yet, if a member of Qurayzha killed a member of Banu An-Nadir, they would accept nothing less than retaliation. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* came to Medina, they asked him to rule on this matter, and he ruled that they would henceforth be treated equally. However, this ruling displeased them, and they did not accept it. Both of these stories affirm the meaning of this verse.

(1) *Narrated by Muslim*

(2) The story of paying uncommercial ransom money among the Jews in war

After this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...But he for whom Allah intends *fitnah* – never will you possess (power to do) for him a thing against Allah...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). The word *fitnah* (which can mean ‘temptation’, ‘test’, ‘trial’, etc.) can mean the torment of hell, as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say, ‘It will be the day when they will be tormented with the torment of the Fire.’’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 13)

Fitna can also mean ‘trial’ and ‘test’, and *fitnat ad-dhahab* means smelting gold by placing it in a melting point and subjecting it to high temperatures so that it melts into liquid and is purified from the base metals with which it is intermixed. In its own right, a trial is not a bad thing; what is bad about it are the ends to which it may lead, depending on whether one passes the trial or fails it. The tests which a man must go through are all trials, and for the one who succeeds a trial is a good thing, but for the one who fails, a trial is a bad thing. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* wants to try or test someone, it is to see whether they will come to Him in obedience of their own free will or not. As long as the True Lord *Glorified is He* has given man the power to choose in order to prove his love for Him, this was His Will, and no one can take man’s free will from him. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted him to have free will and to be tried and tested, so as to see whether he will succeed or fail, and whether he will be a believer or a disbeliever.

However, he for whom Allah intends *fitnah*: ‘never will you possess (power to do) for him a thing against Allah...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). He *the Exalted* made this a law for His creation with the utmost clarity; and one side of man is compelled, while the other side is free. However, he for whom Allah intends *fitnah* ‘never will you possess (power to do) for him a thing against Allah...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 41). This means that no one could possibly alter the laws of the universe, nor will Allah ever alter these laws for anyone; for the natural laws of the universe must proceed as He intended, even for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We know what happened at Uhud when the archers disobeyed by not heeding the command of their high commander, our master Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, did Allah change His immutable laws because His beloved was among them? No, they were defeated despite the

presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* among them. This was due to the fact that Allah wanted the laws of nature to proceed as they were so that things would turn out for the best. Had they been given victory for the Prophet's sake, then what would they have thought of his commandments thereafter? One of them might have said, 'We disobeyed him yet, we were victorious.' So the immutable laws of Allah must come to pass.

'...But he for whom Allah intends *fitnah* – never will you possess (power to do) for him a thing against Allah. Those are the ones for whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts. For them in this world is disgrace, and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41).

Why has Allah not wished to purify their hearts? This was due to the fact that they were hypocrites, and the heart of the hypocrite is diseased. For example, when good events which benefit the believers happen, a hypocrite's hatred and disease increases since his heart is filled with grudge. Allah wishes not to purify one's heart unless he comes to Him first, that is why He says this verse: 'O, you who believe, render not vain your alms by reproach and injury like him who spends his wealth to be seen by men, and he believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls, leaving it bare and hard. They shall not secure aught of what they earn. And Allah guides not the disbelieving people.' (*al-Baqara*: 264)

And Allah says this verse: 'How shall Allah guide a people who have disbelieved after believing and who had borne witness that the messenger was true and to whom clear proofs had come? And Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.' (*Al-'Imran*: 86) The question to ask is the following, 'Did Allah never guide them first, then they disbelieved; or did their disbelief come first so that He did not guide them?' We know that the reason why they were not guided is that they were evildoers or disbelievers. As stated previously, there are cosmological will and legal will. The cosmological will applies to everything that happens in the universe of Allah, and nothing ever happened in the universe of Allah against His Will. Allah has created free will in man in order to have the choice to believe or disbelieve. Also, as long as the True Lord created man with free will to choose this or that, He wills,

cosmologically speaking, all actions of man that happen voluntarily whether he believes or disbelieves. Does He will this legally? No, He does not.

The *Shar'i* Law is a Divine Command which man can either obey or disobey, and we know that certain things are allowed cosmologically, while others are allowed legally. Cosmological things happen, but as for man, Allah has created him with free will. The one who steals does not do so in defiance of Allah, rather he uses his free will and strength which He has given him, which he can use either to do good or to do evil.

When we look at a wristwatch whose maker made it so that one can set it to the time of any place, is this done in defiance of the maker? The answer is no. and the same is true of the television. If we wish to show religious programmes on it, it can do this. Likewise, if we wish to show a dance party on it, it can do this, too. The one who made the television made it able to do this and that; what is important is how the power is directed or used – and man is the same. Allah's cosmological will is all that exists in Allah's Dominion, and His legal will is all that exists in His Law of 'Dos' and 'Do not's'. As long as there are cosmological commandments and legal commandments, Allah created the universe to serve believers, disbelievers and sinners, but His legal commandments are for believers alone. Having said that, it is clear that Allah *the Almighty* wanted believers to rely on His Way of Guidance and the *Shari'a* in order to attain faith. As for disbelievers, his disbelief is not against the Will of Allah *the Almighty*; rather, it is due to the free will that man has, yet, it is important to know that the act of disbelief is against the *Shari'a*. Therefore, if Allah's cosmological will is that someone should be subjected to trial and temptation, no one can impede His Will. Likewise, if he does not obey the Sacred Law, it is due to the fact that he was created with the ability to obey and the ability to disobey.

Let me give an example to illustrate this point. A father gives his son a pound and says, 'You are free to spend this as you wish. If you buy a religious book or something for you and your brothers to eat, I will reward you and trust you with many other things, but if you use it to buy playing cards, I will be angry with you.'

If the boy then buys the playing cards, does this mean that he does this against his father's will? No, it does not mean that he does this against his

father's will, but the result is that he becomes unloved by his father. This is the difference between something which is willed both naturally and legally: something which is willed naturally but not legally and something which is willed legally but not naturally.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Those are the ones for whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts' (*al-Ma'ida*: 41), it indicates that He *the Almighty* created them in such a way that makes their hearts eligible to be purified or not, and thus, all their actions will not be beyond Allah's Will. This is why He *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying, 'For them in this world is disgrace, and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment'. This indicates clearly that there is something in their hearts which prevents them from being purified, and therefore, they shall experience disgrace in this world. The word *Khizy* or 'disgrace' is used in Arabic to give the meaning of both 'scandal' and 'shame'. In fact, these two meanings are related to each other. Yet, what is meant by 'disgrace' and *fitnah* mentioned in this verse? We should know that this verse refers basically to two groups, namely hypocrites and Jews. As for hypocrites, Allah *the Almighty* used to expose and reveal all of their conspiracies against believers. In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that had He so willed, He would have shown them clearly to him so that he would know them for sure as by a visible mark. He *the Almighty* then tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he will most certainly recognise them by the tone of their voice: 'And if We pleased, We could show them to you so that you should know them by their marks. And you shall, surely, recognise them by the tone of their speech. And Allah knows your deeds.' (*Muhammad*: 30)

The same ruling applied to Jews who would also be afflicted with disgrace, i.e. scandal and exposure; this means they would be despised after having been held in esteem. We know that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to Medina, the Jews were the leaders of that area; they were the most knowledgeable because they were people of the Book, whereas the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj were unlettered and had no knowledge. Also, the economy of Medina was run by the Jews in terms of wealth, production, and farming, and thus, they were haughty and proud. Yet, upon the arrival of

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina, their conspiracies and lies were exposed, and they were banished, to the extent that their womenfolk were taken prisoner, while some of them were even killed in retribution for their treachery. As a matter of fact, whenever the Jews plotted against him *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers, Allah *the Almighty* would expose their plots. In fact, disgrace is not their only requital, but they would also endure painful suffering in the Hereafter. He *the Almighty* then says:

سَمْعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَلُونَ لِلسُّخْتِ فَإِنْ جَاءُوكَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ
أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ وَإِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَكَنْ يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ
حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

they listen eagerly to lies and consume what is unlawful. If they come to you [Prophet] for judgment, you can either judge between them, or decline – if you decline, they will not harm you in any way, but if you do judge between them, judge justly: God loves the just [42] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 42)

Before explaining this verse, we should shed light on a very important point, that is, how dictionaries give the abstract meaning of a word out of the context. For example, the word *Sajanjal*, when one looks it up at the dictionary, he finds that it means ‘diamond’, and so are the two words ‘As-Safa’ and ‘Al-Marwah’. If one looks up the word Al-Marwah in the dictionary, he gets the abstract meaning of the word without any kind of attribution. Thus, the first and foremost thing one must understand about Arabic words is to know their abstract meanings, that is, out of their contexts; this is actually the role of dictionaries. For example, if one looks up the word ‘weather’ in the dictionary, he will find that it means ‘the air and other atmospheric conditions which surround a person’, but the dictionary does not tell whether the weather is overcast, clear, or cold.

Yet, if one attaches a relative attribution to a given word, then its meanings will be understood within context. For example, when we say, ‘The weather is bright.’ we thus move from simply understanding the meaning of the word ‘weather’ to ascribing brightness to it. Meaningful speech is made by the use

of ascriptions, which can only be made after the meanings of words are known in the beginning. 'Ascription' means that we ascribe something to something else. For example, when we say, 'Mohamed is hard-working', we thus have ascribed the quality of hard working to Mohamed, and we could only do this after first knowing about the meanings of the words used in the sentence.

Therefore, it is clear that meaningful speech is made by the use of ascriptions, and the meaning might be more clearly understood by attaching a word to what came before it. For example, when someone asks you, 'Who is with you?' you give a short answer by saying, 'Mohamed.' The questioner, relying on the context of the speech, will understand that 'Mohamed' is the person with you.

Therefore, ascription means to ascribe a particular meaning to something, which may be either positive or negative. In truth, ascriptions are of two kinds: real and unreal. If an ascription is real and has been proven, then it is *'Ilm*, or 'knowledge'. If it is real and one believes in it but cannot prove it, then it is *Taqlid*, or 'imitation' such as a child who imitates his father by saying, 'Allah is One' when the child is unable, at this point, to give proof that this ascription is true.

Undoubtedly, knowledge is the highest level of ascription because it is believed, real and proven. On the other hand, if an ascription is believed but not actually real, this is *Al-Jahl*, or 'ignorance' since the ignorant person is the one who 'knows' something in a way which is incorrect; the unlearned man, or *Al-Ummi*, by contrast, is the one who does not know anything at all. We find it difficult to explain things to someone who is ignorant such as the one who holds that the earth is flat and defends this position. He speaks of an ascription in which he believes but which is not real since the earth is actually spherical. Ignorance, then, means to believe in an ascription which is not real. Indeed, it is the ignorant, not the unlearned, who cause trouble in the world because the unlearned man's mind is empty, and all you have to do is to tell him the truth and he will believe it. As for the ignorant, we first must remove the false notion from his mind and then replace it with the true one.

If an ascription is still unconfirmed and unachievable, there is no difference whatsoever between denial and affirmation; this is *Ash-Shakk*, or 'doubt'. If

an ascription has something that is likely to take place, this is *Azh- Zhann*, or 'supposition'. If an ascription is something that is unlikely to take place, this is *Al-Wahm*, or a 'fancy'. So, ascriptions are of several kinds: knowledge, blind imitation, ignorance, doubt, supposition, and fancy. Based on this, we can say that falsehood is an unreal ascription, and if one believes in it, he is ignorant. The opposite of falsehood is truth. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They listen eagerly to lies...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42), this indicates that the ascription in this verse has no basis in reality.

Adversaries of Islam attempt to take advantage of some of the ascriptions in passages of the Quran to declare that it, i.e. the Quran, has some imprecise passages. These adversaries support their opinion by relying on the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *Al-Munafiqun* in which He *Glorified is He* states that when the hypocrites came to Prophet Muhammad, they said: 'We bear witness that you are indeed the Messenger of Allah', and Allah knows that Prophet Muhammad is truly His Messenger: 'In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah." 'And Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). At this point, the speech of the hypocrites is in conformity with what Allah *the Almighty* says. Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes this particular verse of the chapter of *al-Munafiqun* by stating that He bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars: 'but Allah also bears witness that the hypocrites certainly are liars.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1)

It is clear the ascription is the same, but Allah declares the hypocrites to be liars. But if we carefully reflect on the statement of the hypocrites that they bear witness that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah, we will realise that they are bad liars since they did not truly believe in him. As such, the true meaning of 'testimony' is for the sayings to conform to what the heart believes in.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'They listen eagerly to lies and consume what is lawful' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) means that their job was to listen to lies and to consume all that is evil, as though they despised to eat what is lawful. The word *Akkal* (the one who swallows greedily) is an intensive adjective; these kinds of adjectives are used to imply either the intensity or the

repetition of the act. Arabs say, '*Akkal*' and '*Akul*' to refer to someone who *Akala*, or eats, ravenously or eats a lot. Thus, the nature of the intensity applies either to the mode of the action or to its frequency.

As for His saying, ' (They) consume what is lawful...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42), the *Sahata* means 'to wipe out' or 'to erase', yet it is more intensive than this and means to utterly annihilate something so that no trace is left behind of both the thing itself and also its container. For example, if you have an oil or food stain on your clothes, you could remove the stain, or you could go so far in removing it as to rip the stained material right off the clothing. Accordingly, the word *As-Suht* means to remove something so completely that even the thing from which it is being removed is damaged somewhat. This means that it is the act of removing the foreign object and also part of the original object with it. Therefore, the scholars recall this concept when they comment on the verse of the Quran in which Allah states that He deprives usurious gains of all blessing: 'Allah will blot out interest and will cause charity to increase. And Allah loves not anyone who is a confirmed disbeliever and an arch-sinner.' (*al-Baqara*: 276)

People mistakenly believe that usury is some kind of achieving gain and interest, but Allah *the Exalted* makes it clear to us that it is not really a gain since it intermixes with capital and then erases and annihilates it completely. On the surface, usury appears to be a gain, but it is actually a cause of loss and destruction of one's capital.

Zakat, on the other hand, seems to be a loss of money, but really it is a cause of growth. Thus, it is clear that there is a big difference between human standards and divine ones. Let us offer the following example to illustrate this point. Human beings are always concerned with making more and more money. This is actually known as *Rizq Al-Ijab*, but they rarely pay attention to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* may protect them from spending much money, which is known *Rizq As-Salb*. In fact, one man may earn five hundred pounds, while another earns only one hundred. However, Allah might place the first in circumstances in which he must spend thousands of pounds, while He *Glorified is He* might protect the second from these circumstances so that he does not even need to spend all of his earnings, but may even save ten pounds

of it. So, it is clear that *Rizq Al-Ijab* means that Allah will provide the person with much more money, whereas *Rizq As-Salb* means that Allah protects and saves one from having to spend on misfortunes and calamities, even placing blessing in what He gives.

As for the word *As-Suht*, it means everything which one earns by unlawful means such as bribes, usury, theft, embezzlement, or filching. As such, the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* 'They listen eagerly to lies and consume what is lawful' indicates clearly that their ears are used to hearing falsehood and accepting it. By the same token, when we say in our prayer, 'Allah hears those who praise Him', this means that we call upon Him and He *the Almighty* accepts our praise and supplications. Therefore, when He *the Exalted* says that they, i.e. Jews, eagerly listen to falsehood, this obviously means that they accept it. Listening is undoubtedly an act which is performed by one of the body parts. It is taken for granted that man's body parts are built by food through the process of eating. We know for certain that one eats to grow, and once he is full-grown, he eats to preserve his energy and strength. To grow, then, means for more to enter the body than what leaves it; yet after a certain period of time, the same amount leaves the body in the same way it enters it. When man is old, more leaves the body than what enters it.

Indeed, as long as they eagerly listened to falsehood and greedily swallowed all that is evil and unlawful, they would always be in the same miserable state. Their consumption of evil was a cause of their listening gullibly to falsehood since they built the cells of their body on unlawfully gained sustenance; so how should their ears then reject falsehood?! Indeed, their ears are accustomed to falsehood, and their tongues composed it. Their eyes invited unlawful gazes, and their hands invited theft, for they built these limbs of theirs with ill-gotten provisions.

In this regard, it is important to know that Allah *the Almighty* did not say that they just 'listen to' falsehood; rather, they 'eagerly listened' to it. This means that these people, or spies, made it their business to eagerly listen to falsehood. Otherwise, if this were not the case, then anyone who ever hears a lie would be included amongst these people. As such, it is clear that these words refer mainly to those who make it their business to eagerly listen to

falsehood. It goes without saying that a person does not make this particular act of listening eagerly to falsehood his business unless he is a spy for someone else. It is certainly well known that spies violate the trust of the gatherings they attend. Every gathering has its secrets, and if someone attends a gathering, he does not have the right to convey all that he hears therein to others – unless he makes it his business to do so, to the extent that they intentionally attend these gatherings for this purpose.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘They listen eagerly to lies and consume what is lawful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 42) In fact, this part of the verse imposes a very important question, which is the following: ‘Is the eager listening to falsehood caused mainly by the greedy consumption of what is evil and unlawful, or vice versa?’

When Allah *the Exalted* created Adam from the clay of the earth, He blew His Spirit into him. Furthermore, He *Glorified is He* placed all of his life’s needs into the natural products of the earth’s clay. So, if man takes something lawfully, the cells of his body are restored in accordance with the balance set by Allah *the Almighty*. Yet, if he introduces ill-gotten provisions into them, he causes the makeup of his cells to become imbalanced, causing him who greedily consumes evil to listen eagerly to falsehood. Were it not for this imbalance in his bodily makeup, which he himself caused, he would never have listened to falsehood.

The meaning may also be that the person began to listen eagerly to falsehood after his initial greedy consumption of what is evil and unlawful, or on the other hand, his greedy consumption of what is evil and unlawful began after his initial eagerly listening to falsehood. We may observe that Allah *the Almighty* did not say ‘eating evil’ or ‘hearing falsehood’; rather, He *the Exalted* said: ‘They listen eagerly to lies and consume what is lawful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 42) That is, they became accustomed to hearing falsehood and consuming what is evil and unlawful. One of them might have taken unlawful things from the onset, and when he became a greedy consumer and an eager listener to falsehood at the same time, the cells of his bodily makeup were thrown out of balance, thus he no longer possessed the light in the depths of his soul to reject falsehood, but instead accepted it. Falsehood then tempts him into consuming what is evil. So, the matter revolves mainly about listening to what is false and consuming what is evil.

The issue of deceit is undoubtedly part of the issue of the struggle between falsehood and truth. As long as deceit contradicts a cosmological fact or a religious truth, it causes imbalance in the universe. This is why Allah *the Almighty* offers us a striking example with something tangible so that we can fully realise the matter. He *Glorified is He* says: 'He sends down water from the sky so that the valleys flow according to their measure' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). This means that every river carries as much water as it can. Allah *the Almighty* then says that the stream carries scum on its surface: 'and the flood bears on its surface swelling foam.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17) Therefore, this means that before the rainwater flows from the mountains to the valleys, it picks up things which the winds leave upon the mountains and the leaves of trees, and then carries them down to the valleys; these things cause scum to form on the water.

The Arabic word *Rabian*, or 'on the surface' means that the scum rises and sits on top of the water. Why does it do this? It does this because it contains bubbles of air, which cause its surface area to be greater than its weight; it is less dense than the water and so floats upon it. However, what really happens after that? Continuing His Speech on this topic in the chapter of *ar-Ra'd*, Allah *the Almighty* says that the stream carries scum on its surface; and likewise, from metal which they smelt in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils, there rises scum: 'And from that which they heat in the fire, seeking to make ornaments or utensils, comes out a foam similar to it.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

Amazingly, Allah *the Almighty* draws this parable with both water and its opposite, fire. Water carries scum and dross on its surface, and the same happens when metals are placed in fire. If one watches a blacksmith blowing his bellows on a piece of metal, he will see the dross and the foreign materials which are mixed with the iron, which are later separated from it during the smelting process so that it becomes pure. Thus, there is scum within iron, which fire removes when it is smelted, and similarly, there is scum which floats on the surface of water. This is why we see that falsehood sometimes prevails over the truth in the same way dross rises and sits atop the pure iron. However, the question to be asked here is, 'Will falsehood remain permanently like this?' The answer is definitely no, for Allah *the Almighty* says next that as far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as does all dross, but that which

is of benefit to man abides on earth: 'Thus does Allah illustrate truth and falsehood. Now, as to the foam it goes away as rubbish and perishes but as to that which benefits men, it stays in the earth.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

In fact, when we see scum rising to the surface, we are surprised after a while to see that it disappears, and the water becomes pure. Likewise, the scum which rises atop the iron is expelled so that it remains pure. So, if we ever see falsehood prevailing over the truth, we should know for certain that this ascendancy cannot last since Allah *the Almighty* destines that only that which is beneficial to man will remain on earth. This raises another question: 'Why does truth give the opportunity to falsehood to prevail from the onset?' Allah *the Almighty* willed that it be this way so that falsehood would cause the forces of truth to arise, for if falsehood did not disturb people and vex them, would they turn to seeking out the truth? No, they would not, and therefore, falsehood must inevitably come and vex them, so that they seek out the truth. Thus, we see that even falsehood itself is one of the forces of truth. We gave an example to illustrate this point before in which we said that the pain of the sick person is one of the matters leading basically to healing, for if there were no pain, the disease would spread without the ill person feeling it. It is as though the pain alerts him to the presence of the disease and encourages him to seek medical treatment. In this way, he becomes aware of the great importance of health.

Therefore, it is clear right now that falsehood is one of the forces of truth, just as pain is one of the ways leading to healing. As a matter of fact, if the affairs of this life were always the same, man would not know anything about its different facets and aspects. If no pain came to the sick, the disease would destroy him. Thus, just as pain is a way leading to healing, likewise disbelief is a way leading to faith since when we see disbelief and its corrupting influences on society, we ask ourselves, 'What can save us from this?' We know for certain that only faith can free us from such corruption.

In this respect, I would like to stress that the very word *Kufr*, or 'disbelief', is the first proof of faith. This particular word *Kufr* means 'to cover'; so as long as 'to disbelieve' means 'to cover', then a disbeliever covers faith, and thus, the appearance of disbelief on the surface definitively proves the existence of faith before it.

As long as Allah *the Almighty* says that they eagerly listen to any falsehood and greedily swallowing all that is evil, it was inevitable that He *the Almighty* would tell His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* how to deal with these people. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If they come to you (Prophet) for judgment, you can either judge between them or decline.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has the choice to judge between them or to leave them if they come to him for judgment. In addition, He *the Almighty* told him *peace and blessings be upon him* that he had no obligation towards them, for they are people who eagerly listen to any falsehood and greedily swallow all that is evil and unlawful. It was so bad to the extent that when they came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to seek his judgment about something, they did not do this with the intention of finding out the truth or seeking justice, but they only came to him, expecting to find a way to allow themselves to follow falsehood and consume what is evil. They sought judgment in the matter of adultery, even though the Torah told them that the punishment for adultery is stoning.

They went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because they wanted to conceal the legal punishment mentioned in the Torah about adultery and thus fabricated another one, that is, lashing the adulterer, blackening his face and parading him on a donkey facing backwards all around the town. When the judgment given by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not in accordance with their whims, they went away from him. This incident clearly indicates that they only sought lenience since they used to eagerly listen to any falsehood and greedily swallow all that is evil. In addition, they wanted to ingratiate this nobleman who committed this crime of adultery by lessening his punishment.

However, is there any contradiction whatsoever between this verse under discussion and the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what Allah has bestowed from above...?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48)

Undoubtedly, there is no contradiction whatsoever. Some scholars conclude that the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... Judge, then, between the followers of

earlier revelation in accordance with what Allah has bestowed from above...' indicates an obligation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he must judge amongst them. However, the most authentic opinion is that Allah *the Almighty* allows him to choose whatever he wants to do, meaning to judge amongst them or not. Yet, in the event, he chooses to judge amongst them, he has to do so according to what Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed. If we carefully reflect upon the style of this Quranic verse, we will fully realise that the Quran was revealed down by the All-Wise. The order mentioned in this verse clearly indicates that Allah *the Almighty* left the matter to Prophet Muhammad to decide whether to judge or not to judge them since they wanted him to judge between them according to their own whims and desires. Thus, He *the Almighty* assured him that He would protect him from their evil if he had left them alone. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* wanted to assure His Messenger Muhammad that the Jews would never be able to do him any harm if he had chosen to turn away from them. He *the Almighty* says: '...you can either judge between them or decline.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) In addition, He *Glorified is He* tells him not to let the threat of potential harm from them force him into judging for them, for he has the choice either to judge or not to judge them.

He *the Almighty* then says: '...but if you do judge between them, judge justly. Allah loves the just.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) This part of the verse indicates that in the case Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* chooses to judge among them, he must judge justly in accordance with what Allah has revealed, and not by his whims or desires. In addition, it says that Allah *the Almighty* loves those who remove injustice. As long as judging with equity means to remove all injustice, it is as if this law the Jews used to rely upon was unjust. Therefore, the meaning of the word *Aqsata* is to remove an unjust law and restore the balance so that man lives in harmony with all creation. Undoubtedly, the entire universe is run by due measure; the earth revolves around the sun, while the sun does its duty, and planets do not collide with one another. Allah *the Almighty* mentions this undeniable fact in the Quran where He *the Almighty* says: 'It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day. All of them float smoothly in an orbit.' (*Ya Sin*: 40)

So, if you (O mankind!) want your affairs to go well for you, you should then carefully consider the balanced laws, which regulate the universe around you and maintain its fair order. You have to manage your own affairs in a balanced way and with justice so that you can have harmony, exactly just as the universe has. When just balance is referred to it means of which the affairs of the universe are perfectly run. Allah *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: ‘The sun and the moon run their courses according to a fixed reckoning. And the stemless plants and the trees humbly submit to His Will. And the heaven He has raised high and set up the measure that you may not exceed it.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5-8)

Therefore, He *the Almighty* encourages mankind to run their affairs justly as the affairs of the universe are run by due measure. So, if you see that the universe around you is free of disturbance and conflict and that it goes through its motions without any contradiction or collision, then it should be understood that it is governed and run by Allah’s Measure. By the same token, He *the Almighty* has made a measure for you as to the affairs and decisions of your free will, which is contained in the laws and rulings He ordained upon you. So, if you really want the affairs of your free will to go well, then you should base them on the measure defined by Him *the Almighty*. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَكَيْفَ يُحْكُمْونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرَةُ فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ
مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا أُولَئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**But why do they come to you for judgment, when
they have the Torah with God’s judgment, and even
then still turn away? These are not believers [43]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 43)**

He *the Almighty* clarifies, ‘How is it that Jews come to you asking for your judgment when they already have the Torah? Likewise, they do not even believe that you, O, Prophet Muhammad, are a Messenger from Allah. So, how could those who do not believe in you be content to have you pass a

judgment for them?' Indeed, their intentions in doing so must be to find something which contradicts what the Torah teaches and instructs them to do, for if this were not the case, they would simply apply the ruling they already have in their Scripture. They only come to you, O, Prophet Muhammad, in the hope that you will give them some kind of dispensation, and they imagine (Allah forbid!) that you will allow them to continue eagerly listening to falsehood and greedily swallowing all that is evil and unlawful.

Indeed, their coming to Prophet Muhammad to pass a judgment for them is something curious, to which attention should be paid, for they already had the Torah containing Allah's Injunctions and Rulings. Were they to seek his judgment about something which is not mentioned in the Torah, this might be acceptable; but they asked him about something for which the Torah gives a judgment, and then Allah informed him of this so that he would reveal it. Having been informed by Allah *the Almighty* of their plot, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'Where is Ibn Suriyya so that he may give you the ruling from the Torah on adultery?' The man attended and acknowledged that the Torah prescribes stoning to death as the legal punishment to adultery. So, they wanted to deceive him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Also, there is a very important point that should be taken into account, which is that the Jews knew for certain that Prophet Muhammad was unlettered and thus unable to read or write – so, who told him that the ruling was in the Torah? The One Who sent him is undoubtedly the One Who told him. As such, if they wanted to find a lenient ruling, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted this to be a means of bringing disgrace to them.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '... and even then still turn away? These are not believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 43) shows that when the Prophet gave them a judgment which was not to their whims and desires, they turned away from this judgment. Had they truly been looking for a judgment in the first place, they would have accepted the one of stoning which he *peace and blessings be upon him* gave them, but they did not even believe in their own Torah.

He *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّونَ الَّذِينَ أَسْلَمُوا
لِلَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوا مِنْ كِتَابِ اللَّهِ
وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَاءَ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوُا اللَّهَ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا
بِعَاقِبَتِي ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

We revealed the Torah with guidance and light, and the prophets, who had submitted to God, judged according to it for the Jews. So did the rabbis and the scholars in accordance with that part of God's Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve, and to which they were witnesses. So [rabbis and scholars] do not fear people, fear Me; do not barter away My messages for a small price; those who do not judge according to what God has sent down are rejecting [God's teachings] [44] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 44)

The word *Al-Huda* (Guidance) means the road or the path which leads to a destination. The safety of paths is naturally subject to changes of day and night and other conditions.⁽¹⁾ The path is dark at night, and the traveller might encounter obstacles, or he might not walk in the middle of the path and thus fall into holes or collide with rocks.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* states essentially in this verse: 'I have made the path (of guidance) clear for you and lit it up so that you do not collide with anything or encounter any obstacles', a matter which is embodied by the way of guidance which was brought by all of Allah's Messengers and Prophets. In the past, the world was divided and communities were dispersed all over, and there were no means of transport or communication between them. Every community lived in isolation with a kind of autonomy, and thus, if social ailments broke out in one place, they would remain contained in that place until someone came to treat them; so were the roles to be performed by Allah's Messengers and Prophets. One Messenger treated the problem of idol-worship; another dealt with the matter of scales and balances, while a third handled the affairs of the Jewish system of matrimonial life, and so on.

(1) This is a figurative speech which means that the way of guidance is not all the time an easy one.

These ailments were as countless as the number of communities. So, Allah *the Almighty* willed to unveil the secrets of His Universe to people, so that they would utilise them to narrow distances and make it easier for different nations to come together. When nations began to come together, there were no longer barriers between social ailments: a single ailment could break out in the East and spread to the West. What added to this is that, it seemed that the ailments of the world began to become homogenous.

Due to all of these matters, there was a dire need for one Messenger who could treat all these ailments, so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to unify and protect mankind. So, when Allah *the Almighty* says that He revealed the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light, the same applies to the Gospel, which means that it also contained guidance and light; yet all the guidance and light in any revealed scripture was only meant to treat the specific ailments which existed in such isolated communities for which this Messenger or Prophet was sent. For example, Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* lived at the very same time as Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and so is the case as to Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. All these prophets lived during the same time. So, it is clear that some of Allah's Messengers would sometimes be contemporaries since each of them was meant to treat a specific ailment, and thus, their Messages were limited to certain times and certain places.

As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *the Almighty* sent him to all mankind, irrespective of their different races; and his religion will last until the end of time. Therefore, people became no longer in need of any other Messenger or Prophet.

He *the Almighty* then says: 'Verily, it is We Who bestowed from above the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the Prophets, who had surrendered themselves to Allah, deliver judgment...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44). However, this raises a question: 'Why does Allah *the Almighty* speak here of the self-surrender (*Islam*) of all the Prophets sent before Muhammad?' As a matter of fact, Allah *Glorified is He* does so by way of honouring Islam and showing its prestigious status since it is the essence of every Prophetic Message.

In this respect, we find that some poets eloquently expressed this concept. One of them once said:

I praise not Muhammad with my words,
But my words are praised by Muhammad.

Yet, another one said:

They say that Abu As-Saqr is from Shayban, but I say:
Nay, by my life, Shayban is from him!

So, if the entire tribe is to be ascribed to *Abu Sahyban* and not vice versa.

He then added:

Many a father is exalted by his noble son,
Just as 'Adnan was exalted by Messenger Muhammad.

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* describes Prophets as having surrendered themselves, He *Glorified is He* wanted to honour Islam by stating how they surrendered to Him since they found that this was best for them. In fact, the self-surrender of Prophets was done in its fullest meaning: they were completely and utterly obedient to Allah's Commands and Orders. If ever one of these Prophets thought that he might be afflicted with harm because of his mission, or that someone might persecute him or that someone might enjoy abusing him, he surrendered his affair to Allah *the Almighty*; for all the Messengers of Allah spoke the truth and did not worry what might happen on account of it.

He *the Almighty* then says: '...On its strength did the Prophets, who had surrendered themselves to Allah, deliver judgment to those who followed the Jewish faith...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44). They judged according to the Torah amongst those who followed the Jewish faith, and likewise, *Ar-Rabbaniyyun* (the early men of Allah) and *Al-Ahbar* (the rabbis) judged by it. The word *Ar-Rabbani* is derived from the word *Rabb* (Lord), so it means someone whose actions are all devoted to Allah. As for rabbis, they are the scholars who are well versed in knowledge, irrespective of the fact whether they implement it or not. It is true that every scholar has vast of knowledge, but he may or may not benefit

from his knowledge; yet he may, nevertheless, pass on his knowledge to one who does benefit from it. Therefore, one of the scholars said:

Take my knowledge, and heed not my actions:

Pick the fruit, and leave the wood for the fire!

Therefore, one should not say, 'This scholar tells us to do this and that, but we see him doing the opposite' because you should take the fruits of knowledge and leave the wood for the fire. Nevertheless, the scholar should be the first and foremost person to hasten to practise what he preaches, so that he does not go to hell and become one of those about whom Allah blames for not doing what they are saying: 'O, you who believe! Why do you say what you do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not.' (*as-Saff*: 2-3)

He *Glorified is He* then says: '...And so did the (early) men of Allah and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of Allah's Book had been entrusted to their care...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44). We have previously explained that the Torah contains light and guidance by which the Prophets, early men of Allah and the rabbis delivered judgments by the means which Allah entrusted to their care and by the Torah, which their Messengers encouraged them to preserve. In this regard, it is important to note that Allah *the Almighty* says: 'that which had been entrusted to their care' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44) and not that they 'preserved' it, thus showing us the difference between the Quran and all the heavenly scriptures revealed before it.

We know perfectly well that every Messenger brought a miracle that proved that he was truly sent by Allah, yet these miracles have nothing, in essence, to do with their Messages. For example, the miracle of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the staff and the cleaving of the sea, while his Message was the Torah; and the miracle of Prophet Isa (Jesus) was to heal the lame and the leprous, while his Message was the Gospel. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his miracle and his Message were one and the same, namely the Quran. In the same respect, every Messenger's mission was linked and restricted to his time and his people, and thus, he required an appropriate miracle and an appropriate Message. However, when Allah *the Exalted*

decreed to send a Messenger to all humanity and made him the Seal of the Prophets, his miracle and his Message had to remain one and the same, so that any Muslim could forever say: 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and here is his miracle, which is also his Message.'

In fact, the Quran will remain a clear miracle until the end of time since Allah *the Almighty* wanted it to be different from all the other messages and miracles. Previous miracles were like a matchstick which can only be lit once, which means that those who witnessed the occurrence of these miracles would believe in them, yet those who did not witness them will not believe that they had occurred unless someone they trust informs them. Allah *Glorified is He* entrusted the care of the Torah to the men of Allah and the rabbis, which is to say that He told them to take care of it and to preserve it. As a matter of fact, this Divine Command to them was a legal obligation, which could either be obeyed or disobeyed. Even though He *the Almighty* entrusted the care of the Torah and the Gospel to them, they, too, have forgotten much of what they had been told to bear in mind. Therefore, the message was forgotten and no longer inhabited their minds as much due to the fact that when something occupies one's thoughts and settles always in the forefront of his consciousness, it remains unforgettable. Truthfully speaking, forgetfulness occurs when something is far from one's thoughts.

Allah *the Almighty* told them to preserve the message, i.e. the Torah and the Gospel, but all of them, except for the Prophets, did not do so. As a matter of fact, man has free will by means of which he can decide whether or not to obey Divine Commands. This is why we find that the men of Allah and the rabbis forgot, even concealing what they did not forget. The first stage contributing to the lack of preservation was actually that they forgot the Divine Command; the second stage was that they concealed what they did not forget, while the third was that they corrupted what they did not conceal and altered it with their tongues. Furthermore, it would have been bad enough had they stopped with these stages, yet they also brought other things and claimed that they were from Allah when really they were not. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran that severe punishment in the hell-fire is prepared for those who attribute what they write down by their own hands to Allah: 'Woe, therefore,

to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, "This is from Allah." That they may take it for a paltry price Woe, then, to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn.' (*al-Baqara*: 79)

Thus, they did not preserve the scriptures as they were ordered. This is why Allah *the Almighty* did not leave the Quran to be preserved in the same way which means by virtue of legal obligation, for He *the Almighty* had already tested mankind. In addition, out of the fact that He wanted the Quran to be the everlasting miracle, He *the Almighty* did not assign the task of its preservation to mankind; rather, He took it upon Himself to preserve it. This fact is mentioned clearly in the chapter of *al-Hijr*: 'Verily, it is We Who has sent down this Exhortation and most surely we are its Guardians.' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

This particular verse of the chapter of *al-Hijr* is proved absolutely correct, especially if we consider it in the light of the fact that some Muslims who wrong themselves by straying from the guidance of Islam and the Quran preserve the physical Quran itself; they write it in different ways and sizes. For example, there are golden copies of the Quran which women wear on pendants round their necks; there are yet small copies which can fit into the hand; and even disbelievers have invented a way to print the entire Quran on a single page.

In such a way, Allah *the Almighty* protects the Quran even by means of non-Muslims. Every day we see people whose conduct is far from the teachings of the religion, yet they spend money to preserve the Quran, to the extent that we find it protected in countless ways: one man keeps a copy in his car and another in his bedroom. A woman might have her hair uncovered and her chest bare, yet have a golden copy of the Quran hung around her neck. This confirms to us that the preservation of the Quran is not a commandment of moral responsibility; rather, it is protected by the Will of Allah.

If it were a matter of moral responsibility, the Quran might have been forgotten. Since Muslims have deviated from some of its teachings, it seems likely that they would have failed to preserve its letter, too. Actually, the opposite has occurred, which essentially means that despite the fact that Muslims have strayed from the message, the Quran itself has never failed to be preserved. Surprisingly, if many of those who sin against themselves hear that the printed Quran has been insulted in any way, they will turn the world upside

down in their outrage. As a matter of fact, such people do so out of the Divine Will, as Allah took the pledge that He would keep the Quran intact till the end of time. By the same token, if the enemies of Islam attempt to corrupt the Quran in any way, we find that all Muslims stand in their way. Some of them who seek to distort the Quran suggest adding the following prayer, i.e. "Allah's peace and blessings be upon him" after the name of Prophet Muhammad in the chapter of *al-Fath* and particularly to the verse in which Allah describes Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers with him as firm and unyielding towards all the deniers of truth: 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. And those who are with him are hard against the disbelievers but tender among themselves.' (*al-Fath*: 29)

It as though they wanted to give extra honour to Prophet Muhammad. Yet, when Muslims discovered this, clamour broke out and all the copies of that version of the Quran were burned. As such, it is clear that Muslims do not allow any kind of alteration to be made, whatever its motive may be.

He *the Almighty* then says: '...Therefore, (O children of Israel), hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44). The word *Al-Khashiya* (awe) means the fear that one feels towards someone he thinks could potentially harm him. It is certain that Allah *the Almighty* is the Only One Who is able to cause harm and benefit, and therefore, a man should not fear anyone but Him. This is why it is incorrect to think that rulers or authority figures can cause harm to you in any way. Therefore, we must all stand in awe of Allah *the Almighty* Who advises us to stand in awe for Him, and Him Alone.

Yet, if anyone changes the laws of Allah's Guidance for the sake of a ruler or his cronies or friends, which, in fact, is the very essence of corruption, this, in turn, leads to the existence of all evils and ills. Indeed, one of a ruler's cronies might, without his knowledge, order scholars to change certain elements of the religion's teachings, but none of them will capitulate to his demands except those who are weak. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was fully aware of this fact when he said: 'Corruption may not come from a ruler himself, but it may come from those around him.'

Such a thing, i.e. being submissive to the will of a ruler in corrupting the teachings of the religion, only happens when people stand in awe for other

than Allah *the Almighty*. This is why 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* used to gather his relatives and those who were close to him and say to them, 'I have reached a resolution concerning this ruling, and by Him in whose hand s my soul is, if any of you defy me therein, I shall punish him severely!' This is the manner of the one who wishes to serve and rule without incurring sins thereby. We see that many forms of corruption arise simply due to the defiance of the following wise principle: 'hold not men in awe, but stand in awe of Me'.

He *the Almighty* then orders us not to trade His Messages for a trifling gain. This is because the material value of the price taken in exchange for the Messages will never last longer than this worldly life, for, as we have explained before, this world is not measured by its true life span, i.e. until Allah decides to bring an end to mankind. Truthfully speaking, everyone's life span in this world is measured by how long he lives within it.

Suppose that life lasted for millions of years. How could any individual person benefit from these millions of years with his limited life span? Therefore, the life span of any man lasts only as long as he is alive in it; a matter which is known only to Allah *the Almighty* for, indeed, every term is recorded. This is why we find that one person may live a life of seventy years, while another might die at the age of sixty; a third might yet die at forty; a fourth might die at the age of one hundred; and a fifth might die whilst still a baby. Therefore, the life span of an individual might only be a moment. Furthermore, as long as life and death are not determined by times and causes, then it is part of the unseen which is determined only by the Will of Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah has spread out death over all times, to the effect that we can never claim that it will not afflict a person; the exception is birth which means a person will die only after he has been born, but a human being might die in the womb while still a foetus. In fact, miscarriages may take place after an hour of pregnancy, some after a month, while some after several months, and so on. In doing this, He *the Almighty* has allowed us to learn from the microscopic matter of the foetus in the womb the stages of its development. He *Glorified is He* shows us the form of the foetus after half an hour of development, after one hour, and so on. Life and death can occur at any moment. Yet, when we analyse these forms, we discover and have a better understanding about all the

stages of the foetus's development along with all the stages of life, lest anyone were to imagine that his life in this world is guaranteed to be such-and-such exact period of time.

The price that corrupts men take in exchange for altering Allah's Messages and laws will only benefit them in this worldly life, and they should remember that their lives in this world are limited. They should also remember that their individual lives are short compared to the life span of this world. In order for a man to make a sound economic transaction, he must be aware that his life span is limited to an unknown number of years, no matter how long he lives. In addition, if he compares this life to the life of the life to come, he will find that his life is temporal. Therefore, if he can exchange it for an eternal life, or the life of the Hereafter, this would be a supreme triumph. Truly, a man's life may come to an end at any moment, while his life in the Hereafter is everlasting. Also, the pleasures which a person enjoys in this worldly life are only commensurate with his possibilities, while the delights and pleasures of the Hereafter are ascribed to the Omnipotent Power of Allah *the Almighty*.

So, which trade is more advantageous: something limited in exchange for something unlimited; something presumed in exchange for something certain; delight commensurate with one's position and power in exchange for delight ascribed to the Omnipotent Power of Allah *the Almighty*? Which trade is more advantageous? It is completely clear that the gain of this worldly life is paltry compared to what Allah *the Exalted* has prepared for those who are conscious of Him.

He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...for they who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has bestowed from above are, indeed, deniers of the truth!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44) What does it mean to judge in accordance with what Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed on mankind from above?

We know that Allah *the Almighty* has ordained a judgment for every matter of dispute in existence. Thus, if you, as a human being, wish to pass judgment about something, you must seek out its nature, or crux, by looking back into its history. We will thus find that creed that pertains to the Existence of Allah *the Almighty* represents the apex of these rulings; if one judges that He *the Almighty* does not exist, he is ruled to be a disbeliever. In the same respect, if a man

believes in Allah but rejects some of His Laws, he is ruled as committing a form of disbelief. However, if a person believes in the authenticity, or validity, of a ruling but is unable to help himself, is this regarded as disbelief or wrongdoing? It is not disbelief, or *Kufr*, but it is evildoing or *azh-zhulm* (if the ruling concerns two parties). Yet, it is iniquity or *fisq* (if it is between a man and himself because he, in essence, breaks away from the ruling just as a fresh date breaks away, or *Tafsuq*, from its shell).

The unjust man is the one who lives within a sphere of moral responsibilities, and then comes out of this sphere just like a fresh date that comes out of its shell. Once the date comes out of its shell, it is in danger of rotting.

Therefore, when He *the Almighty* says: ‘...For they who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has bestowed from above are, indeed, deniers of the truth’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 44); ‘...And they who do not judge in accordance with what Allah has revealed – they, they are the evildoers’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 45); and ‘...For they who do not judge in the light of what Allah has bestowed from on high – it is they, they who are truly unjust’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 47), we should heed Allah’s Laws and try to control ourselves, lest we fall into destruction.

Some scholars conclude that the first verse, or (*al-Ma’ida*: 44) refers to Jews since Allah *the Almighty* said before: ‘Verily, it is We Who bestowed from above the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 44). As for the second verse, or (*al-Ma’ida*: 45), they conclude that it refers to Christians who did not judge and rule according to the Gospel.

In reply to these claims, we say, ‘Is it possible that this would apply to the religions which came before Islam, and not to exist in Islam, too?’ This is neither rational nor logical, and thus, the meanings of these verses are general. If man judges against the truth that is in accordance to the creed, which represents the apex of rulings, this is viewed as the essence of disbelief or a denial of the truth. Furthermore, if he rejects a judgment, or ruling, of the Supreme Truth, this is form of disbelief. In addition, if he believes in both the ruling and Allah, but his soul overpowers him, this is viewed as injustice. Furthermore, if he judges between two parties and allows his bias to lead him away from Allah’s Ruling, this is evildoing.

Thus, the use of the words 'deniers of the truth', 'evildoers' and 'unjust' tells us that the words differ according to the nature of a judgment. No one, therefore, should say that the first verse was revealed in reference to such-and-such sect, the second in reference to such-and-such sect, and the third in reference to such-and-such sect; rather, these are general principles which refer to all aspects of moral responsibility. At the beginning of each pronouncement, He *the Almighty* says: 'for they who...', and as we know, these words are general in their applicability. This is proved by the fact that whoever judges according to other than what Allah has revealed thereby trades Allah's signs and Messages for a trifling price along with rejecting His Judgment. In addition, He *the Almighty* says in the next verse: 'And We ordained for them in that (Torah): A life for a life...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 45).

In fact, these are laws concerning crimes and their legal punishments, in which case to judge according to other than that which Allah revealed is evildoing; so the situation differs according to the nature of the judgment.

When we discussed the matter of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* and how Allah instructed the angels who are in charge of running the affairs of the creation on earth to prostrate themselves before him (Adam), we said that this prostration was a symbol of how they would serve him *peace be upon him*. As a matter of fact, every manifestation of power in the universe is run by an angel whom we cannot see. These angels are known as the managers of affairs. When He *the Almighty* informed them of the new creation which would come into the universe, i.e. Adam, and informed them that they would serve him, He commanded them to prostrate before him. This is why angels who are not in charge with managing the affairs of earth were not included in this Divine Command. Yet, when the Satan refused to prostrate before Adam *peace be upon him* Allah *the Almighty* asked him: 'O Iblis, what hindered you from submitting to what I had created with my two hands? Is it that you are too proud, or are you really above obeying my command?' (*Sad*: 75)

The word *Al-'Alin* or 'those who are above' refers to the angels who glorify Allah *the Almighty* night and day without stopping and have no knowledge of the existence of Adam, and therefore He *the Almighty* asked Satan: 'Are you too proud to prostrate, or do you think yourself one of the most honoured

angels who were not commanded to prostrate?’ And we said before that Satan himself was not an angel since the Quran clearly says he was from the jinn: ‘He was one of the jinn’ (*al-Kahf*: 50).

Therefore, there is no reason to dispute as to whether Satan is an angel or not, for he was not an angel and the Quran explicitly states that Satan is a jinni. He was a being of free will, with the ability to choose whether to obey or disobey, for jinns are also beings of free will. If one of them chooses to adhere to Allah’s Way of Guidance to such an extent that he becomes equal to the angels, he must live up to this, but Satan did not. Satan should have also obeyed the Divine Command to prostrate, for as long He *the Almighty* issued the order to do so, then as a lower being Satan should have done so since we know ranks must be respected. The ministers obey the orders of a president, and if some of the ministers’ aides are also present, they will obey his orders too, since they are included in them a fortiori. Even if Satan were a higher being than the angels were, he would still have had to obey the Command of the Supreme Creator and not to disobey or decline. However, as a lower being than the angels, it was even more imperative that he had to yield to Allah’s Command. However, Satan attempted to justify his refusal to prostrate by saying that he is better than Adam *peace be upon him* for Allah created him out of fire, whereas Adam was created out of clay: ‘He (Satan) said, “I am better than he. You have created me out of fire while him you have created out of clay. ”’ (*al-A’raf*: 12) In another verse, he justifies his disobedience by saying he cannot prostrate himself before such creature who has been created out of clay: ‘He said, “Shall I submit to one whom You have created of clay?”’ (*al-Isra*’: 61)

This raises an important question, ‘When a created being refuses to obey a ruling, does he refuse the ruling in and of itself without considering the one who issues it, or does he refuse the issuer of the ruling, which in this case is *the Most High*?’ Satan rebelled against the One Who issued the ruling, and therefore, He *the Almighty* cast him out of the paradise, and he became accursed. Adam, on the other hand, disobeyed his Lord by approaching the forbidden tree. Out of His Mercy, Allah *Glorified is He* gives His commands precursors which apply to the state of the one He commands. Thus, He *the Almighty* did not say to Adam *peace be upon him*: ‘Do not eat from the tree’, but rather

ordered him not to approach it: 'We said "O, Adam, you and your wife dwell in the garden and eat therefrom plentifully where ever you will, but approach not this tree, lest you be of the wrongdoers."' (*al-Baqara*: 35)

This is because He *the Almighty* knew that Adam *peace be upon him* was a man, and thus, he is subject to fluctuations. In addition, He *the Almighty* knew that if he saw the tree and its fruits, he might not be able to restrain himself. Therefore, it was best that he not to approach it at all. Allah *Glorified is He* truly wants to protect man since He does not waive or excuse the legal responsibilities He has ordained unless something happens which is beyond man's free will. Therefore, He wanted to protect Adam *peace be upon him* from even approaching that tree lest he be tempted. He *the Almighty* applied the same methodology as the prohibition of drinking wine; He did not say, 'Do not drink wine', rather, He said that intoxicants, games of chance, idolatrous practices and the divining of the future are loathsome evils of Satan's doing, so shun them: 'O, you who believe! Wine and the game of chance and idols and divining arrows are only the abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90)

The reason for this is if a man sits in a place where wine is drunk and sees the drunken people laughing and cajoling, he might be tempted to drink. Therefore, the command to 'shun' in this verse is even more explicit than 'Do not drink it.' In this respect, we know that Allah's Orders only apply to practical actions which mean the instances where a person actually moves and acts. As for perceptions, it is permissible for a man to perceive things, and Allah *the Almighty* has left us free to love whom we will and to hate whom we will. However, this love must not lead us to immoral actions such as giving unjust favours. Likewise, although we are not commanded or forbidden to hate, hatred of someone can lead a person to wronging him. What is forbidden is evildoing and injustice, and therefore Allah *Glorified is He* orders us not to let hatred of anyone lead us into the sin of deviating from justice: '...let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just. This is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is Aware of what you do.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8)

That is, you (O, Muslims), You should not let your hatred of people cause you to be unjust. Therefore, it becomes clear that Allah *the Almighty* does not

forbid the feeling of hatred; rather, Allah *Glorified is He* forbids anything that may result in infringing upon the justice of others even with ones for whom one may have hatred. One must firmly believe that if someone wrongs him, he must not respond to such injustice committed against him except in the light of being obedient to Him *the Almighty*.

Adam *peace be upon him* ate from the forbidden tree. By doing so, he had committed both two sins: one of getting close to the tree and the second of eating from it. So, he *peace be upon him* fell into sin, yet He asked Allah for forgiveness. The Quran recorded that Adam and his wife Hawwa (Eve) *peace be upon them* confessed that they have sinned against themselves: 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the losers.' (*al-A'raf*: 23)

Truthfully speaking, this confession of Adam and Hawwa (Eve) indicates plainly that the Judgment of Allah *the Almighty* is absolutely right. In addition, it tells that both of them were responsible for this sin since they were unable to control the evil of their souls. So, they did not reject Allah's Ruling, but confessed that they were unable to adhere to it. This is why Allah *the Almighty* taught them words by means of which they could show repentance to Him and have their sins forgiven. In fact, Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who taught Adam and Hawwa (Eve) *peace be upon them* how to repent. Thus, we see that Adam is not like Satan, who completely rejected Allah's Ruling. The big difference between Adam *peace be upon him* and Satan is that Adam confessed his inability to control his soul, while the latter rejected the Ruling of Allah.

So, he who does not judge by what Allah has revealed because he rejects His Judgment outright and finds fault with it – Glory be to Him! – is a disbeliever and a denier of the truth. By the same token, if this person was to make a judgment between two parties, and he does not judge according to what Allah has revealed, he is an evildoer. Yet, if one makes a judgment out of his whims, he is judged to be immoral. Each attribute is thus appropriate to its designation. There is no need then to debate and differ over the interpretation of these verses by ascribing one of them to Jews and the other to Christians. In addition, falsehood should not be made attractive to people thus leading them away from adhering to the *Shari'a* of Allah. This is because

one must firmly and strictly adhere to what Allah has revealed in Islam. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَا أَنْ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ
وَالْأُذُنَ بِالْأُذُنِ وَاللِّسْنَ بِاللِّسَنِ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهِ
فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ لَهُ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

In the Torah We prescribed for them a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, an equal wound for a wound: if anyone forgoes this out of charity, it will serve as atonement for his bad deeds. Those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are doing grave wrong [45] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 45)

In the Torah which has been just described by Allah *the Almighty* as being a light and a guidance, He *Glorified is He* ordained for and obligated Jews the law of 'A life for a life...', that is, how to retaliate. Yet, we must understand each item of this list according to its appropriate action, that is, if one unlawfully takes the life of another, he has to be killed. However, when Allah *the Almighty* says 'an eye for an eye', does this mean that an eye is to be killed when retaliation is brought? No, it does not, rather, it means that an eye is to be removed in retribution for an eye, and likewise for His saying, 'a nose for a nose'; it means that a nose is to be cut off in retribution for a nose. The same applies to His saying, 'an ear for an ear' since it means that the penalty for cutting an ear is to have one's own ear cut. So, each item has its appropriate action: a life is taken for a life; an eye is plucked for an eye; a nose is cut for a nose; and an ear is deafened for an ear.

In fact, the expressions of the Arabic language are idiomatic and can accurately and precisely describe an action. A man might be hungry, for example, but hungry for what?! If he is hungry for food, he is called *Jaw'an* (hungry), yet if he has a desire for a particular kind of food such as meat, we do not say that he is 'hungry', rather, he is *Qarim*. As for that man who desires milk, Arabs call him '*Ayman*', but if he needs water instead, he is said to be 'thirsty', or '*Atshan*'. Regarding that person who is hungry for sex, he is said to be 'lustful', or *Shabiq*.

This shows us that humans do different actions with each having its own name and expression. For example, Arabic language differentiates between the words *Jalasa* and *Qa'ada*, both of which basically mean 'to sit'. Yet, the two words indicate two different literal meanings, as follows: *Jalasa* means literally to 'sit up', i.e. to move from a reclining position to sitting up with a straight back, whereas *Qa'ada* means 'to sit down', i.e. to go from standing to sitting. This is why Allah *the Almighty* mentions these two words consecutively in the same verse in the chapter of *Al-'Imran*: 'Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth' (*Al-'Imran*: 191).

Another example to clearly illustrate this point is for the words 'to look', 'to glance' and 'to glimpse'. As a matter of fact, each of these three words indicates a meaning which differs from the other two, e.g. 'to look' means to behold with both eyes, while 'to glance' means to behold for a short moment. As for the meaning indicated by 'to glimpse', it means to behold very briefly.

Likewise, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* under discussion will indicate that He ordained for them that the penalty for taking life is the killing of the murderer; the penalty for plucking an eye is to have one's eye plucked; the penalty for cutting off a nose is to have one's nose cut off; the penalty for cutting an ear is to have one's ear cut, and the penalty for breaking a tooth is to have one's tooth pulled. Then, He *the Almighty* tells that a similar retribution for wounds must be made. We should take into account that one can be wounded anywhere on one's body, in which case retribution must be equal to the wound. Literally, the word *Qisas* (retribution) is derived from the word *Qassa* which means to tail someone by following their tracks in the sand without straying from their path. Due to the fact that retribution demands equal injury which is a difficult thing to achieve exactly, so how can we carry out retribution in the case of wounds?! In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* allows us to assault whoever assaults us in the same way he has assaulted us: 'So whoso transgresses against you, punish him for his transgression to the extent to which he has transgressed against you' (*al-Baqara*: 194). Yet, the question is still not answered, that is, how can we exactly carry out retribution, especially if we take into account the fact that the punch given by a strong man will not be as powerful as that given by a weak person?

Truthfully speaking, Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who offers us an answer to this question. Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that we can forgo retribution out of charity and decline to claim it. We know the story of 'The Merchant of Venice', the Jewish usurer who lent money in exchange for a pound of the debtor's flesh to which the two agreed by contract in the presence of witnesses. The man was unable to repay the loan when the deadline came, but the judge was so intelligent that he said, 'Take the pound of flesh, but if you take an ounce too much or too little, we shall take it from you.' So, the usurer declined to take it.

Even though Allah *the Almighty* legislated for different crimes, He did not bar the way of spiritual ambition; a point which is quite clear in His saying, '...but he who shall forgo it out of charity will atone thereby for some of his past sins...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 45). The word 'charity' means to give others something by way of seeking out the Pleasure of Allah *the Almighty* even though one is not obligated to do so, nor does that particular thing rightfully belong to those to whom it is given. As a matter of fact, the main reason behind all the problems people face today concerning their legal processes is that they spend far too long a time in the litigation process; when a crime is committed, the investigation conducted by the courts might take over a year. Moreover, *Wali Ad-Dam* (the victim's closest male relative who has the right of retribution) should have a say in the matter since when this authority is given to him, he may be so content with enabling him to exercise his right of taking retribution, to the extent that he may well forgo it, due to the fact that the decision is given to him, giving him the ability to exact retribution; however, it is more likely that he will have mercy.

If this were to happen, that is, if *Wali Ad-Dam* forgoes retribution, the one who is pardoned for out of charity will, for the rest of his life, owe his life to the one who gave up his right to retribution – this will cause bonds of affection and love to be created between them. Thus, when the Supreme Lawgiver *the All-Wise* legislates, He wants us to take into account the fact that we will not be always sinned against; rather, we may one day sin against someone else, so if this is the case, would we not like the *Wali Ad-Dam* to forgo his right to exact retribution upon us? So, if governments wish to bring an end to cycles of revenge, let them fully implement the Supreme Divine Law.

The following example actually takes place in Upper Egypt. When someone is murdered, the guilty party goes to the family of the victim, carrying his burial shroud with him so that they can exact revenge upon him. As a matter of fact, when this happens, guardians of the murdered victim are cleansed of the desire for revenge and thus let him live. As such, this murderer owes his life to them, i.e. the guardians of the murdered victim who forgo retribution out of charity. The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...but he who shall forgo it out of charity will atone thereby for some of his past sins’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 45) indicates that *Wali Ad-Dam* is the only one who has the right to forgo retribution out of charity. The verb *Tasaddaqa* which literally means ‘to give charity’, requires the existence of a subject and an object, i.e. the one who gives the charity and the one who receives it. In this regard, it is important to know that Allah *the Almighty* erases the sins of the one who forgoes retribution out of charity in proportion to the forgiveness he extends towards his fellow man. As such, it is clear that Allah *the Almighty* wants to spread love amongst mankind.

He *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, ‘...And they who do not judge in accordance with what Allah revealed – they are the evildoers!’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 45) We have already explained the absolute necessity of judging by what Allah has revealed. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَرِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ ۚ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ
هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

We sent Jesus, son of Mary, in their footsteps, to confirming the Torah that had been sent before him: We gave him the Gospel with guidance, light, and confirmation of the Torah already revealed – a guide and lesson for those who take heed of God [46] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 46)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘we caused...to follow’, or *Qaffayna* which means ‘We caused someone to come after another’, for ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* came after Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. In fact, when one man walks behind another, the back, or *Qafa*, of the leader is directed towards the face of the follower. Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘And We caused ‘Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), to follow in the

footsteps of those (earlier prophets), confirming the truth of whatever there still remained...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 45) indicates clearly that 'Isa (Jesus) was sent in confirmation of the truth of which Musa (Moses) was sent, i.e. the Torah. He *the Almighty* then says: '...And we revealed to him the Gospel, wherein there was guidance and light...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 45). We previously explained that this 'guidance and light' was appropriate for the environment wherein it was revealed.

In Arabic language, there are expressions which are said to be of 'relatively close' meanings. For example, if a man in a village tells his son to turn on the light, the boy will light a kerosene lamp, but if a man in a city tells his son to turn on the light, the boy will press the button so that the electric light comes on. These relative aspects could thus make a word indicate two meanings. Another example to clearly illustrate this point is a man living in an apartment who considers his ceiling high, yet this high ceiling is the floor for those living above him. Therefore, the word 'ceiling' in this case indicates both the meanings of 'height' and 'floor'. This is actually what we call 'relative concept'.

Likewise, a man might be a son, but this does not mean 'he cannot also be a father to his own son'. So, the words 'guidance and light' in this context are relative concepts. It is assumed that every 'guidance and light' was appropriate to the environment wherein it was revealed. For example, Jews were materialistic people, and thus, the Torah was revealed to them since it was most appropriate for them during that particular period of time. This materialistic environment was afterwards in need of spiritual energy, and thus, the Gospel was revealed with all the required spirituality. This is why when 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon him* was asked a question about inheritance, he said, 'I was not sent to apportion inheritance.' This statement of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* indicates that he knew for certain that he had come bearing a spiritual rejuvenation comprised of emotional exhortations and counsels.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَلِيَحْكُمَ أَهْلَ الْإِنجِيلِ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ
بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**So let the followers of the Gospel judge according to what
God has sent down in it. Those who do not judge
according to what God has revealed are lawbreakers [47]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 47)**

This verse indicates clearly that the followers of the Gospel should adhere to the laws and rulings mentioned in it, namely the Gospel. If we understand this verse in the light of the previously mentioned one, we will fully realise that alongside its spiritual dimensions, the Gospel adopts the fundamentals of the laws found in the Torah. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* made it clear that he who does not judge in the light of what Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed is iniquitous, that is, he has become disobedient. As a matter of fact, if someone does not obey Allah's Orders and Commands pertaining to His Divinity and Lordship, then he is judged to be a disbeliever and denier of the truth. In the same respect, if he does not obey Allah's Divine Rulings relating to how correctly judge amongst people, he is an evildoer. So, all of these concepts are closely related to each other.

Having shed light on the Torah and the Gospel, He *the Almighty* moves to speak about what He revealed to the Seal of all the Prophets and Messengers, namely, the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ
فَأَحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا
مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ
فَأَسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

**We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth,
confirming the Scriptures that came before it and with final
authority over them: so judge between them according to what
God has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate
from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law**

and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about [48] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 48)

When we read the phrase ‘We sent’, or *Anzalna*, we know for certain that is Allah *the Almighty*, the Supreme Lawgiver is the One Who has legislated. Some people yet wish to foist their foolish beliefs onto people by claiming that Islam is a ‘progressive religion’, while others will describe it as a ‘reactionary religion’; both of these kinds of people are actually seeking to ascribe something to Islam which has nothing to do with it. We say to these people to not say that, but say instead that Islam is a ‘heavenly religion’ since it has been sent down from Allah *the Almighty*. Islam possesses all the benefits and advantages of different aspects and ideologies of life, whether materialistic or spiritual. Islam actually brought forth true social advancement and scientific progress since the meaning of ‘progress’ is for man to keep on refining himself until all people are equal.

Islam benefits man in this worldly life and the life to come, as well. People with these ideologies do not really understand their own ideas, whether they are progressive, reactionary, right wing, or even left wing. In this regard, it is of great importance to know that the contemporary ideologies and thoughts which have caused all this conflict in the world from East to West are capitalism, communism, socialism, existentialism and so on.

For example, when we consider those who instigated the Communist Revolution of 1917, we find that they claimed to have started on the road to true communism via the route of socialism. In fact, they should have headed towards what they claimed, but instead we actually find that the more time elapses, the more they deviate away from their original ideas until finally they turned on themselves. This definitively proves that the ideology they chose for themselves was false.

In this respect, the following question shall be asked, ‘Did capitalism remain intact?’ The answer is a definitive ‘No’, since events forced capitalism to give workers their entitled rights, and thus, capital no longer has its great

impact. Furthermore, socialism became highly affected by capitalism, and so did capitalism became affected by socialism since it adopted more and more socialistic methodologies; so much intermixing of the two happened to the extent that both of them want to come to a common ground with each other. However, Islam created this common ground from the very beginning, respecting both capital and labour. In addition, it obligates everyone to firmly adhere to performing his due role in life and thus guarantee that the course of life will continue to the end of time. This is why we find capitalists speaking of the need for job creation and incentives. In the same respect, socialism did not achieve its goals, but rather ended up with destroying human rights. Furthermore, what about communities that were never touched by socialism, before it existed, and wherein there were people who exploited others?

Logic says that it was absolutely necessary for socialism to believe in the existence of the Hereafter wherein those who previously exploited people would be punished. As such, they, namely socialists, had to be religious. Likewise, in these communities that adopted capitalism, which centres on material profit, people were bereft of spirituality.

Once again, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'We sent' or *Anzalna* implies that a message of guidance came down, or *nazala*, from a higher source. If we reflect carefully upon the statements of the Quran, we find that Allah *the Almighty* wants to elevate our rank through revelation by asking us to come to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to listen to the Divine Orders and Commands. As a result, we will be closely connected to heaven and not the earth.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We sent to you (Muhammad) the Scripture with the truth...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). We observe that the verses of the Quran are in correlation with each other. Yet, the fact that the Quran came down from a higher source with the truth requires that all the laws included in it must be in conformity with life. In another position of the Quran, He *the Almighty* says that He has sent down the Quran with the truth and with the truth it, namely the Quran, has descended: 'And, in accordance with the requirements of truth and wisdom We have sent it down, and with truth and wisdom has it descended...' (*al-Isra'*: 105). This means that the Quran was really sent down from Allah *the Almighty* and not a human invention. In addition, it clearly

indicates that it has come down bearing the way of guidance from Allah by means of which justice will be maintained everywhere and by everyone. In addition, all the laws under which the course of life runs normally will be guaranteed and protected by virtue of this Divine Guidance mentioned in the Quran.

Careful reflection upon the aforementioned verse indicates that it is comprehensive which means it tells clearly that the Quran confirms the truth of the earlier heavenly revealed Scriptures. Yet, there is a good question to be asked in this respect, 'The word *Al-Kitab* has been mentioned twice in this verse, so, is there any difference between them?'

We know well that the definite article 'the', or '*Al*', can be used in Arabic language to refer to either 'classes' or 'specifics'. For example, when you say, 'I met a man, and I honoured the man', the word 'the' refers specifically to a particular man whom you knew before, and not one you met. Accordingly, the word *Al-Kitab* mentioned first refers specifically to the Quran, while the second one refers to all the heavenly scriptures before it. As such, we can deduce that the Quran is a guardian and an overseer over all these previously revealed Scriptures since they had been marred by corruption and alteration.

So, the word 'truth' mentioned in this verse clearly means that the Quran, the seal of all the Divine Scriptures, was sent down bearing the absolute truth for all the affairs of the world and the needs of human life. In addition, it means that no alteration or distortion shall affect or change it. Therefore, it is clear that the meaning of the words 'with the truth' in this verse extends to the content of the Quran and to the process of its revelation, as well. The Quran was revealed after all other heavenly revealed Scriptures which were appropriate for the times in which they were revealed. Indeed, He *the Almighty* created man in order that they could bear witness that He is the only One Who deserves to be worshipped and that they could thrive in and build this world by means of the thinking, energy, and adaptable material He gave them. So, if they wanted to live a basic life without any advancement or comfort, they could find all they needed in the constituents of the earth; yet if they wanted to advance, then they had to make use of their minds and energies to benefit from the material created by Him *the Almighty* and thus, they would be able to uncover the Secrets of Allah in the universe.

The Secrets of Allah *the Almighty* in the universe are too many, and they certainly serve us even if we do not know how. For example, we recently knew about the force of gravity which holds the planets and the celestial bodies in their due positions. In addition, we knew nothing about the positive and negative electrical charges which flow through the universe until recently.

As a matter of fact, when He *the Almighty* wants people to reveal a new secret in the universe, He provides mankind with the means for discovering it. In this respect, we should know that every secret of this universe, which has been subdued for man, will be uncovered in a defined and fixed period of time set by Allah *the Almighty*. This discovery of the secrets of the universe may be the result of the work of the human mind, which may rely on pieces of information to reach such conclusions about these secrets, just like a geometry exercise a student solves after having been given certain information by a teacher in which he uses this information to prove the conclusion his teacher wants him to prove. Thus, if it happens that man's mind studies the matter scientifically and empirically, the secret may be revealed along with the study; yet if the time comes for the secret to be discovered in the universe, but man has not studied the clues which would lead to it, and Allah nevertheless wills for the secret to be revealed, what happens then?! Will Allah *the Almighty* prevent its disclosure? The answer is 'No'. In fact, He *the Almighty* allows this secret to be accidentally discovered by a researcher who was actually looking for something else. In this case, we say that the secret comes into the open coincidentally.

As a matter of fact, if we carefully consider today's inventions, innovations and discoveries, we will find that the most crucial ones belong to the second kind, that is, universal secrets which are disclosed coincidentally. As a matter of fact, when Allah *the Almighty* allows every secret in the universe to be disclosed in a defined period of time, this means that this revelation of this particular secret is one of Allah's Countless Bounties upon mankind. It is certainly well known that He *the Almighty* out of His Favour, granted life to man, gave him power to do things and imparted some of His Knowledge to him: 'Then they found a servant of Ours, upon whom We had bestowed Mercy from Us, and whom We had taught Knowledge from Ourselves.' (*al-Kahf*: 65) Furthermore, He

gave him wisdom by means of which he can gain his livelihood: 'He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good; and none would take heed except those endowed with understanding.' (*al-Baqara*: 269) In this way, He *the Almighty* wants His creation to interact with the universe in order to discover things. In this respect, if Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to have this interaction, He will surely give us a way of guidance which protects our energies and our ideas from what damages them.

Truthfully speaking, conflict of people's caprices and whims is the main reason behind the corruption of man's ideas and energies; one's whims may be in conflict with another's, and the same applies for ideas; they may oppose each other. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* wanted us to follow one way of guidance, so that all our actions would stem from one main source, that is, that which was sent down from a higher source, the Supreme Creator, Who can never be changed by anything. As for those things over which there is no difference, He *the Almighty* left us to study them for ourselves since we would be compelled to agree on them. This is why we always say that there are no conflicts whatsoever in matters of experimental sciences. In fact, we never find scholars classifying electricity into Russian, or American, etc. This is based on the fact that the laboratory does not take sides, and lifeless material has no bias. Therefore, results obtained in laboratories have only one meaning. In other words, they are conclusive.

We see that the scientists of the east and west agree concerning the results of practical experiments, and each nation tries to steal the results of the others in order to use them to help its own advancement and progress. However, when it comes to human whims, the matter is completely different since each nation tries to keep the whims of others outside its borders; for whims never reach a common ground. That is why we find all the Divine Commands fall under the following two categories: 'Dos' and 'Don'ts'. By this, He *the Almighty* ensures our unity and prevents our energies from working against each other. This point is affirmed in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* explains that if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin, and all that lives in them (would long ago have perished). 'And if the truth had followed their desires, verily the

heavens and the earth and whosoever is therein would have been corrupted. Nay, We have brought them their admonition, but from their own admonition they now turn aside.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71)

As a result, it is clear that Allah's Way of Guidance in His Universe only came to give order to man's behaviours in those matters wherein whims differ. As for those behaviours of life wherein whims do not differ, He *the Almighty* left them free and unrestricted since people are compelled to agree on them, for material does not take sides and the laboratory has no bias.

This is why we previously explained that when Allah *the Almighty* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as the Seal of all the Prophets and Messengers, He *Glorified is He* gave him His commands under the two imperative forms of 'Do' and 'Do not'. As for the matter of experimental and material science, He *the Almighty* conveyed His Ruling on it to us by using Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself as an example. When he came to Medina, he found the people cross-pollinating date palms as they planted them, and when he saw some people doing this, he said to them, 'Were you not to do so, it would be good.' So, they did not cross-pollinate the date palms, and so the harvest was poor and the dates failed. Then, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed by them and said, 'What is wrong with your date-palms?' They said, 'O, Prophet Muhammad! You told us such-and-such.' He said, 'If there is any use of it, then they should do it, for it was just a personal opinion of mine, and do not strictly follow my personal opinion. However, when I say to you anything on behalf of Allah, then do accept and follow it, for I do not attribute lie to Him *the Exalted and Glorious*.' Another narration recounts that he said, 'I am but a human being. If I command you something to do with your religion, and then hold firmly to it, but if I command you something of my own opinion, then I am but a human being.' In a third narration, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said very clearly, 'You have better knowledge (of a technical skill) in the affairs of the world.'⁽¹⁾

This Hadith indicates clearly that Prophet Muhammad left it to his community to look after their practical and worldly affairs. These words of

(1) Narrated by Muslim

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not yet give people carte blanche with the teachings of the religion, for he made a clear distinction between that which Divine Guidance must be followed and that which is left up to man. As we know, man undergoes different stages throughout his life: infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and advanced maturity. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* ordains laws in such a way that is appropriate for each of these life stages. Due to the fact that the period of infancy requires material support, He *the Almighty* first gives it to an infant. Yet, when a child attains the age of puberty, He *the Almighty* bestows upon him the ability of perception. Furthermore, when it is the age of adulthood, He passes the reins on to him so he can live in the world according to the teachings of His Way of Guidance. The Message of Islam thus was appropriate for the time in which it was revealed. In fact, Allah *the Almighty* entrusted the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to defend and protect the course of life from human desires and whims. Regarding this, it is of great importance to know that Messengers would be sent by Allah to convey His Guidance to their own peoples and nations, yet when they disobeyed their Messengers, the heaven itself would afflict punishment upon them when needed; but when humanity matured, Allah ordered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to convey the Message and allowed him to punish them if they contradict Divine Guidance in the affairs pertaining to the smooth running of the course of life since he *peace and blessings be upon him* had become capable of being trusted to do so.

If you look at how the world was in the past, you will find that people lived in isolation from each other, to the extent that each community in one place knew nothing about other communities. In addition, each community had its own system, course of life, customs, and traditions. Yet, Islam came for all humanity since Allah always knew for certain that Islam would come at a time when the barriers of time and space would be broken and when a social ailment that emerged in the east would spread immediately to the west, and likewise from west to east. What that means is that Islam is a universal religion which takes into account the fact that the world has become a small village in which information and news travel from east to west in the blink of an eye.

Islam came at a time when the world started to share the same ailments and problems, and therefore, a comprehensive cure needed to be sent down that would be suitable to apply for all mankind at all times and all places. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent with the final Message since no other Prophets will follow. It is the timeless Message that no other Messengers will be sent to complete or perfect, so Allah has undertaken to preserve and protect that Message from distortion or alteration. Divine Scriptures that were revealed prior to the Quran contained the Ordinances of Allah that were directed to certain people at specific times. Allah, therefore, assigned preservation of these Scriptures to the people they were sent down to. Instead of submitting to Allah and obeying His command, they manipulated His Scriptures and abandoned His guidance. Any command is subject to being obeyed or rejected based on the attitude of those commanded. Adherents of the former Abrahamic religions distorted their Scriptures which started by forgetting some of them, as Allah says: ‘...and have forgotten some of what they were told to remember...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 13).

Moreover, they concealed part of what they did not forget, as Allah says: ‘As for those who hide the proofs and guidance We send down, after We have made them clear to people in the Scripture, Allah rejects them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 159). Thus, they forgot some of what Allah revealed to them; they concealed and altered some of it, and even, distorting it with their tongues: ‘There are some who twist the Scripture with their tongues...’ (*Al-’Imran*: 78).

They did not stop at doing just that; they invented words of their own and said they were from Allah. The responsibility of preserving the previous Scriptures had been appointed to them: ‘...Allah’s Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 44).

Since the previous nations deviated from the Straight Path and disobeyed Allah’s Guidance, He has undertaken to preserve His Final Book and has not assigned this responsibility to human beings who were tested several times, yet failed to comply with His Ordinance. Also, the Quran is the final Revelation which will never be followed by another Book, so Allah has undertaken to guard it against distortion: ‘Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.’ (*al-Hijr*: 9) Therefore, the Quran prevails

over the previous Books in the sense that it reveals the truth that has been concealed in them while correcting what has been distorted. Allah has guaranteed that it will never be manipulated, so when the word *Al-kitab* ('Allah's Book', 'the Book', 'the Scripture', etc.) is mentioned without any particular reference, it means the Noble Quran: 'We sent to you (Muhammad) *Al-kitab* (the Scripture) with the truth...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48), so this refers to the Quran; then He says in the same verse: '...confirming *Al-kitab* (the Scriptures) that came before it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48) where *Al-kitab* refers to the Psalms, Torah, Bible and the Scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses). The Quran was sent down '... with final authority over them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48), which means to tell both what is true and what has been distorted in them.

Whenever Allah describes Himself with a word that is also used to describe His servants, it does not mean any form of similarity whatsoever, for an adjective becomes completely different in quality and degree when attributed to Him. For example, Allah is All Hearing, and human beings also have the sense of hearing. This does not mean that the stated attribute is somehow 'shared' by the servants and their Lord; rather, Allah uses a word that is familiar with the intent to bring the meaning closer to our minds. Therefore, we must always understand the words used to describe His Attributes in the light of the fact that '...There is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

When the word *Al-ghani* (wealthy) is used with Allah, it means the Self-Sufficient Who controls the treasures of the heavens and earth and Who is in need of no one and on Whom everyone is dependent. Thus, the scope of the word is completely different when it is used with Him unlike its meaning when it describes any of His servants. When the word *Al-Muhyaymin* is used to describe the Quran, it means the following: '...with final authority over them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). Meanwhile, it refers to an Attribute of Allah which can be interpreted in several ways. The word *muhyaymin* has multiple connotations. It denotes 'Protector', 'Guardian', 'Overseer', and 'Witness'. It means the Dominant One Who takes care of all things. All these meanings are related and apply to Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*. He takes care of all things and disposes all affairs, which absolutely implies that He watches over everything and is Witness over all His creation. In this sense, He is also the Guardian and Protector of His servants.

As we have also pointed out, the word *Muhyamin* is used to describe the Quran, and in this case, it further means that the Book is sent with final authority over all previous Books to confirm the truth of what they contain and unveil the falsehood invented by those to whom they were sent down. The 'Scriptures' mentioned in the verse refers to the original Books revealed by Allah, so whatever truth they still contain is confirmed by the Quran, while whatever truth was distorted is corrected by the Quran. The Quran cleanses Allah's Message from human prejudices, and it is in this sense that the Quran is sent as a final authority over previous Scriptures. Allah then says: '...so judge between them according to what Allah has sent down...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). The Arabic word *yahkum* (judge) is derived from the root *h-k-m* from which the word *hakamah*, or 'bit' which is the metal mouthpiece connected to the bridle of a horse so that it can be controlled. Allah's Guidance, likewise, is the authority that keeps creation from evading the Will of the Creator.

This command of Allah: '...so judge between them according to what Allah has sent down...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48) applies to disbelievers as well which is also confirmed by the verse: 'If they come to you (Prophet) for judgement, you can either judge between them, or decline— if you decline, they will not harm you in any way, but if you do judge between them, judge justly. Allah loves the just' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42). This is the rule on which judgments of all cases should be based. However, why would they seek Prophet Muhammad's judgment, while they do not believe in him? The disbelievers sought through Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to sanction their own whims. They wanted him to resolve problems between them in the way they desired, and thus obtain approval for the judgment that pleased them. They already defied the Law of Allah and did not intend to submit to His Guidance by asking His Messenger to resolve between them. For example, they wanted to evade the punishment of stoning and replace it by a lighter one, so they went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Had he sanctioned a lighter punishment, they would have taken it; otherwise, they would reject his judgment. They went to him seeking an easier punishment in order to please themselves, not to please Allah by complying to His Ordinance. Since they were people of power and influence, they told Prophet Muhammad *peace*

and blessings be upon him that if he judged between them in the way they desired, they would believe in his Message and call their people to embrace Islam, too. Such was their design.

However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refused to yield to their will by obeying the words of Allah Almighty: ‘...so judge between them according to what Allah has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). If they had a copy of the Torah which was free of distortion, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would have told them to follow the judgment of the Torah. When the Prophet asked the most learned among them to recite the ruling stated in the Torah, one of them tried to conceal the lines containing the ruling of stoning with his hand as the verses of the Torah were recited. Since the truth in the Torah had been altered, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had to judge according to the Quran, for it was on the basis of it that the truth of previous Scriptures could be assessed: ‘...So judge between them according to what Allah has sent down. Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). As the verse cites, they were tempted to forsake what Allah has enjoined on them in order to further their temporal power, a behaviour which Allah *the Almighty* describes by saying: ‘They have sold Allah’s message for a trifling gain...’ (*at-Tawba*: 9). They only wanted to falsify Allah’s Law for their own advantage by seeking Prophet Muhammad’s judgment, and this is why Allah warned His Messenger against following them: ‘...Do not follow their whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law and a path to each of you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). Suppose that some of the rulings in the Torah were not distorted, but Islam was sent down with new rulings that abrogate those of the Torah. Then which should be followed? The Quran should be followed then because it has been sent down with final authority over previous Revelations so as to correct as well as to perfect what they contained.

The essence of creed is one and unchanging in all religions. Only juristic rulings that govern the various aspects of people’s lives vary from one religion to another.

This was due to the fact that it was based on the time, place, and condition of the people to whom the message was sent. When Allah sent Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) to the children of Israel, he told them, as the Quran quotes: '...and to make some things lawful to you which used to be forbidden...' (*Al-'Imran*: 50). Things were forbidden in the Jewish religion which Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) came to make lawful again. Allah made certain things forbidden to the children of Israel as a punishment to them: 'For the wrongdoings done by the Jews, We forbade them certain good things that had been permitted to them before...' (*an-Nisa'*: 160). Allah forbids His servants certain things since they would harm them, and He may also forbid them things that had been lawful to discipline them. The children of Israel were forbidden certain good things as a punishment for allowing themselves other things which Allah had forbidden. '... We have assigned a law and a path to each of you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). The verse uses the word *shari'a*, Arabic for 'law', and *manhaj*, Arabic for 'path'. The former literally means a 'waterway', while the latter literally refers to a 'dry land path'. These meanings allude to the essential requirements of life, namely water and land. The Rulings of Allah are essential for the prosperity and well-being of mankind, and thus the similarity. Allah has assigned a law to each, but He says: 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah)...' (*ash-Shura*: 13).

Therefore, the fundamentals of faith never change throughout time. During the first stage of its advent, Islam focused on establishing these fundamentals unequivocally by declaring the Oneness of Allah, His absolute Perfection and the falsehood of polytheism. After having ingrained faith in the hearts of believers, Allah established the juristic laws that govern the affairs of human lives, and this was during the second stage of the Revelation.

Rulings were ordained gradually to make compliance easier for believers. Juristic rulings were enjoined at the time of Prophet Nuh (Noah) that suited his people. Then, Allah prescribed in Islam, the Final Message, other rulings that fit all subsequent times and places after its advent until the end of time. Thus, He sent down His guidance to mankind across time in several stages to suit their lives. All these laws came from the same source, and

therefore, we believe in all of them since we believe in Him Who has sent them down to us.

Allah then says in the verse: ‘...If Allah had so willed, He would have made you one community...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). Had He willed, Allah could have ordained the same rulings, the same obligations and prohibitions for all mankind, but this would not have been appropriate for the different times and various, quite isolated, communities that had lived before the coming of Islam. Such communities were isolated in the sense that each had a quite different nature and way of life, along with suffering from different social ailments, which makes it logical that different rulings had to be ordained for them to deal with their quite different lives and problems. ‘...If Allah had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good. You will all return to Allah...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48).

Let me present to you some of the insights I have about this verse. Had we all been made a single community, worship would have perhaps been more of a habit than a manifestation of devotion. We would perform worship without experiencing the joy and feeling the honour of being in a state of obedience to Allah. I believe this is one important reason why all mankind was not just one community with the same characteristics and the same religious duties. We get tired of monotony. For example, we eat, drink, and have intercourse with our spouses, so perhaps the pleasure associated with that may fade away as we get used to it. During *Ramadan*, we are commanded to observe *sawm* (fasting), so we abstain from all that from dawn to sunset. When it is time to break our fasts, we then feel the pleasure of what we had been deprived of during the day, and we feel rewarded for our patience, carrying out our duty and devoting ourselves to Allah, let alone the matchless reward in the Hereafter.

More importantly, as the verse cites, we have been made into different communities as a test for mankind: ‘...but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). Tests are not bad in themselves, but they are considered bad when we fail in them. If we are wise enough to persevere and pass them successfully, the outcomes are rewarding and prove

that they were indeed worth the time, effort, and determination. Therefore, so long as Allah has willed to test us through His messages, we should strive to succeed by racing to do righteous deeds that please Him: ‘...but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good. You will all return to Allah and He will make clear to you the matters about which you differed’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 48). Success in a test requires perseverance, for otherwise, the outcomes will be most unwelcome. Acting heedless of Allah may secure transient pleasures, and perhaps devotion is rather hard for the human soul. However, reward for doing righteous deeds is uncomprehending joy, that is matchless, and through obedience, the pleasure that would be actually attained is above all in comparison to worldly pleasures. Satan and our own selves make temptations alluring so that we indulge in passing desires which begin and end in this fleeting life as they die with our death, after which lasting suffering awaits in the Hereafter. Is it wise to sell eternal happiness for such a paltry price? This is indeed a loss, and the real triumph is to succeed in the tests to which Allah subjects us.

Racing to do good may be tiring, but the outcome is worth the struggle. Allah has not forbidden you some of the desires of this world because He wants to deprive or torture you; He does so since He knows they will only bring suffering and harm if you approach them. Moreover, these prohibitions are only for the short span of time in this worldly life, and the reward is unconditional happiness that will never come to an end in the Afterlife. Such is the fruit of devotion; so it is wise to commit ourselves to it even though it is hard for the human soul.

Allah says: ‘...you will all return to Allah...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 48). Everyone returns to Allah, both the pious and the wicked, ‘...and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 48). As long as people differ, there must be some in the right and others in the wrong. On the Day of Judgement, Allah will resolve between His servants, and everyone will see to which of the two groups they belong.

Allah says in the following verse:

وَأِنْ أَحْكَمَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ أَنْ
يَفْتِنُوكَ عَنْ بَعْضِ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ يَرِيذُ اللَّهُ أَنْ
يُصِيبَهُمْ بَعْضُ ذُنُوبِهِمْ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ لَفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

So [Prophet] judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow their whims, and take good care that they do not tempt you away from any of what God has sent down to you. If they turn away, remember that God intends to punish them for some of the sins they have committed: a great many people are lawbreakers [49] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 49)

Someone might say that Allah said right in the previous verse: ‘We sent to you (Muhammad) the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it and with final authority over them...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). The answer to this question may be manifested clearly in the fact that the Quran was revealed to determine what was true from previous revelations, and thus Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was obligated to implement it. This is why He *the Almighty* says next: ‘So (Prophet) judge between them according to what Allah has sent down.’ Allah *the Almighty* thus tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He sent down the Quran to him with the truth so that it would confirm the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and likewise determine what is true within them. Then, He *the Almighty* orders him *peace and blessings be upon him* to judge amongst them in accordance with what has been revealed in the Quran, even if people bring him anything that contradicts what is revealed in the Quran. In this connection, it is important to know that Allah *the Almighty* orders him *peace and blessings be upon him* to beware of them, lest they tempt him: ‘Do not follow their whims, and take good care that they do not tempt you away from any of what Allah has sent down to you.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 49) To beware means to be cautious and vigilant about someone who wishes to harm you. Truthfully speaking, the one who wants to harm may mistakenly believe that what he is doing is truly good, yet his actions are, indeed, truly evil. Therefore, it is clear that the meaning of *Al-Hadhru* mentioned in this verse is that one must practise utmost caution so that he would not be afflicted with harm from

anyone who may claim to be benefiting him. For example, your adversary might come to you to offer to do you a favour or to give you a hand in something; if this is the case, you should completely reject this help.

In essence, caution requires one to be very attentive at all times. This is why people used to make a connection between the crow and caution, to the extent that they used to narrate this story on the crow that teaches its chick how to be cautious by saying, 'Beware of man, for when he stoops to pick something up from the ground, he is picking up a stone to throw at you.' So, the young crow said to his father, 'What should I do then if this man is already hiding the stone in his pocket?' This story shows how the crow is naturally cautious.

Another striking example regarding this is that of a usurer who makes it seem attractive to people to give their money to him in return for an interest rate of twenty percent; this may seem to be beneficial, but in all actuality it is harmful. Although it may seem to increase one's wealth, it is actually subjecting one who gives in to Allah's Wrath since He *the Almighty* tells us clearly that He will deprive usurious gains of all blessing: 'Allah will blot out interest yet will cause charity to increase.' (*al-Baqara*: 276)

As a matter of fact, usury is a harmful act, for which the adversary embellishes it to make it seem beneficial. This is why Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be cautious. Therefore, what is required of his *peace and blessings be upon him* followers in the light of this Divine Warning? They must also be cautious or beware since even the best of all mankind was instructed by Allah to be so: 'take good care that they do not tempt you away from any of what Allah has sent down to you.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 49) In fact, these types of people planned to deceive Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying to him, 'We have come to you so that you might judge between us, and if you judge in our favour, we will follow you.' As a matter of fact, this saying of these said people might seem on the surface to be beneficial, but Allah *the Almighty* gave His Final and Decisive Ruling on the matter by ordering Prophet Muhammad to beware of them, lest they tempt him away from that which Allah has bestowed upon him from above. (*al-Ma'ida*: 49) Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'If they turn away,

remember that Allah intends to punish them for some of the sins they have committed. A great many people are lawbreakers.' What is meant here is that if they turn away, then you should know (O, Prophet Muhammad) that Allah is protecting you from slipping into any suspicion of falsehood. These people, who do not want you (O, Prophet Muhammad!) to judge amongst them in accordance with what Allah has revealed down, have chosen to remain disbelievers and have distanced themselves from Allah's Way of Guidance. Therefore, He *the Almighty* will afflict them with His Punishment in return for their sins. In this regard, it is of great importance to know that Allah *Glorified is He* never commits injustice against them; rather, He only afflicts them with punishment because of their sins, and He knows them best, for He is All-Knowing of all of mankind.

He *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with His saying; '...a great many people are lawbreakers.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 49) This part of the verse indicates clearly that such people are treated as lawbreakers because they disobey the teachings of their Prophets and Messengers. In addition, they rejected what has been revealed in their Scriptures. In fact, had they followed the teachings of their heavenly Scriptures, they would have believed in the truth of which Prophet Muhammad, the unlettered Prophet, came. In the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Those who follow the Messenger, the Prophet, and the nations whom they find mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel which are with them. He enjoins on them good and forbids them evil and makes lawful for them the good things and forbids them the bad things and remove from them their burdens and shackles that were upon them. So those who shall believe in him and honour and support him and help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him - these shall prosper.' (*al-A'raf*: 157)

So, the way to happiness and prosperity was written and recorded in the Torah and the Gospel; the Divine Command to believe in Prophet Muhammad, the unlettered Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was given in previous Scriptures revealed before the Quran. In fact, the Torah and the Gospel contained glad tidings that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be sent to enjoin all that is good and forbid all that is evil, to make lawful for mankind all things man's natural predisposition sees as good and to forbid

them from changing or corrupting the Divine Way of Guidance with which he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent. In the same respect, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was to exhort them not to give in to stubbornness, for he came to lift the punishment to be afflicted upon them due to their corruption of Allah's Way of Guidance. So, all who followed the light and guidance of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would feel salvation and triumph. As for those who did not follow this light of Prophet Muhammad, they would thereby be judged as breakers of Divine Laws. In fact, any attempt to deny the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is doomed to failure, for those who truly know and understand the Torah and Gospel are fully acquainted with the description of him (Prophet Muhammad). In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that the people of the Book know Prophet Muhammad as they know their children, yet some of them knowingly suppress the truth: 'Those to whom We have given the Book recognise it even as they recognise their sons, but surely some of them hide the truth knowingly.' (*al-Baqara*: 146)

We all know what 'Abdullah ibn Salam *Allah be pleased with him* did when he went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to announce that he had embraced Islam. He said, 'Indeed, I know Prophet Muhammad better than I know my own son.' 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* then said to him: 'How can this be, O, Ibn Salam?' 'Abdullah ibn Salam replied, 'Because I testify with complete truth and certitude that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, but I cannot testify with such certainty about my own son, for I do not know what women might do.' To this, 'Umar said, 'May Allah grant you all success, O, Ibn Salam!'

However, some of the scholars and rabbis of the children of Israel concealed the glad tidings of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, for they desired leadership and the gifts which people would bring them, and therefore, they sought out the descriptions of Prophet Muhammad, yet concealed them. Indeed, as long as they did this, we should know that Allah wanted to afflict them with punishment for some of their sins.

We may observe that whenever Allah *the Almighty* instructed His Messenger to address the Jews, He *the Almighty* never pronounced an accusation against all of them, but only to some, even if this 'some' comprised a great deal of

them. This is what we might call 'allowing for the possibility' which means that some of the Jews had embraced Islam in secret. It is true that many of them were iniquitous, but some of them were not. This point is supported by what has been narrated by Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* who said, 'A Jewish man and woman committed adultery, and one of the Jews said, "Let us go to this Prophet, (Muhammad) for he is sent with lenient laws; and if he gives us any ruling which is less harsh than stoning to death, we will accept it and use it as an argument before Allah, saying, 'One of Your Prophets gave us this ruling.' So, they went to the *masjid* (mosque) where Prophet Muhammad sat with his Companions and said, "O, father of Al-Qasim, what do you say about a man and woman who commit adultery?" He *peace and blessings be upon him* did not answer them until he first went to their school. When he got there, Prophet Muhammad asked a young man who despised speaking untruthful words that his people would speak, and he said, "The Torah tells us that the punishment is stoning." So, Prophet Muhammad judged that the punishment should be stoning.'

In this same respect, Al-Baraa' ibn 'Azib *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Prophet Muhammad passed by a Jew with a blackened face due to being flogged. He called them and asked, 'Is this the punishment for the adulterer that you find in your Book?' They replied, 'Yes.' Then, he called one of their scholars and said, 'I adjure you, by Allah Who sent down the Torah to Moses, to tell me if this is the punishment for the adulterer that you find in your Book?' He said, 'No, if you had not adjured me by Allah, I would not have told you. The punishment for the adulterer that we find in our Book is stoning, but many of our nobles were being stoned (because of the prevalence of adultery among them) so that if we caught one of our nobles (committing adultery), we would let him go. However, if we caught one of the weak amongst us, we would carry out the punishment on him. We said, "Come, let us agree upon something that we may impose on both noble and weak alike." So, we agreed to blacken the face and whip them instead of stoning.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'O, Allah, I am the first of those who revive Your Command which they had killed off.' Thus, he issued orders that he (the man) be stoned.⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by *Muslim*

So, many of them were iniquitous, and a few of them were not iniquitous since they were contemplating about believing in Prophet Muhammad. In fact, had the charge here been that every single one of them was iniquitous, those who were considering believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have sensed the light and guidance he brought. When Allah *Glorified is He* says that many of them are lawbreakers, this means that those who were thinking about believing in him *peace and blessings be upon him* would perceive and realise the clear presence of light and guidance in his words.

We might ask why they wanted to distort Allah's laws merely to gain temporal power and a paltry sum from the matters in which they sought. Why did they do this? The True Lord gives us the answer:

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Do they want judgment according to the time of pagan ignorance? Is there any better judge than God for those of firm faith? [50] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 50)

In order for us to know the precise meaning of 'ignorance', we must call to mind the divisions of attribution of which we have previously mentioned. We know that every word we speak has meaning, and when we hear a word, a meaning comes to mind based on its context. For example, when we hear the word 'mountain', an image of a mountain comes to the mind, but the exact state of the mountain does not since the word lacks precise context. So a word has a meaning, but this meaning does not give any real benefit on its own. If we say 'Cairo is overpopulated', or 'its facilities are in poor condition', we are giving a description which clarifies what we mean when we say 'Cairo'.

There is a difference between an expression which has a single meaning without any connotation, and an expression which has a connotation with it. When an ancient Arab heard an expression that had no connotation or implied meaning, he would not accept it. An Arab once said, 'I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', as though 'Messenger' is an adjective describing 'Muhammad' that has no connotation or implied meaning; so another Arab, who heard him, said, 'What about Muhammad?' He did so in order to alert the first speaker to the fact that he had not given a complete thought. So every

word has a meaning, but this meaning is isolated and is in need of an attribution. For example, if you say to your friend, 'Muhammad', and your friend knows who this Muhammad is, he will ask you, 'What about Muhammad?' When he says this, he is asking for the implied or exact meaning so he can know what Muhammad did or what happened to him. Therefore, if you say, 'Muhammad visited me yesterday,' and the speech then becomes meaningful.

So every individual word has its own meaning in isolation, and when a connotation or an implied meaning is added to it, it gives the meaning shape. If this attribution is factual, and the one who says it believes it and can prove it, this attribution is called 'knowledge'; since knowledge means an attribution which is held to be true, is actually true and can be proven true. For example, when we say, 'The earth is spherical', these words first evoke an image of the earth, and then add an attribution to it, namely 'spherical'. Therefore, we believe it to be spherical, and reality affirms that it is. When we give proof for it, it becomes 'knowledge'.

If the attribution is factual and believed, but we cannot prove it, this is 'blind following' or 'imitation'. It is similar to a child who repeats certain facts, which his father tells him, but he cannot prove them to be true. He follows someone whom he trusts. The stage below 'knowledge' is 'imitation'. If one believes that an attribution is factual, but in actuality it is not, then this is 'ignorance'. Ignorance does not mean that you do not know; it means that you think you know something which is actually contrary to reality. Being ignorant is different from being uneducated since an uneducated person simply does not know, whilst the ignorant person 'knows' something which is contrary to reality, and he clings to this false knowledge: 'Then is it the judgment of (the time of) ignorance they desire?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 50)

The True Lord in the verse asks if they wish to continue in their false, ignorant beliefs. As we know, dealing with an uneducated person is different from dealing with an ignorant person since you can tell an uneducated person the information you want to teach him, and he will accept it. As for the ignorant person, you must do two things with him: 1) you must help him to cast the false idea from his mind; 2) you must convince him of the true idea. The people who cause problems for those who preach religion are the

ignorant people who not only harbour erroneous beliefs but also adhere and hold to false concepts.

However, what if an attribution is open to being both affirmed and negated? If affirmation is equal to negation, this is *doubt*; and if affirmation is stronger, this is *supposition*; and if negation is stronger, this is *delusion*. Thus, it becomes clear to us that dealing with the ignorant person is difficult, and the people who cause problems in this world are the ignorant since they harbour false beliefs. Also, if Allah has given His judgment, then why are they not satisfied by this? Do they desire to be ruled by the law of pagan ignorance? The people of the Book themselves also used to despise the laws of pagan ignorance.

Yet, we should notice this disdain, or despising, existed at a time when the confrontation existed between the pagans and the people of the Book, and they predicted that they would attain a victory over the people of Mecca and Medina. They even said many times, 'The time is ripe for the coming of a prophet whom we shall follow, and alongside whom we shall slay you as' Ad and Iram were slain.' However, no sooner did the Messenger of Allah come that they began to say the opposite. What did they say to the ignorant people? The True Lord tells us the answer: 'Have you not seen those who were given a portion of the Scripture, who believe in superstition and false objects of worship and say about the disbelievers, "These are better guided than the believers as to the way"?' (*an-Nisa'*: 51)

Some of the Jewish rabbis went to the Quraysh, and some of the leaders of the Quraysh asked them, 'You are people of the Book and possessors of ancient knowledge. Tell us what should think about Muhammad.' The rabbis asked, 'What is Muhammad to you?' The Qurayshi leaders said, 'We slaughter great camels, give people milk and water, release prisoners of war, keep our family ties, provide water for the pilgrims and our religion is ancient, while Muhammad's religion is new.' The rabbis replied, 'You are better than him and most certainly more rightly guided.' This was the extent of their deception. Narrators tell another story which is relevant to this subject. A rabbi said to Abu Sufyan, 'By Allah, you are certainly more rightly guided than he is.' The reason they said this was that they were envious of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Therefore, were the people of the Book content to be ruled by the laws of pagan ignorance? No, it was really a matter of contradiction and inner conflict, and as long as they were at conflict with their own selves, it was easy for them to be at conflict with the scripture which had been revealed to them. Therefore, the True Lord asked: 'Then is it the judgement of (the time of) ignorance they desire? (*al-Ma'ida*: 50) Then He gives the contrasting side of the matter: 'But who is better than Allah in judgment?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 50) He did not say that the best lawgivers are Muslims since it is possible that some could go astray. Therefore, He referred the matter back to that which never alters, namely the Law of Allah. Also, when He *the Exalted* affirmed this, He always knew that one day some Muslims would come along and stray from His Way of Guidance.

We sometimes see a Muslim acting in an impious way, but do we attribute his behaviour to Islam? No, we look instead to see the ruling Allah affirmed in His Book. When we see that Allah's Law declares a certain action to be illegal and prescribes punishment for it, the punishment also applies to impious Muslim. For example, the True Lord says: ' (As for) the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38) This law applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims. We do not maintain that this is the law of Muslims, and that is the law of pagan ignorance, rather, we say, 'This is the law of the Revealer of religion, Allah Himself.'

We may observe that the True Lord's Words 'But who is better than Allah in judgment?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 50) are in the form of a question. Naturally, a question is a way of conveying an image of something to the mind, not its reality. When a speaker asks a listener to tell him the answer, we wonder whether the questioner knows the answer or not. In normal life, this might be the case. We see it when someone says to another, 'Who visited you yesterday?' This is a question about the identity of a visitor, and it is a true question. However, what if the One speaking and asking the question has knowledge of everything so that nothing escapes Him? He is asking us to answer His question, 'Who is better than Allah in judgment?' This is an elevated form of rhetorical question.

Let me give another example, and Allah is beyond compare. If someone comes to you and claims you have not treated him well, even though he was

in jail and you were the one who got him released. You say to him, 'Who was it that went and paid the bail to get you out of jail?' You are the one who did this, but you do not want to say it to him. You want him to be the one who admits what you did for him. So, you only say this because you are certain that he will have no answer other than to admit that you were the one who did all this for him. In this way, it becomes an admission, not an assertion.

The True Lord knows that when they think of an answer, they will only be able to say, 'O Lord, you are the best lawgiver.' This is an admission and a declaration on their part. For a believer, on the other hand, it is completely different since he acknowledges and recognises how Allah *Glorified is He* has favoured him: 'But who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who are certain (in faith)?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 50) Those who understand that Allah's Law is the best are those who have reached the level of inner certainty. We know that certainty has different levels: when an honest person tells you something, you gain knowledge of this thing. For example, if he says to you, 'I went to New York, and this city is composed of several islands and contains many huge buildings. Violence is rife there, and the people look as though they are possessed by a mad urge for wealth.' When you hear this honest person say this, you take him seriously and consider his words to be certain, or truthful. This is 'the knowledge of certainty' that means it is a report from a person whose honesty you trust. Later, this person invites you to come with him, so you board a plane with him that takes off and rises to an altitude of forty thousand feet. After eleven hours, its altitude lowers a little so that you can see the lights of a huge city, and your friend tells you, 'That is New York, and there are the skyscrapers.' Now, the 'knowledge of certainty' has become an 'eye of certainty'. When you go out together into the streets of New York, to the island of Manhattan and up the Empire State Building, the tallest skyscraper in New York, you now have 'definite certainty'.

The stages of certainty are three: 1) certain knowledge: which you acquire when an honest person tells you something; 2) eye of certainty: which you get when you see the thing itself; 3) definite certainty: which you acquire when you deal directly with whatever it is yourself. I once gave my students a specific example to explain the difference between the different kinds of certainty. I

said to them, 'In Indonesia, I saw a kind of banana that was half a metre long.' Of course, the students believed me because they trusted my words, and I had given them an image based on my knowledge, so they arrived at certain knowledge. After this, I came into the room and opened a bag and took out of it a banana which was half a metre long; their certain knowledge transformed to become an eye of certainty. Then, I took a knife, peeled the banana, and put a piece of it in each one of their hands; thus, they came to acquire definite certainty. When the True Lord uses the word 'certainty' by itself, it means both what is known and what direct experience confirms to be true.

One of those who believe in Allah might say, 'I am completely convinced by the mere certain knowledge I possess, and I do not need to await an experience of true certainty since I would never entertain any doubt.' Therefore, we find that 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Were the veil to be lifted from me, my certainty would not be any greater.' Also, the True Lord illustrates this for us when He says: 'Competition in (worldly) increase diverts you. Until you visit the graveyards. No! You are going to know. Then no! You are going to know. No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty, You will surely see the Hellfire. Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty.' (*at-Takathur*: 1-7)

At first, there is certain knowledge; and then when we see hell as we pass over the Bridge, it will become eye of certainty. Allah, out of His Mercy, does not make us Muslims experience it with definitive certainty, rather, He says: 'And there is none of you except he will come to it.' (*Maryam*: 71) So, He gives us the image of hell. However, when the True Lord wants to give us an image of definitive certainty, He did that by saying: 'Then I swear by the setting of the stars, And indeed, it is an oath - if you could know - (most) great. Indeed, it is a noble Quran. In a Register well protected; None touches it except the purified. (It is) a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. Then is it to this statement that you are indifferent' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75-81). And all of this is a precursor to the True Lord's saying: 'Indeed, this is the true certainty.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 95)

Allah states here that the abode of the faithful believer will be paradise which the believer will see with an eye of certainty. As for the faithless

disbeliever, his abode will be in hell. Therefore, all the people will see hell with an eye of certainty, but only those whom the True Lord places therein – we seek His refuge – will suffer it as definitive certainty, whilst the believers will enjoy the bliss of paradise with definitive certainty. And after this, the True Lord says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ
وَمَن يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

You who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies: they are allies only to each other. Anyone who takes them as an ally becomes one of them – God does not guide such wrongdoers [51]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 51)

The address here is made to the faithful who are prohibited from befriending Jews and Christians. What does befriending include? It includes helping and aiding. The meaning of this is the following: ‘O, you who believe, be well aware that you are entrusted with a mission, which is to remove errors and false beliefs from mankind. These errors were represented as distortions in religion that turned to sources of misguidance after having been sources of guidance. So beware of placing your hands in their hands by seeking aid and support from them.’

The True Lord’s words ‘Do not take Jews and Christians as friends’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 51) constitute a commandment of moral responsibility and a requirement of faith in Allah. As long as you have faith in Allah, if you were to see that someone’s faith is compromised because of how he disobeys his Lord’s Guidance, you should not trust him to help you. This person has proved that he cannot even be trusted with his own responsibilities, so do you imagine that he can be trusted to help you with your responsibilities? The answer is no due to the fact that he has proved that he could not be trusted with the religious guidance which was revealed to him. Alliance means support, and support means to actively come to the aid of another. Do you think that they are really acting to give you support, or that they are only pretending to help you? You should know that they will do just what the True

Lord says they will do: 'Had they gone forth with you, they would not have increased you except in confusion.' (*at-Tawba*: 47)

Were they to join your ranks, they would do just what the hypocrites do to you. What else can you expect from those who betrayed the trust of the scriptures which were revealed to them? So alliance, support, and aid can only come from someone who is united with you in the same supreme goal; and as long as there are people who differ with Islam concerning the supreme goal, namely faith, then a Muslim should not trust them. Also, He says: 'they are but allies of one another.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51)

Someone might ask how the True Lord could say of them: 'The Jews say, "The Christians have nothing (true) to stand on", and the Christians say, "The Jews have nothing to stand on", although they (both) recite the scripture. Thus, the polytheists speak the same as their words.' (*al-Baqara*: 113)

So we have three divisions here: Jews, Christians and polytheists. The polytheists of Quraysh said the same ignoble thing the people of the Book said, despite the fact that they were in constant mutual conflict with them, and each one of them denied the other; as Allah says: 'So, We caused among them animosity and hatred.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 14) So, how could He then say 'they are but allies of one another'? (*al-Ma'ida*: 51) This requires a moment of contemplation so that we can see the full picture. We know that those who go against the True Lord's Way of Guidance could be at odds with one another over the issue of temporal power, but when they confront a great power that has the ability to bring ruin to all their houses of lies, they stand together against it. This is what we see in real life: Eastern powers used to be at conflict with Western powers, but no sooner did anything emerge connected to Islam that they then joined forces, even though Eastern powers had been defeated. The teachings of Islam are a threat to the authority of both sides, even though, in reality, Islam is a mercy for them which would take them out of darkness and into light. Therefore, they indeed act in accordance with the True Lord's Words: 'they are but allies of one another.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51)

Also, when they are alone with each other, the True Lord says this about them: 'We caused among them animosity and hatred.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 14) Thus, we understand the nature of the relationships amongst the enemies of Islam.

The True Lord says: 'whoever is an ally to them among you – then indeed, he is (one) of them.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51) This means that whoever takes them as allies and helpers will assuredly fall into the idolatry of hypocrisy for he will be with the Muslims in his words, but with the enemies of Islam in his heart. The True Lord ends the verse by saying: 'Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51) The worst of all wrongdoing is to associate partners with Allah, which is most evil of all, as the True Lord says: 'Polytheism is great injustice.' (*Luqman*: 13) This is because when one man wrongs another by taking something that is rightfully his and giving it to another, is this man able to take anything from Allah? No, it is not possible, for man cannot wrong Allah. Nevertheless, he will be punished for his polytheism, and this is an evil that brings nothing but loss to the human soul. The one who associates partners with Allah takes nothing but loss; and this is the ultimate failure.

When evildoing brings some kind of benefit to an evildoer, it is a trifling evil, for the ugliest of evils is for a man to associate partners with Allah and gain nothing from this except grievous punishment. If a polytheist rebels against certain points of Allah's Way of Guidance, can he dare to rebel against the Decrees of Allah which are beyond his free will, such as death?

The True Lord commands man to have faith, and the requirements of faith are the testimony of Allah's Oneness, faith in His messengers, scriptures and in the Last Day, the performance of prayer, giving *zakat*, the fasting of *Ramadan* and the pilgrimage to Allah's House, for those who are able to do so. The idolater who refuses to have faith and fails to fulfil his responsibilities, can he dare to refuse to fall ill or die? No, and hence he does a great evil to himself, which brings himself nothing but loss. The True Lord will not guide him since the meaning of guidance is for a man to find someone who will lead him to the road, which leads to a goal. 'To guide' means to show someone the way to a goal. Allah does not treat His creation unfairly by refusing to guide them; rather, those who wrong themselves by refusing to have faith thereby forgo their True Lord's care simply by their own free choice. The True Lord then says:

فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ يُسْرِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشَى أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَائِرَةٌ فَعَسَى
 اللَّهُ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِالْقَتْلِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُصْبِحُوا عَلَى مَا أَسْرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ تَدِيمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾

And you [Prophet] will see the perverse at heart rushing to them for protection, saying, ‘We are afraid fortune may turn against us.’ But God may well bring about a triumph or some other event of His own making: then they will rue the secrets they harboured in their hearts [52] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 52)

What is meant in this verse is that there is a prohibition of taking the people of the Book as allies instead of Allah, and whoever hears this prohibition and has faith in his heart will heed it. However, as for he who conceals disease of hypocrisy in his heart will not only take them as allies but will hurry to do so, which requires reaching one's goal in the shortest time possible. Compare ‘hurry into’ with Allah's statement: ‘And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord.’ (*Al-Imran*: 133)

The goal here is Allah's forgiveness which believers must vie with one another to acquire it. When referring to ‘hurry into’, it means that he was already steeped in this thing from the beginning. So, when the True Lord says, ‘they hurry into their friendship’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52), this suggests that they were already with these disbelievers from the onset, along with competing to befriend them. The general reason for this was the presence of a disease in their hearts that made them seek out any means possible; and these means were embodied in their words: ‘We fear lest some misfortune of a disaster may befall us.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52)

So, they forged alliances in fear that good fortune would turn against them, ‘We need them because they have wealth and weapons.’ This was the position of the hypocrite ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy who said, ‘I am a man who fears the turns of fortune.’ He feared misfortunes and calamities. The opposite of this is what ‘Ubada ibn As-Samit *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘I shall seek the alliance of the Messenger of Allah and the believers and break my alliance with Jews and Christians.’ Allah says: ‘Perhaps Allah may bring a victory.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) We should be aware that one of the meanings of the Arabic word *Fath* which is commonly translated as ‘victory’ means ‘to judge’, as in the verse: ‘Our Lord! Judge between us and our people in truth’ (*al-A'raf*: 89).

So, when the True Lord says, 'Perhaps Allah may bring a victory or a decision according to His Will' (*al-Ma'ida*: 52), this means that He will ordain a judgment which will set the terms of alliance with the people of the Book and those who have no knowledge.

'A decision according to His Will' (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) means a judgment with which He will address believers. The one who believes in Allah performs actions which cause certain effects, while other things might come to believers without any effort on their part, but as pure Graces from Allah. So, Allah might bring about good fortune, which could mean the means with which you may utilise to make the best preparations possible to assault them, as He says in another verse: 'for which you made no expedition with either horses or camels.' (*al-Hashr*: 6)

An example of this is what happened at Banu An-Nadir, when the exile took place, and the believers claimed the land of Banu Qurayzha, which was a gift of truly good fortune from Allah. So Allah *the Exalted* treats believers in two different ways: the first is that they make preparations which lead to results: 'Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands.' (*at-Tawba*: 14). In this verse, the True Lord made the fighting of believers a means. As for the second way, it is that an event of His devising that brings about victory by His Lordly protection and power.

The words 'may' and 'perhaps' are expressions of hope, so that a speaker hopes that what follows the modal verb 'may' will happen. For example, if we were to say, 'You may treat Zayd generously.' The one who says this wants the one to whom he speaks to treat Zayd generously; and this means that the one who is speaking is not able to treat Zayd generously himself. If someone says, 'It may be that Allah will treat Zayd generously', this shifts the hope from man to Allah. The one who says this is a human being, and he is speaking about another human being, while hoping for something from Allah *Glorified is He*. His Power is greater than any other power. This means that the breadth of hope increases. So what if Allah Himself expresses hope? If He does, this hope will be realised beyond any doubt.

Therefore, we see different levels of hope: 'one when a person hopes for something from another person and one when a person addresses a hope to

Allah for someone else. The highest level is when Allah expresses a hope for a person which He is the one to bring it. Also, since the final hope is between the Supreme Lord and Himself, then He would assure that ‘...Perhaps Allah may bring a victory or a decision according to His Will,’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) and this was indeed realised. When they said, ‘We fear that fortune may turn against us, so we will preserve our relations with the people of the Book for the sake of alliance and support.’ After this, the victory by means of good fortune and Allah’s devising has come – so what did they do then?

What they did was revealed in the following verse: ‘Then they will become regretful for what they have been keeping as a secret in themselves.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) They felt remorse. Their statement revealed the disease of hypocrisy in their hearts. It is as though what they harboured within themselves was hatred for this religion, and its way of guidance and a dislike of seeing it become victorious over anything else. Therefore, the True Lord *the Exalted* tells us that their words were not the direct cause; rather, the direct cause was the disease that dwelt in their hearts; and this disease was their dislike to see the Islamic way gain victory since they lived off the wealth of those who opposed the religion. However, once Islam became dominant, they would lose their wealth. Likewise, before the coming of Islam, the people of the Book in Medina were people of knowledge, wealth, and prestige, and the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj would take usurious loans from them, buy weapons, and take their learning from them. However, when Islam came, Jews lost all of this, so their hearts became diseased, for Islam had taken their temporal power from them, the power which had made them distort Allah’s Scriptures. Since they were prepared to oppose Allah by distorting His Scriptures, would not they also direct their enmity towards you, O, Muslims, and act as though they were aiding you when in reality they were plotting to betray you?! Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Then they will become regretful for what they have been keeping as a secret in themselves.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) When they hear this Divine Speech in the Quran which is repeated regularly everywhere they go, this was before there had been any victory or any event of Allah’s devising. So, when they heard Allah *Glorified is He* telling them of their fate, it means that He had recorded what their souls had concealed, just as He had said before: ‘and they say to themselves.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 52) This means that

they said it to themselves, and the Creator heard it. When they heard all this, they would have announced that they had never said, as if they had not truly said it to themselves. However, they were amazed when the True Lord exposed them, recorded what they said, and then revealed it. They should have acknowledged that indeed they did say it which should have caused them to embrace faith, but they did not do so. Thus, they were doomed to remorse. The True Lord then says:

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ
 أَنَّهُمْ لَعَنَكُمْ حِطَّتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا خَسِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**And the believers will say, ‘Are these the men who swore by
 God using their strongest oaths that they were with you?’
 All they did was in vain: they have lost everything [53]
 (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 53)**

In this verse, believers will see the remorse of these people with their own eyes. Remorse is a woe felt presently that fills the heart for a previous action, such as when a person does something regrettable, and then its consequences become clear later. So, he says: ‘If only I had not done that!’ He feels down and sorry about what he did in the past, and the woe of his soul is also expressed on his face. However, when good fortune comes, the hypocrites and the people of the Book will be severely and grievously disappointed, so much so that they will not be able to deny it nor pretend to be cheerful. It will be so severe that it appears on their faces.

When this happens, believers will become aware of it and will say: ‘Are these the ones who swore by Allah their strongest oaths that indeed they were with you.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 53) If hypocrites were truly honest, then, they would be happy and their joy would appear on their faces; their pleasure would be obvious, but the opposite was the case, and they were filled with regret and disappointment.’ Their deeds have become worthless.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 53) This means that their deeds and their saying, ‘We are with you’ were all in vain. Allah says: ‘And they have become losers.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 53) The basic meaning of ‘loss’ is that one’s capital has diminished. The hypocrites did

what they did in order to hide behind the Muslims, but they failed and were exposed. The True Lord then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ
وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾

You who believe, if any of you go back on your faith, God will soon replace you with people He loves and who love Him, people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers, and who strive in God's way without fearing anyone's reproach. Such is God's favour. He grants it to whoever He will. God has endless bounty and knowledge [54]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 54)

These words are addressed to believers, and every call of this kind is probably followed with a commandment, a glad tidings, or a warning to those who disobey. The only case which might seem problematic, though actually it is not, is if this expression is used and then followed by an exhortation to have faith, such as when Allah says: 'O you who have attained to faith! Believe.' (*an-Nisa*: 136) Why would the True Lord say this? To answer this, we have to ask ourselves, 'What is faith?' Faith is a deep belief of the creed in the heart so that it does not resurface to the mind to be debated again. Therefore, when Allah *the Exalted* addresses a believer and tells him to believe, this means that He is saying, 'You believed before I called you, and it was because of your faith that I called you. So, always protect this faith and renew it constantly, for I called you because of the faith I knew you possessed.' The True Lord is saying, 'O, you who believe, be constant in your faith and let every moment of the rest of your lives be filled with it which is a sign of loftiness and strength. You came to believe before I addressed you as believers, so hold onto this, and be firm in your faith.'

Also, the meaning of His Words 'whoever of you should revert from his religion' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) is that if anyone leaves Islam, Allah will replace them and will bring forth those who will not be like these apostates. So, those

who apostatise should be made aware that they are not a loss of Allah's soldiers in the slightest since the One Who ordained His Law to be revealed to a final Prophet and Messenger would not place this messenger and this religion at the mercy of human vicissitudes. If people leave the religion, Allah *the Almighty* will replace them with others.

This verse differs slightly in its grammatical usage from a similar phrase in a verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara* wherein Allah says: 'They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is great (sin), but averting (people) from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and (preventing access to) *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater (evil) in the sight of Allah. And *Fitnah* is greater than killing." And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able. And whoever of you reverts from his religion (to disbelief) and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally.' (*al-Baqara*: 217)

So what is the reason for the True Lord using one grammatical version of the verb in one verse and another version of the verb in a different verse? We know that the Quran was revealed in the dialect of the Quraysh who were the leaders of the Arabs, and no other tribe could match them. We all know that no one dared to disturb the journeys the Quraysh undertook to Yemen and to the Levant. This was due to the fact that the Quraysh's homeland was the location of the Inviolable House of Allah, to which all the Arabs made pilgrimage, and if anyone were to disturb the caravan of the Quraysh, he would bring down punishment upon himself or his tribe. Therefore, it was the Inviolable House of Allah which gave this gift to the Quraysh, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* reminded them of this in the chapter of *al-Fil*: 'Have you not considered, (O Muhammad), how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their plan into misguidance? And He sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with stones of hard clay, and He made them like eaten straw.' (*al-Fil*: 1-5)

Allah's warning was carried out upon the Army of the Elephant since they intended to destroy Allah's Inviolable House. Then, the True Lord followed

the chapter of *al-Fil* with the chapter of *Quraysh*, wherein He said: 'For the accustomed security of the Quraysh; Their accustomed security (in) the caravan of winter and summer.' (*Quraysh*: 1-2)

He thereby made it clear to them that as part of the protection He afforded His Inviolable House, Allah kept the Quraysh safe during their winter and summer journeys. Furthermore, had the Temple which gave the Quraysh their ascendancy been destroyed, the people would have attacked them from all sides. The evidence of this is when He says of those who intended to destroy Allah's Inviolable House: 'And He made them like eaten straw' (*al-Fil*: 5) and 'Their accustomed security (in) the caravan of winter and summer'. (*Quraysh*: 2)

Since this is what Allah did for the Quraysh, they should have worshipped Him: 'Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, (saving them) from hunger and made them safe from fear.' (*Quraysh*: 3-4) So, the Quraysh derived their leadership of the Arabs from the location of the Inviolable House, and their dialect also became superior. All of the great markets of the Arabs that were held there, the most famous were the one of 'Ukazh. On these occasions, all the beautiful examples of language from the different tribes were presented to the Quraysh, so that their dialect was especially refined and pure. Every poet would offer the best poetry he could muster, and every orator would give the best speeches he could compose. As a result of this, the Quraysh would hear the finest examples of language. This meant that their dialect of Arabic was the highest, and when the time came to record the Quran in writing, the counsel given was the following, 'If you differ amongst yourselves on anything, then write it in the dialect of the Quraysh.' This was due to the fact that the dialect of the Quraysh had adopted the best features of all the other dialects. The Arabs of Tamim and Hijaz differed on certain points. It is as though Allah *the Exalted* gave one verse in the dialect of Hijaz and another in the dialect of Tamim, which is further evidence that the Quran has not come to bolster Quraysh dominance, rather, it came for all of mankind. Therefore, we find each dialect represented by one of its words in order to make it clear that the Quran is meant for all people.

When we read the True Lord's Words, 'whoever of you should revert from his religion – Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will

love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54), we know that He is telling us that He is able to bring forth people of faith if others apostatise, just as He told us before: 'And whoever of you reverts from his religion (to disbelief) and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally.' (*al-Baqara*: 217) This tells us that an apostate is destined for hell after the coming of the Last Hour. However, the Words, 'Whoever of you should revert from his religion – Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) tell us that something else will happen even before the Resurrection comes. Who could imagine that Allah would send down a Quran which challenges the world, and then declare unequivocally in this Quran that something will happen that is still unknown to man, if it were not truly going to happen? The phrase 'will love' infers something which will happen in the future. We ask, in this respect that who could declare what choice people will make about faith? No one can, but Allah can do so, and He is declaring that He will bring forth people who believe to replace those who apostatise.

Also, if people had apostatised and then waited to see who would replace them, but no one did, then what would have happened? Everyone would have certainly left the religion. Allah *the Exalted* would not have unequivocally stated and placed in the mouth of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that some people would apostatise unless He knew that people indeed would do so; the knowledge in this verse, as in the rest of the Quran, came from Allah, Exalted and Glorified, and the True Lord stated it as true fact. Also, are there any people whom Allah loves, and yet who love Him not? We say that this does not happen with Allah, but it does happen in human life, as the Arab poet said:

You are my beloved, but I seek refuge

Lest I be one who loves, but is not loved

The misery of those who love occurs when one loves someone, but the love is not reciprocated so that the one who loves spends his life weeping. We may observe that Allah's Love is mentioned first in this verse: 'He will love and who will love Him.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) This is due to the fact that it is the

way in which knowledge is revealed: The True Lord knew that they would turn to Him, so He loved them; and when they came forth, they did what made them beloved to Allah. Furthermore, what is 'love'? It is the affection of the heart, and we have spoken much already about this. We know that there is a kind of love which is determined by reason, while another is determined not by reason, but by emotion.

For example, when we go to a doctor, he prescribes medicine for us which is bitter and tastes unpleasant. We find that the one for whom this medicine is prescribed goes to the pharmacy to ask for it, and if he does not find it there, he goes around asking every pharmacy in town. If he does not find it, he asks someone who is travelling abroad to bring it back for him. If his friend brings him this medicine, he is filled with joy and happiness. Does this sick person accept this bitter medicine with his emotion or his reason? He accepts it and loves it with his reason. Rational love, as we said, means to prefer what is beneficial. For example, we find that the father of an unintelligent child loves the intelligent child of another man. He loves his own unintelligent son with his emotion, but he loves the other man's son because of the intelligence he possesses. Therefore, there is rational love, and there is emotional love. This is what happens on the human level, but it does not happen with Allah *Glorified is He*.

They love Allah *the Exalted* with their reason, and their love might increase until it becomes emotional love. This might be tested when Allah sends people something which seems to be evil on the outside, but they continue to feel love for Him. This means that their love for Allah has gone from being merely rational to being emotional as well. A story about 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* explains this point for us. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you (fully) believes until I am more beloved to him than his own self.'⁽¹⁾ Some people might have told the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* that he was more beloved to them than their wealth and children, but 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'You are more beloved to me than my wealth and my son, but

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (iv. 336) and As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-mManthur* (iii. 223)

not my own self.' So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* repeated his words, 'None of you (fully) believes until I am more beloved to him than his own self.' Upon this, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* realised that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* meant rational love. Since 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* knew that no one is held responsible for emotional love, he replied, 'I now love you more than my own self.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* responded, 'Now, O 'Umar!' It was as though at that moment 'Umar's faith was perfected. So do not ask, O, believer, whether Allah's Love is rational or emotional, for the meaning of 'Allah's love' is the continuous Grace He shows to those whom He loves in this life. In the Hereafter, the True Lord will receive them into His blessings and grant them the Grace of the beautiful vision of Him: 'For them who have done good is the ultimate (reward) and extra.' (*Yunus*: 26) The 'ultimate reward' is paradise, and scholars say that 'extra' means the beautiful vision of the One Who bestows all this good.

Allah says: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) When the True Lord says, 'will bring', we should know that what comes after these words is one of the signs of prophethood which came upon the tongue of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Allah's Quran, for all of this indeed happened just as the Quran said it would, and certain people apostatised. Those who apostatised were of two kinds: those who apostatised during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who apostatised during the reign of Abu Bakr and 'Umar *Allah be pleased with them*. The words 'will bring' indicate that a certain amount of time would pass before what followed would occur.

The first apostasies were in Yemen after the Farewell Pilgrimage and before the passing of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. There was a deceitful soothsayer in Yemen named 'Abhala ibn Ka'b who was known as Dhu Al-Khimar, or Dhu Al-Himar according to another narration. In the books of Islamic history, he is known as Al-Aswad Al-Anasi. He was one of the two liars of whom the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke when he said, 'While I was sleeping, I was given the treasures of the earth and two gold bangles were put in my hands. I did not like that, but

I received the inspiration that I should blow on them, and I did so, and both of them vanished. I interpreted it as referring to the two liars between whom I am present: the ruler of San'a and the ruler of Yamaha.'⁽¹⁾

This soothsayer owned a donkey which he had trained in a special way just as monkeys are trained. It would stop when he told it to stop and go when he told it to go, and this soothsayer considered his command over the donkey to be miraculous. Or according to the narration which calls him 'Dhu Al-Khimar' as he used to wear a veil over his face. It is strange that no apostate was ever asked for any sign to prove his prophethood by those who followed him.

The first thing which must be done to confirm a man's claim to be a prophet is for the people to ask him for a sign to prove it and a miracle which they can recognise, but we never find this to be the case with any apostate. How could those who follow the apostate not bother to ask him about himself and his claim to be a prophet? Also, the miracle which proves his message needs to be genuine, for this is what happens with any messenger. How could the people believe in someone when he does not bring miracle?

We must consider this matter psychologically and say that religiousness is a natural instinct of man, and even the man who is irreligious gets angry and sad when we call him 'irreligious'. Therefore, we find that every imbecile amongst such people considers himself to have a religion and does not imagine himself to be an imbecile with no religion or morality. This is why the True Lord said: 'For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.' (*al-Kafirun*: 6)

It is as though the basic truth of natural disposition is that religion is essential for man; and as long as this is the case, then why is everyone not religious? It is due to the fact that religion is not only a name or an attribute, but is also a matter of adherence to moral responsibilities. What makes people fear religions is that they do not want to endure the hardships of its responsibilities. This is why when a man comes along and says, 'I am a prophet, and my miracle is that I excuse you from praying and paying the poor-due. Also, I allow you to look at each other's womenfolk.' The people who follow their

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad

desires and are devoid of insight will be attracted by this, along with saying, 'This is a wonderful religion!' They will surrender to it and further deceive themselves into thinking that they are religious, even though, in fact, they are excusing themselves from religious observance. It is a strange thing that when people claimed to be prophets in the pasts – and when they continue to do it in our times – we do not find any educated people going to such people and asking them what their miracle is, but everyone asks them what their teachings are!

Furthermore, when the people of Yemen asked Dhu Al-Khimar what his teachings were, his response was to excuse them from some religious obligations beginning by lessening the number of prayers, lowering the poor-due alms, and allowing them to mix with the womenfolk of others. Some of the people found these teachings agreeable and were fooled by them, so consequently they forgot all about asking for a miracle. All who falsely claimed to be prophets were of this type, which is why we find that everyone who falsely claims to be a prophet tries to make the teachings of the religion easier. One tried to decrease the poor-due alms, and a woman named Sujah tried to decrease the prayer, while a third tried to lighten the issue of usury by permitting it, but none of them ever brought a miracle. Some people, nevertheless, followed them simply because they made the religion easier. False prophets only seek to please souls that are too weak to bear the burden of Allah's religion by adhering to it faithfully and devotedly.

An example⁽¹⁾ of this is what happened in Alexandria when a false prophet appeared and made lawful an insidious evil. Some of the educated people who wanted a religion that would satisfy their whims followed him. It was like this in old times too. Historians have described how Dhu Al-Khimar (the one with the veil) or Dhu Al-Himar (the owner of the donkey – it was said that he had a trained donkey who would bow on hearing his injunction), who as we said was an illusionist, enchanted the hearts of those who heard his words. He showed them wonders and was thus able to claim the rule of Yemen after which he announced his apostasy. He took control of Sana' and all that lies between At-Ta'if and Bahrain, and his malice spread like wildfire.

(1) The story of the Alexandria man who claimed to be prophet

Our master Mu'adh ibn Jabal *Allah be pleased with him* had been appointed governor of Yemen by the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and he told of what had happened, saying that a soothsayer named Dhu Al-Khimar (or Dhu Al-Himar) had apostatised. Our master Mu'adh ibn Jabal *Allah be pleased with him* went to Hadramaut, where a message reached him from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* telling him to send men to fight Dhu Al-Khimar, and the Muslims planned the best way to carry out the Prophet's command. After this, a man of the Daylami tribe named Fayruz went in where Dhu Al-Khimar was sleeping and killed him in his bed.

Despite the distance between Yemen and Medina, that very night the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Al-Aswad Al-'Anasi has been slain this night.'⁽¹⁾ By the end of that month, news came that the false prophet had been killed. And this was one of the miracles of prophethood.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* some people's beliefs were shaken by this incident of Dhu Al-Khimar (or Dhu Al-Himar), but at the same time, this event was like a shot of vaccine because it caused immunity to develop. Allah *the Exalted* told them about it first: 'whoever from among you turns back from his religion, Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54).

The True Lord said this in order to give believers spiritual immunity. It is as though He said to believers: 'Do not think that you will not encounter any challenges to your religion and belief. Indeed you will encounter them.' It is as though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'People might think that as long as I am alive, I will administer Allah's Way of Guidance on Earth. However, when I die, perhaps they will abandon their faith.'

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed the words of Allah *the Almighty* to believers, the intention behind it was to impart spiritual immunity. Had the Muslims been caught unaware by the apostasy, along with Allah having not warned them of it beforehand, they would not have had the necessary immunising caution, which is the first step towards protection. We know that modern science has found a way of isolating the

(1) *Kanz Al-'Ummal*

microbes or viruses which cause infectious diseases, and scientists can weaken these microbes or viruses, and then place a little of them into the human body, so that the body's defence mechanisms fight the microbe or virus and defeat it. Once this is done, the body possesses the power to defend itself against this disease. This is the True Lord's aim when He says these Noble Words: 'whoever from among you turns back from his religion, Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). Therefore, when apostasy occurs, the Muslims would not be caught unaware by it, and they would trust that this apostasy would be a means of the fruition of Allah's promise: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). Thus, believers have no need to panic when apostasy occurs, along with their souls not being disturbed. When apostasy occurs, believers should say, 'The One speaks truthfully when He says there will be apostasy also speaks truthfully when He says: "Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) When the Arabic particle *sa* (will) precedes a verb, this means that the event will occur in the near future, such as when the True Lord says: 'The foolish among the people will say...' (*al-Baqara*: 142). He says, '*sayaqulu*' (will say). When the particle *sawfa* (will - in time) is used, this means that a larger amount of time will pass before the event occurs. This is why we see that apostasy extended during the rule of Abu Bakr and 'Umar Allah *be pleased with them*.

What will be the attributes of the people whom Allah *the Almighty* will bring forth in the verse: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him (who are) humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers; they strive in the cause of Allah and do not fear the blame of a critic.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) There are six attributes here: Allah *Glorified is He* loves them, they love Him, they are humble towards the believers, they are powerful against disbelievers, they strive hard in Allah's Cause, and they do not fear to be the blame of someone who might criticise them.

How can a believing man be humble and powerful at the same time? It can happen because the True Lord does not want us to have the same attitude all the time; rather, He wants us to react to our circumstances. When a

situation requires a believer to be kind hearted, he must deal with it with kind-heartedness. When a situation requires a believer to be tough, he must deal with it with toughness. When a situation requires generosity, he must be generous. A Muslim must react appropriately to every situation and must not react the same way to everything. Were a believer to be humble at all times, a circumstance requiring power might arise that he would be unable to deal with. On the other hand, if he were powerful all the time, a situation requiring humility might arise which he would be unable to deal with. Therefore, the True Lord has made a believer's heart flexible and able to deal with each situation appropriately.

A believer must be powerful and undefeatable in the face of his enemy. He must meet him with strength. He must be humble and tender towards his parents as the True Lord commands: 'And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion...' (*al-Isra'*: 24). If a believer is humble and tender towards his parents, does this negatively affect his powerfulness? No, this is something which rather increases a man's powerfulness. Allah speaks of them as those: ' (who are) humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). In Arabic, '*adhillatun ala al-mu'minin*' literally says 'humble toward the believers'. It uses the proposition *ala* which means 'on or upon', rather than the more usual *li* which means 'to or towards'. Why does the True Lord say it this way (when the word *ala* (upon), or in this verse translated as towards) implies that something is above, whilst humility means for something to be below)? This expression is worded this way for a wise reason which is that as long as a believer loves Allah, He loves him, and he humbles himself before his fellow believers, this raises his status. It is not humility in the ordinary sense of the word; rather, it is kindness, affection, and mercy. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'humble towards' (*ala* (literally upon)) 'the believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54), this means that believers have affection for one another, so this affection appears to be humility. The root of the word *adhillah* (humble) contains the letters *dh* and *l*, which scholars say has two opposing meanings. For example, the True Lord says: 'And we have subjected them to them' (*Ya Sin*: 72). He says, '*dhallalnaha*', or 'We subjected them'. This means that we have made them subject to man's control. This subjugation is not the result of man's overpowering of animals; rather, it is the

result of Allah's subdual of them; they are meant to serve man. Another example is found when the True Lord says: 'and follow the ways of your Lord submissively' (*an-Nahl*: 69). He says, '*dhuhula*', or 'submissively'.

This means to do so calmly and yieldingly; and this is the humbleness of tenderness. Also, there is *dhull* which means 'humbleness' or 'the opposite of pride', whereas *dhill* which means 'tenderness' or 'the opposite of hardness'. Therefore, if we consider the word in its meaning of 'tenderness', then a believer's tenderness towards his fellow believer is *dhill*, whereas if we consider the word in its meaning of the opposite of pride, then it is *dhull*, or 'humbleness'. When a believer is humble towards his fellow believers, this means that he is humble in his tenderness and affection. Also, when the True Lord wants to describe how something is within the reach of a believer so he does not have to exert effort to get it, He says: 'Its (fruit) to be picked are hanging near.' (*al-Haqqa*: 23)

In another verse, He says: 'And low will hang, down its clusters of fruit, most easy to reach.' (*al-Insan*: 14) He says '*dhullilat*', or 'low will hang' and '*tadhlila*', or 'most easy to reach'. This means that its fruit will hang low and within reach, and it will fall in the place where a believer will be. If a believer stands, he will be able to pick it by stretching out his hand, and even if he reclines, he will be able to reach the fruit because it will hang low for him. Even if he lies down, the branches of fruit will come down to him. Thus, he will be able to eat them at any time and in any position.

In this verse, the True Lord says, 'humble towards the believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) which means that the humbleness of a believer towards his fellow believer elevates his rank since he is blessed by being loving and being loved by Allah, *the Exalted*. There is no exaltation higher than this. Therefore, the Hadith that reiterates this is the following: 'When a man humbles himself to Allah, He raises him.' This means that when he humbles himself, while remembering Allah *Glorified is He* and doing so for His sake, Allah raises him.

Allah says, '...powerful against the disbelievers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). This is the fourth attribute of believers in this verse, after the True Lord says: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him (who are) humble toward the believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). A believer is

powerful towards disbelievers in that he is invincible, and as long as he realises this, he will be happy to join fighting in Allah's Cause: 'they strive in the cause of Allah' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). The phrase *Al-jihadu fi sabil Allah* (strive in the cause of Allah) refers to a particular kind of striving: a man might strive to protect or defend his nationality or some other allegiance. However, as far as the religion is concerned, all these allegiances are worthless unless they spring from allegiance to Allah's Way of Guidance so that His Word is supreme.

The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was once asked about the best kind of fighting: Abu Musa *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that a man came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'A man fights for booty, he fights for fame and he fights to be seen by others. So who fights in Allah's cause?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'The one who fights to make the Word of Allah supreme fights in His cause.'⁽¹⁾

As long as a believer is beloved to Allah, and loves Him, is humble towards believers and is powerful against disbelievers –as long as this is the case, when he is given a position of authority over other believers, none of them should despise to be under his command. In this way, a believer stays away from having arrogance and conceit since he is striving in Allah's cause. Also, should anyone criticise him for doing so, he does not allow this. It is as though Allah clarifies this point: 'Be well aware that you should not imagine that those whom Allah loves, who love Him, who are humble towards believers, who are powerful against disbelievers and who strive in Allah's Cause will not be exposed to mocking, scorn and condemnation from those who wish to dissuade them from this striving in the cause of Allah *the Exalted*.

Therefore, the True Lord says: 'do not fear the blame of a critic.'
(*al-Ma'ida*: 54) This has been clearly manifested throughout the history of Islam, and the True Lord did indeed bring forth people whom He loved, who loved Him, who were humble towards believers, who were powerful against disbelievers, who strove hard in Allah's cause and who did not fear the blame of someone who criticised them.

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad

Also, when we examine this verse closely, we see that the indication of the words that contain *sawfa* (will in time) first began to be manifested during the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When he *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about those whom Allah loves, who love Him and who have these attributes, he pointed towards Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari *Allah be pleased with him* and said, 'They shall come from this man.'⁽¹⁾

When Allah revealed His words: 'And (to) others of them who have not yet joined them' (*al-Jumu'a*: 3), Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him* asked the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Who are these people, O, Messenger of Allah?' So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* placed his hand on Salman *Allah be pleased with him* and said, 'Even were faith as far-flung as Pleiades, a man of these people would attain it.'⁽²⁾

The first apostasy happened in Yemen, among the people of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari *Allah be pleased with him*. As we said, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wrote a message to Mu'adh ibn Jabal *Allah be pleased with him* then Fayruz Ad-Daylami volunteered to assassinate the false prophet Dhu Al-Khimar (or Dhu Al-Himar) and succeeded. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* informed the people of what happened that very night even though the news of the assassination did not reach Medina until after Muhammad returned to the Most Exalted Companion, and this was one of the miraculous signs of his prophethood.

Also, it occurred during the Prophet's time that Musaylama, the Liar⁽³⁾ claimed to be a prophet and wrote a letter to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* which said: 'From Musaylama, the messenger of Allah to Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah'. Therefore, he was unable to deny that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truly a Prophet of Allah *Glorified is He*. Musaylama's letter continued: 'Then, half of the earth shall be mine, and the other half will be yours.' It seems that he believed that it was important to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the earth should be divided. So, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*

(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim and At-Tabari in (*At-Tafsir*)

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad

(3) The story of Musaylama, the Liar, alleging to be a prophet

wrote a reply to him with words filled with the gifts of true prophethood: ‘From Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to Musaylama, the Liar. Peace be upon him who follows guidance! The earth belongs to Allah. He causes it to be inherited from whomever He wills of His servants. The (best) outcome is for the righteous.’⁽¹⁾

However, Musaylama did not heed the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and a campaign was prepared to deal with him. The battle finally took place during the rule of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and it was severely brutal. Wahshey, the man who had killed Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* at the battle of Uhud, wanted to expiate his sins, so he went to kill Musaylama. He, thus, uttered his famous words: ‘As an ignorant pagan, I killed the best of men (meaning Hamza), and as a Muslim, I killed the worst of men (Musaylama).’ This was the end of Musaylama.

There was a third false prophet during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* named Tulayha ibn Khuwaylid⁽²⁾ of the tribe of Banu Asad. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* to deal with this false prophet. When the imposter learned that Khalid *Allah be pleased with him* was coming to fight him, he fled. However, later he embraced Islam sincerely and became a true Muslim.

We should note that the Arabic word *ridda* (apostasy) is used to describe the events, which we have just described and which met these responses. We do not call them *radd* which simply means return; the reason for this is that *radd* might mean a return to the truth, while *ridda* always means a return to falsehood. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘refer it to Allah and the Messenger’ (*an-Nisa*: 59). He says, ‘*rudduh*’ (refer it to). As for the one who apostatises, he returns to falsehood. It is curious that the word *ridda* (apostasy) which Islam uses to refer to abandoning faith to disbelief is also used by the enemies of Islam who do not believe in any religion. When a follower of communism abandons it, they call this *ridda*. If they were truly

(1) Narrated by Abu Hanifa in his (*Musnad*) and Ibn Sa'd in (*At-Tabaqat A-Kubra*)

(2) The story of Tulayha ibn Khuwaylid alleging to be a prophet

people of principle, they should have used another word, but there is no word which describes the return to falsehood except *ridda*. Likewise, the word *minbar* only exists in Islam where it means the pulpit on which a preacher stands to give the Friday sermon. Therefore, when they establish a left-wing organisation, they speak of the '*minbar* of the left'. So, that raises the question, 'Why did you take this word from us?'

Another example is when a writer writes: 'This dancer worships at the "*mihrab*" (prayer-niche) of art (or in English, we might say, 'worships at the altar of art'), we ask, 'Why is he using the word "*mihrab*"?' You should look for another word. All of this indicates that religious language is the richest language, which is why they resort to using it.

Islam is often superficially criticised because its law states that an apostate must be executed. We rhetorically ask: 'Does anyone really think that this is to Islam's detriment?' No, it is a credit to Islam since when a man embraces Islam, he embraces the complete religion. Those who leave it forfeit their lives, while those who are thinking about embracing Islam must therefore be cautious with their lives. Islam, therefore, cannot be embraced lightly; rather, it must be embraced seriously. Everyone should be aware of this before they embrace it, for they are entering a complete religion, not a game or vain amusement.

All those who wish to embrace Islam must think hard and find their way to the truth since their life will be the price of leaving Islam. This proves the seriousness of this religion and how unforgivable it is to enter it frivolously. Since it is a serious matter to embrace Islam, this gives the opportunity of choice. Therefore, those who would choose to embrace Islam must understand that the price for leaving it, after having entering it, is one's life. When a religion asks a person to think seriously before embracing it, is this deception or sincere advice? It is sincere advice, and therefore, it is a credit to Islam. It is a matter of public knowledge so that everyone who enters it knows that this is the precondition. Had Islam wanted to make things trivially easy, it would have said, 'Come and join Islam, and you can renounce it whenever you want.' Rather, the true religion does not deceive anyone, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'that those who perished (through disbelief) would perish upon evidence and those who lived (in faith) would live upon evidence' (*al-Anfal*: 42).

We have previously spoken about the apostasies that occurred during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*, but the words *sawfa* (will - in time) that occur in Allah's Speech: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) indicate that the affair would be protracted. Apostasies also occurred during the rule of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and seven men appeared claiming to be prophets, such as Banu Fazara, the people of 'Uyayna ibn Hisn, who apostatised and to whom Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* sent troops to fight; the people of Ghatfan apostatised as well. There were also the people of Qurra ibn Habidah ibn Salama, and Banu Salim, the people of Al-Fuja'a ibn 'Abd Yalil to whom Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* sent armies to chastise them; and there was also Yarbu', the people of Malik ibn Nuwayra, and some of the tribe of Banu Tamim, amongst whom Sujah bint Al-Mundhir, the wife of Musaylama claimed to be a prophetess. There was also kinda, the people of Al-Ash'ath ibn Qays, and the people of Al-Hutyam ibn Dabi'a who were named Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il and resided in Bahrain. Our master Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* abolished all of them which made many people say that the people whom Allah loves, who love Him and who have the attributes which this verse mentions, were Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and his companions. However, does this discount the possibility that any other group of people amongst them might have the likes of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*? No, it does not, and an example of this is 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* because of what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said on the day of Khaybar: Salama ibn Al-Akwa' *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was late for the Prophet at Khaybar due to an infection in his eye, so he said, 'Shall I stay behind when Muhammad has gone out to fight?' So, 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* went out and set out to catch up with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. On the eve of battle, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I shall surely give...', or he said, 'he shall surely take the banner tomorrow to a man whom Allah and His Messenger love.' – Or he said, '... a man who loves Allah and His Messenger' – 'and Allah will give us victory by his hands.' Then, came 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* whom the people had not expected to attend. Then, the people said, 'Here comes 'Ali!' So, the Messenger of Allah

peace and blessings be upon him gave the banner to ‘*Ali Allah be pleased with him* and *Allah the Exalted* gave the Muslims victory by his hands.’ ⁽¹⁾

During the rule of our master ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab only one apostasy took place. It came from Al-Ghasasinah, led by Jabala ibn Al-Ayham⁽²⁾, a Levantine tribe who were allies to the Byzantines. Jabala was their chief, and he embraced Islam and came to circumambulate in the Sacred Mosque, bringing much wealth with him as the chief of the tribe of Ghassan. They were renowned for their horsemanship and fine clothing, and Jabala was wearing a long cloak. Someone stepped on Jabala’s cloak and caused him to fall down, so Jabala slapped the man, who informed ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* of this. ‘Umar declared that the man had the right to exact retribution, and the Ghassanite chief said, ‘I shall purchase this slap for one thousand *Dinars*’, but the man refused, so Jabala increased his offer to two thousand *dinars*, but the man refused this, too; so he increased his offer to ten thousand *dinars*, but the man refused this, too. So, Jabala said to ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Give me some time to think about this.’ When ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* gave him some time, Jabala fled to the Levant and became Christian. Thus, we see the extent of the words *sawfa* (will -in time) and how much time they covered; and indeed they extend even to the present day. In our time, apostasy came from Persia in the form of Baha’ism and Babism.

The goal of the apostate is to gain superficial prestige in this worldly life if he has the desire to rule; and the *modus operandi* of the apostate is to make religious obligations lighter for those who follow him. Those who claim to be prophets usually make up their own sacred laws are only seeking prestige for themselves in this world, and those who follow these false prophets are only trying to make their religious responsibilities lighter. Why do they wish to make their religious responsibilities lighter? It is due to the fact that man is instinctively religious which is proved by the fact that if we call a disbeliever ‘irreligious’ or ‘immoral’, he will become angry and fly into a rage. The reason he does so is that he does not like the idea that anyone else should deny that he is religious and moral in some form or other. We might see a

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad*

(2) The story of the palm of Jabala ibn Al-Ayham

Muslim who has sinned numerous times, thus he wronged himself, but when he hears someone insult Islam, he becomes enraged and begins to defend Allah's religion. This is the faith-based natural of which Allah *Glorified is He* has placed within all people; and what makes religion difficult for the human soul is not religious disposition, rather, religious responsibilities are what most consider difficult since they are a matter of free will. The True Lord has placed all the responsibilities of religion inside the realm of human free will, and He did not wish to make them a matter of compulsion. Had He willed to make all people believers, no one would have been able to disbelieve: 'Perhaps, (O Muhammad), you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers. If We willed, We could send down to them from the sky a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3-4)

Therefore, no one has the ability to defy Allah, but He willed to make the responsibilities of faith subject to free will. Man is free to fulfil or not to fulfil the responsibilities of faith, and either way he will be requited. An example of this is the tongue: Allah *the Almighty* created it with the ability to say, 'There is no deity but Allah, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is his Messenger.' This tongue is also able to say – Allah forbid – 'I do not believe in Allah.'

The tongue does not disobey its owner, for Allah *Glorified is He* created it with the ability to express the secrets of man's heart, along with making it subject to man's will. Another example drawn from our own inventions during this time is the television which man made to be a device compelled to show whatever programmes he decides to broadcast on it. If man uses television to broadcast religious and scientific films and programmes which reveal the secrets of Allah's creation and strengthen man's spiritual values; this is a faith-based decision. On the other hand, if he broadcasts depraved films that specialise in buffoonery and iniquity, this is a decision that places him amongst those who spread corruption on the earth.

So, the True Lord created man with the ability to adhere to the responsibilities of faith and also the ability to flout them. When Allah *the Exalted* commands His servants to implement or adhere to a responsibility of faith, He knows that man is more than capable to do this, for He has complete knowledge of His

servants. Likewise, if it were not within their power to adhere to the responsibility, He would not have ordained it for them. We all know the difference between *ibad* (worshippers or servants) and *abid* (slaves): all beings are Allah's slaves, and a man remains His slave even if he despises his responsibilities. If he does not live up to his responsibilities, he is, nevertheless, compelled in many ways which he cannot evade. For example, no one can stop breathing by their own free will, for as we know this is something which occurs whether one likes it or not. Likewise, no one can continue to breathe once his time to die comes, and no one can resist illness when it comes to him. Therefore, man's haughtiness and his disobedience of Allah *Glorified is He* in certain matters does not mean that he has completely freed himself from Him in every way, for the True Lord does what He wills. No one can control his beginning when he is born, and nor can he control his end when he dies; and many things occur between the brackets of birth and death which no one has the ability to control. Free will only applies to some things, and everything else is a matter of compulsion, and we are all Allah's slaves therein. However, the True Lord has given us the freedom to choose for the rest of life's affairs.

The truly intelligent person is the one who asks his Lord, 'you have created me with free will, O Lord. What would You like me to do?' The person then finds himself faced with Allah's Commandments and Prohibitions, along with His Way of Guidance and its requirements. This Way of Guidance sets out the guidelines to what a believer may do and what he must not do. A believer then says, 'I relinquish my free will in favour of Your Will, O Lord.' The servant who relinquishes his free will in favour of his Creator's Will becomes one of those servants whom the True Lord calls 'The (true) servants of the Most Merciful.' (*al-Furqan*: 63)

In our daily lives, we see examples of what takes place between the head of a family and its members. The head of the family says to his children, 'You want to go on an outing. So, where would you like to go?' One of the family members says, 'Let us go to such-and-such place', while another says, 'Take us wherever you like as long as we are together.' It is certain that the one who says the latter to the head of the family will earn a special place in his affections. If this happens amongst human beings, then what do we think of

the favour which will be earned by the servant who says this to his Most Generous Creator? He will certainly attain to a high rank since he moves from the level of slave to the level of worshipper, of whom the True Lord says: 'And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them (harshly), they say (words of) peace, and those who spend (part of) the night to their Lord prostrating and standing (in prayer). And those who say, 'Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering. Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence.' (*al-Furqan*: 63-66)

These are the true servants of the Most Gracious whom He loves and who love Him. As for the one who rebels against Allah's Way of Guidance, he should be aware that he cannot rebel against His decrees of fate. The True Lord wants to give us spiritual immunity when He says 'O, you who believe, whoever of you should revert from his religion, Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) This immunity is manifested in the fact that a believer must be careful of those who rebel against Allah's religion by claiming to be prophets sent after Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This verse explains to us the gravity of what these apostates do. One such apostate says, 'I am a prophet sent by Allah.' Then, this false prophet finds people to listen to him, believe him and follow him. Also, he may not find anyone who asks him, 'If you are indeed a prophet then, what is your miracle?' He only finds those who believe his lies due to the whims of their souls. These whims can be summarised by saying that this false prophet brings an easy religious message which deceives his followers, who in turn deceive themselves into imagining that they are devoutly religious, when in fact they are following a false message. Many people have claimed to be prophets or have claimed to be the awaited Mahdi (He is the prophesied redeemer of Islam who will rule for five, seven, nine, or nineteen years according to differing interpretations before the Day of Judgment. He will rid the world of evil); however, no one had ever asked them for a miracle to prove their prophethood since the false prophet lures people by offering to lighten their religious responsibilities.

We find that some well-educated people, who claim to use their intelligence in all matters, follow these charlatans. For example, a few years ago we saw incredible scenes when someone claimed to be a prophet, and several men and women believed in him and followed him. A married woman would go to this false prophet and kiss him, and even let him kiss her on the lips right in front of her husband. What has happened to men's honour to allow such things to happen? This is the nature of these misguided swindlers who claim that they have guidance; indeed, it is guidance that leads to hell.

Do these movements spring from Islam? No, they come from people who hate Islam. For example, someone entraps a man of special talent and vision, and then convinces him that he can play the role of a false prophet. An example of this is the Indian Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who founded the Qadiani movement. We know that the English colonised India for many years and considered it the jewel in the British crown. We also know that the enemies of Islam, led by the colonising force, attempted to undermine it since they saw that religious adherence had allowed Muslims to conquer whole empires, not by the sword but by protecting people's right of choosing religion.

Although the message of Islam began in Arabia, it spread throughout the world, and the Persians and Byzantines had capitulated before those who carried the banner of 'There is no deity but Allah, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is His Messenger.' After this, we find that it was Muslims who defeated the Tatars, and likewise the Wars of the Crusades were waged in successive campaigns, but those who fought for Islam resoundingly defeated them.

The occupation of India was made difficult by Islam due to the power of the faith and the willingness of the faithful to fight in its cause. Therefore, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came along and tried to weaken Muslims' power to fight in Allah's cause. He said, 'I have come to you to abrogate the principle of the struggle in Allah's Cause "*jihad*" from Islamic doctrine.' Mirza Ghulam Ahmad dared to announce that fighting was abrogated, although the True Lord says in His Noble Book, the Holy Quran: 'Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you.' (*al-Baqara*: 216)

With His infinite Power, Allah *the Almighty* respites but never neglects. Thus, the cholera epidemic came to India in 1908 to deal with Ghulam

Ahmad and brought his existence to an end, just as the True Lord says: 'Allah will bring forth (in place of them) a people He will love and who will love Him' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54).

In Persia, as well, the homeland of Salman Al-Farisi *Allah be pleased with him* a man emerged and claimed to be a prophet, and he was clever enough to attempt to associate himself with Islam only to turn against it later. The man said, 'I am the Door (*Al-Bab*), and after me the Mahdi will come.' When the people asked him what his teachings were, he said, 'I have come to make your religious responsibilities easier since Islam's responsibilities are no longer fitting for these times.' Some people followed him, and others rose up against him. Those who followed him did so because they wanted to make their religion easier, while those who opposed him were those whom Allah *the Exalted* loved and who loved Him. Scholars were brought to him to debate and argue with him, and he admitted that he was wrong and made public repentance in the Grand Mosque, whereupon his followers deserted him.

Then, others came and tempted this man to return to his misguidance and deception. A Russian consul in Paris took him in, gave him refuge, and convinced him to announce that his public repentance was only made to save him from execution. So, this 'Bab', whose real name was 'Ali Muhammad Ash-Shirazi,⁽¹⁾ was able to disperse a great deal of propaganda, especially after a girl named Qurrat Al-'Ayn, who was known as 'The Pure One', joined his movement by giving a public speech. Anyone who reads this speech will recognise the profligacy which this 'Bab' preached. This woman announced that Islam's period as a religion had ended and that the Bab had gone into occultation for a while because he was awaiting a new sacred law. She also said that the world was going through a period of transformation. The new religion began to be 'revealed' to the Bab, and this assuming 'Pure One' said that the new law concerning women which had been revealed to the Bab was as follows:

Woman is a flower, created to be smelled and embraced,

So there is no punishment for the one who smells and embraces her.

(1) The story of 'Ali Muhammad Ash-Shirazi who claimed to be a prophet

And as long as woman is a flower, she can also be plucked, picked, and given to one's friends. At the end of the speech, she said, 'Do not veil your women from your friends!'

Those who wish to learn of the series of the moral outrages which Qurrat Al-'Ayn's speech contained may read the book '*Nuqtat Al-Kaf*' by Al-Bab Al-Kashani, London, page 154. This is what the Bab brought after annulling Islam: 'Do not veil your women from your friends, for now there are no barriers or punishments. Take all that you can from life, for there is nothing after death.' This is the summary of the profligacy, which this so-called Bab (Door) brought. He declared that there shall be no Reckoning or Last Day and that the purpose of a woman is to be exposed, embraced, and smelled. It is beyond belief that some married couples followed him and called themselves 'religious'. They looked at the affair and considered that the licentiousness which the Bab brought was a religion, although his teachings facilitated corruption to it. They replaced responsibilities with profligacy, and then called it 'religion'!

This is what the enemies of Islam wanted to do to it, and the Russian imperial consul was the one who encouraged this man and protected him in the year 1261 AH. Despite this, the people of Persia sentenced him to death after a wave of fierce condemnation. No one could save him, so he was executed. Those who read the accounts of what he said before his execution will see how he abased himself, pleaded and wept. Had he truly been sent by the True Lord he would not have abased himself and pleaded for his life. Rather, he would have been filled with contentment and joy because he was on his way to Allah *Glorified is He*.

This charlatan knew the punishment for which he was heading, so he wept and begged for mercy. Once the Bab was killed, one of his followers, Mirza Husayn, announced that the 'scripture' which the Bab had brought and had called 'The Message' (*Al-Bayan*) was false. Also, Mirza Husayn Ali said that he had brought a scripture called 'The Most Holy' (*Al-Aqdas*), as though the whole thing were simply a matter of deceiving people, and then justifying this deception.

If we take a look at a book they call '*Bahjat As-Sudur*' (The Heart's Delight) by Haydar ibn Ali Al-Baha'i, we will find that it contains every

imaginable deviation. Al-Baha' said, 'Conceal your gold, your destination, and your religion.' This means you should not let people know how much wealth you possess, nor where you are going, nor that you are a Baha'i, otherwise, you might be killed. The Baha'is believe that the time of the Quran has ended and that 'The Most Holy' is a superior scripture to the Quran. This book 'The Most Holy' states that Jerusalem is the rightful home of Jews and solely for them and that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is the master of all prophets. This shows us that this man was a tool of the Zionist occupation. They held a party in Britain to honour him and gave him knighthood for his services to the colonial power.

Sheikh Rashid Rida, who documented the biography of Imam Mohammad Abdu, has mentioned a meeting with Baha'ullah in Beirut. As reported by Sheikh Rida, on the authority of Imam Mohammad Abdu, Baha'ullah used to perform the five daily prayers and attend the Friday Prayer like Muslims. When he was asked about the Baha'i movement, he said that it was an attempt to bring *Shiites* and *Sunnis* closer, to establish a common ground between them. The Ottoman State was about to bring Baha'ullah to trial, but a Russian consul intervened, and it was agreed that the man would only be exiled to Baghdad. He lived there for some time and then died; his son 'Abbas, who was known as 'Abd Al-Baha', presided over the Baha'i movement.

The movement started with a man who called himself the Bab. He wrote a book where he said, 'Anyone who claims to bring a new religion after my religion before a thousand years have passed will be cursed and deprived of mercy!' Only seven years had passed before a second man appeared; he called himself Baha'ullah and preached what he referred to as 'a new religion'. His son, 'Abd Al-Baha', was his vicegerent. 'Abd Al-Baha' was then succeeded by his son, Shawqi Effendi, who lived in Akko. Thus, their lies were exposed; and the current head of the Baha'i movement is a Jew named Peterson.

Modern apostasy from Islam does not spring from among Muslims; rather, it is instigated by anti-Islamic individuals who use people with atheistic tendencies and cunning thought to misrepresent the message of Islam. Centres have been established to call for such anti-Islamic beliefs in Belgium, America, and England. They have tried to infiltrate into Islamic societies to

drag them into accepting their erroneous calls. Their ever-preferred trick has often been the issue of women, using it to attack and present Islam in the most untrue light. They accuse Islam of restricting the freedom of women, imprisoning them in their homes, and they make other similar accusations, all aiming to conceal the clear fact that Islam honours women. Ironically, I have heard a young Western woman saying, 'I wish I were a Muslim woman and had a Muslim son.'

Let no Muslim be deceived by all this hype intended only to destroy the values of Islam which protect people and respect their feelings. These movements which creep into our societies are meant to distort the values of our religion. It is incumbent on our governments to deter those who conspire against Islam and not let anyone who can merely put sentences together speak about religion. Every Muslim is required—however he can—to refute and contest any beliefs alien to Allah's religion. May Allah reward the judges of Egypt well for how they barred the way for such attacks and took an uncompromising stance to defend Islam! The country's constitution states that Egypt is a Muslim country even though some laws are still to be issued or amended. Egypt's judges, through their attitudes, gave an example worthy of emulation to prove that faith is what should govern the life and conduct of true Muslims even though some of the laws do not conform to the Islamic Law.

Whenever any of those malicious movements appears, we should remember the words of Allah: 'You who believe, if any of you go back on your faith, Allah will soon replace you with people He loves and who love Him...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). All of such movements which intend to defy Islam come to an end; Islam remains strong because of its followers whom Allah loves and who love Him. Allah makes Islam victorious by their hands, and He describes them as: 'people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers, and who strive in Allah's way without fearing anyone's reproach' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54).

Allah ends this noble verse by saying: 'Such is Allah's favour. He grants it to whomever He wills. Allah has endless bounty and knowledge' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). Indeed, it is a favour from Allah; He loves them and has made them love Him, and they are humble towards the believers and hard

towards the disbelievers. Thus, Allah has made them the bearers of the banner of His religion, and this is a great favour from Him. We should be aware that regardless of what or how many our good deeds are, Allah does not gain any benefit from them, for He *the Exalted* is the Giver of all that is good. He has brought us into this world that is so abundant in provision. The earth is so rich in minerals, metals, and sustenance; the sky is adorned with stars, the sun, sending warmth and heat, and the moon. All these are favours *the Almighty* Creator has bestowed upon His creatures.

Allah *Glorified is He* grants His favours to whomever He wills, and His Power is limitless—He is able to do anything. Therefore, a believer does not do Allah any favours by believing in Him, nor does it harm Allah in any way that some people do not believe in Him. He is absolutely able to bring forth people who will bear His Message. When falsehood rears its head, it means that the time when it will be uprooted is imminent, for scum and dross are always washed away, while that which benefits people remains on earth.

When Allah assigns a spiritual mission to the believers, the honour is from Him, not from the believers for accepting the mission; Allah bestows a favour on the believers when He chooses them for the mission of bearing His Message; all the benefits of such honour pass to the believers, and they are amply rewarded for their obedience. We know that ‘favour’ (*fadl*) means that something is given in excess to what is due and fair; Allah says: ‘Say (Prophet), “In Allah’s *fadl* (grace) and mercy let them rejoice; these are better than all they accumulate”’ (*Yunus*: 58).

Every moral responsibility Allah gives to people constitutes a favour from Him, for He enjoins such responsibilities on us only for our own good, to set life to rights. So long as the Ordinance of Allah is for our own benefit, then it would be logical to think that we need not be rewarded for living up to its responsibilities. However, Allah does not want to charge His creatures with responsibilities, which they carry out with obedience and love, and then not reward them for that with the best of rewards. This is why He says: ‘...Say, “Do not consider your submission a favour to me; it is Allah Who has done you a favour, by guiding you to faith...”’ (*al-Hujurat*: 17). So the favour is all His; He has guided us to faith and obedience and rewards us for that by making us lead good lives and granting us eternal happiness in the Hereafter.

‘Say (Prophet), “In Allah’s *fadl* (grace) and mercy let them rejoice; these are better than all they accumulate.”’ (*Yunus*: 58) Allah’s bounty and grace know no bounds. Some might wonder, ‘How come you say Allah’s bounty has no bounds, whereas He says, ‘that man will only have what he has worked towards; that his labour will be seen.’ (*an-Najm*: 39-40)

Ponder this example: when a Muslim dies, we should observe the Funeral Prayer for him and implore Allah to grant him mercy and forgiveness. Those invocations earn well for the deceased, for Allah grants him mercy for his brothers’ entreaties; and his brothers are also rewarded for doing good things to the deceased fellow Muslim as Allah commands them.

Now, the noble verse says, ‘that man will only have what he has worked towards’ (*an-Najm*: 39-40), so, has the deceased person worked for this reward he is given because of his brothers’ invocations? Are such invocations his good deeds so that he may be rewarded for it? No. The fact that ‘man will only have what he has worked towards’ actually refers to justice, to the rightful reward one directly receives because of his deeds. However, this is not all that Allah gives His devoted servants; He does not treat them with justice, but with His grace and bounty. For example—and Allah is above all comparison—an employee may be told that he will be paid one hundred pounds, ‘but then, at the end of the month, he receives one hundred and fifty. Justice consists in the fact that he receives his rightful wage of one hundred pounds, but the fifty pounds he is given in excess to the promised wage represent a token of generosity from his employer.

When Allah commands us to pray for a dead Muslim, this is a favour from Allah to the deceased person and to us as well; it is one of the ways He grants His favours to His servants. He *the Exalted* rewards everyone for his good deeds, not in proportion to such good deeds, but in excess. Through the prayers He commands us to offer for a deceased Muslim, He showers His mercy on that person and on those who pray as well. This is one of the meanings implied in His words: ‘Say (Prophet), “In Allah’s *fadl* (grace) and mercy let them rejoice: these are better than all they accumulate.”’ (*Yunus*: 58)

In fact, Allah’s reward to His servant is always far greater than his good deed. What makes a believer offer prayers and invocations for a deceased

believer is the bond of their faith in Islam, so a believer continues to belong to Islam and receive Allah's mercy on its account even after death: '...Such is Allah's favour. He grants it to whomever He wills. Allah has endless bounty and knowledge.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54)

That is a favour from Allah extended to every believer, for Allah is Limitless and All Knowing. He says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'O My servants, if the earliest and latest of you and the human and jinn of you were to rise in one place and ask Me whatever they want, and I were to give to everyone what they ask, that would not decrease what I have any more than a needle decreases the sea when dipped into it. O My servants, it is only your deeds that I reckon for you and then recompense you for: so whoever finds the outcomes of his deeds good should be grateful to Allah, and whoever finds them otherwise should blame no one but himself.'⁽¹⁾

Allah's stores are full and they never empty. His Power is infinite. He blesses whatever you do for Him, and for whatever you give, He gives you abundant reward. This applies to love. When your love for anyone stems from your love for Allah, He blesses this love and increases it. On the other hand, when love originates from a temporal cause, it will diminish one day when that cause is no more.

When love is for the sake of Allah, when one's love for others is out of his love for Him, it will last, for it stems from a cause that never ends. When love is based on desire or interest, it soon disappears when the desire is extinguished or the interest is fulfilled. Such worldly love is apt to increase so long as it receives the expected return from the loved ones. If no such return is received anymore, the relationship is seen as a loss by the one who offers this transient love. However, love that is only for the sake of Allah originates from an unending source, so it never decreases, for Allah blesses those whose love for each other is out of their love for Him. He is the All Knowing and Almighty who gives every one of His servants what he deserves. Allah says in the following verse:

(1) Cited by Muslim, *At-Tirmidhi* and *Ibn Majah*

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ
 الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

**Your true allies are God, His Messenger, and the
 believers – those who keep up the prayer, pay the
 prescribed alms, and bow down in worship [55]
 (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 55)**

Allah forbids us from taking the Jews and Christians as allies, which necessarily implies that this prohibition extends to all those who harbour enmity to Islam. Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* is Sufficient for us. He, His Messenger (Muhammad), and the believers are our allies. Not only because they are enemies, but rather, assistance should not be sought from those who are helpless—and such are all mortals; rather, we should take refuge with the One Who is Omnipotent. Our enemy might pretend hypocritically to offer us help. Allah has forbidden us from making His enemies our allies to free us from depending on their limited help; He calls us to rely on Him whose Power never comes to an end.

The original Arabic text of the verse uses the word *innama* (only) which denotes 'restriction' or 'limitation'. For example, if someone says, 'The only generous one is Zayd', it is like saying 'Zayd is generous, and no one but Zayd is generous,' and the two clauses have been made into a single clause. This is a statement that affirms that Zayd possesses generosity and negates that anyone else does. If we only say, 'Zayd is generous,' this does not exclude the possibility that other people might be generous, too.

Allah makes it clear where the believers should seek assistance: 'Your true allies are Allah, His Messenger, and the believers...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55). He reassures the believers before forbidding them from taking the people of the Book as allies. If the disbelievers had affection for the believers and eagerness to help them fulfil their spiritual mission, they would not remain disbelievers then! They would be ready then to embrace faith since they are ready to assist its people.

The fact that a disbeliever remains a disbeliever proves that his heart has not received guidance, so how can he help a believer with regard to his faith?

The people of the Book cannot be trusted since they have distorted the Scriptures which were revealed to their Prophets and concealed whatever news they contained of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. How, then, can they give aid to a Muslim? He cannot give assistance to the people of faith because he has not accepted faith himself. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'neither trust the people of the Book (in what they say regarding religion) nor accuse them of lying (in everything they say; some of it might be true). (Only) say, "We believe in Allah, what He has sent down to us and what He has sent down to you." This is because the one who cannot guide himself certainly cannot guide others.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade us from trusting what the people of the Book say; he knew they strayed into deviation and misguidance. They mixed the truth with falsehood and harboured fierce hatred against those who had attained faith. This is why Prophet Muhammad forbade us from asking them about religion. They might give a truthful answer, which we deny as falsehood, or they may lie, and we believe what they say is true. Therefore, it is not right or appropriate for a Muslim to ask the people of the Book about religion because the result is either one of these two: he may believe a lie or deny a truth. The people of the Book actually argued with one another, as Allah tells us: 'The Jews say, "The Christians have no ground whatsoever to stand on", and the Christians say, "The Jews have no ground whatsoever to stand on"...' (*al-Baqara*: 113).

Whom of the two should we believe? Should we believe what the Jews say about the Christians or what the Christians say about the Jews? We can neither believe nor deny what either of them says. We should understand that when Allah has forbidden us from taking any allies but Him, He would never leave us, as believers, without any helper. He only forbade us from seeking alliance from those who cannot possibly be sincere in helping us.

In the English translation of the verse, the plural noun 'allies' is used, but the original Arabic text uses the word *wali* (ally) which is the singular form. Why does Allah use a singular word when it refers to Allah, His Messenger and the believers? Here is the answer. Is the help that Prophet Muhammad gives separate from the help of Allah? Is the help that the believers give

separate from what is given by Allah and His Messenger? No, because all help comes from Allah; the Messenger's assistance is not separated from his Lord's, nor is the believers' assistance separated from the Messenger's *peace and blessings be upon him*. All are comprised in one thing. Allah says, addressing the believers: 'Your true allies are Allah, His Messenger and the believers...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55). This means that Allah is the Helper of Prophet Muhammad and the believers; Prophet Muhammad is the helper of the believers and the believers are helpers of one another, as Allah says: 'The believers, both men and women, support each other...' (*at-Tawba*: 71). Such is the protection and support Allah grants to the believers, who should also offer protection and support to one another.

People are subject to vicissitudes, so a believer is not always in a position where he can give advice. Sometimes you can give advice, but other times you are the one who needs it. You may falter in a certain aspect of religion; therefore your fellow believer offers you advice so that you may correct yourself. That fellow believer may falter in a certain aspect of religion, too, and then it will be your turn to offer advice so that he too may correct himself. The One Who has created humankind knows them best; He knows they are subject to change, and each has his weaknesses and strengths. Therefore, He commands the believers: '...urge one another to the truth, and urge one another to steadfastness' (*al-Asr*: 3). Why does Allah command us to urge one another to the truth? The path of the truth is difficult to follow; those who commit to it encounter difficulties caused by people of falsehood. Therefore, people who follow the truth must support and urge one another to remain steadfast and be ready to sacrifice every precious thing for the cause of Allah. Whatever we do and say must spell the truth. The believers have to seek a reminder through what happened to others and see how they were patient. This is how the believers should support one another. This is what this verse means: 'The believers, both men and women, support each other...' (*at-Tawba*: 71). Therefore, the verse we are dealing with teaches us to seek protection and assistance from Allah Who possesses absolute Power. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If anyone (of you, o believers) relieves a distress of a believer in this world, Allah will relieve for him a distress in the Afterlife. If anyone protects a believer from

being exposed (due to a slip he has done or an affliction that has befallen him), Allah will protect him from being exposed both in this life and the Afterlife. Allah helps His servant as long as he helps his brother.'⁽¹⁾

And how can you help your brother? It is through offering him assistance, support, and advice, and through spending of your time, energy, power, and wealth to help him. Do not begrudge him your time; do not think you have wasted your time while you were helping him and you could have accomplished more for yourself if you had not helped. All your time, wealth, and energy have been given by Allah, and you do not do anything by your own power, but by His. When you dedicate some of your limited power to others, He, Who possesses unlimited Power, will compensate you. He will help you as you have helped your brother. If you want Allah to be on your side, extend help to others. In doing so, a believer ascends to the highest level of sagacity.

So Allah says: 'Your true allies are Allah, His Messenger and the believers—those who keep up the prayer...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55). He *the Exalted and Almighty* wants to show us the qualities of the believers, for when we become acquainted with the nature of faith and attributes of its followers, we can distinguish the believers from the disbelievers. The most prominent attribute of those who have faith in Allah is their constant observance of *salat* (prayer) which constitutes a renewed declaration of one's allegiance to Allah five times every day. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Islam is based on five tenets: the testimony that there is no deity, but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, observance of *salat* (prayer), paying *zakat* (obligatory alms), Fasting in *Ramadan* and performing Pilgrimage to the House (of Mecca) for whoever can afford the journey.'⁽²⁾

These five tenets form the foundation on which Islam is built—but a house is not built with foundations alone. Other elements are required to make the building stand firmly. A believer is required only once in his life to testify that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger. Mandatory *salat* is observed five times daily, which takes but a little portion

(1) Cited by At-Tirmidhi in *Al-Hudud*, Abu Dawud in *Al-Adab*, Ibn Majah in *Al-Muqaddimah*, and Ahmad 2/252, 414

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in *Al-Iman*, Ahmad 2/26, 93, Al-Hamidi and At-Tabarani

of the day. Obligatory Alms are paid only by the able, and even those who are enjoined to give it only have to do so once a year. Mandatory fasting is enjoined only in the month of *Ramadan*, but even a sick person, a traveller or anyone who has one of the prescribed excuses, is permitted not to fast then and make up for that later, when the excuse is no more. Furthermore, a sick person who does not expect to be cured may give charity in lieu of fasting, and so may the elderly who could be put at risk by fasting. As to *hajj* (Pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Mecca), it is enjoined only once in one's life and only on those who can afford to make the journey (in terms of expenses, physical strength, etc.).

Those are the tenets of Islam, and there are particular circumstances where the believer may be excused from observing them, but the exception is the *salat* (prayer); no one may be excused from observing it regularly. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The head (the most important part) of the matter is Islam, and *salat* (prayer) is its pillar.'⁽¹⁾ He also said, 'What is between a person and disbelief is the abandonment of *salat* (prayer).'⁽²⁾ He also said, 'the pact between me and them is the *salat* (prayer): whoever abandons it has thus forsaken faith.'⁽³⁾

No Muslim is excused from abandoning *salat*. Whoever cannot stand up may observe it while sitting; if he cannot, he may observe it while lying down. One may even observe *salat* by nodding; he may perform the prescribed movements with his head only. If one is unable even to move his head, he may observe *salat* with his eyes. In case of total paralysis that one cannot even move his eyes to perform the movements of *salat*, he may observe *salat* in his mind. Only if one loses consciousness, is he excused from observing *salat* (prayer).

Allah further describes the attributes of the believers by saying: '...the believers— those who keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55). Paying *zakat*, or the obligatory alms, is the act of using the fruits of your work to help others, to share your gains with the weak and

(1) Cited by At-Tirmidhi in *Al-Iman*, and Ahmad

(2) Cited by Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah on the authority of Jabir

(3) Cited by At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad on the authority of Hudhayfah

needy. This exertion is a sign of your faith, since you give a portion of the fruits of your effort for the sake of complying with Allah's Commands. Allah ends the verse by saying: '...and bow down in worship' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55). Does this mean the physical act of bowing that we perform in the *salat* (prayer)? Is the word *raki'un* (bowing down) only used figuratively as the submission to Allah? Were these words revealed in a specific event and therefore carry a specific meaning? It has been narrated that 'Abdullah ibn Salam *Allah be pleased with him* went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'The people of Qurayzha and An-Nadir have abandoned us and sworn that they will never even sit with us, and we cannot reach your Companions as we live so far from them. 'Abdullah complained about the way the Jews treated him⁽¹⁾, so Allah revealed this verse to His Messenger: 'Your true allies are Allah, His Messenger and the believers—those who keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms and bow down in worship.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55) Ibn Salam hence said, 'We are content to have Allah, His Messenger and the believers as our helpers.' Another version of this narration adds that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to his mosque as people were bowing and prostrating in *salat* (prayer). Then, a man went into the mosque and asked for charity but no one gave him anything. The man said, 'O Allah, bear witness that I have come to the mosque of the Messenger of Allah and asked for charity, but no one gave me anything!' Companion 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* heard him say that as he was observing *salat* (prayer), so he stretched out his hand where the man could see it and then take the ring he was wearing from his hand as charity, so the man took it. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the man if anyone had given him anything, and the man said, 'Yes, a ring', and pointed to 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb. As related, it was on that occasion that the verse was revealed: 'Your true allies are Allah, His Messenger and the believers— those who keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and bow down in worship.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55) (The Arabic text of the verse can also be rendered as '... who...pay the obligatory alms as they bow down in worship', which is appropriate for this version of the narration.)

(1) Companion Abdullah ibn Salam had been a Jew from Banu Qaynuqa' before converting to Islam (reviewer's note)

Usually, *yarka* ' (bow down) means to submit. In the verse, it refers to submission to Allah by obeying His commands. If we say, 'So-and-so *raka'a* (literally, 'bowed down') to that person', this is a figurative usage of the word which here means 'to surrender'. Allah *the Exalted and Almighty* says:

وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَإِنَّ حَرْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Those who turn for protection to God, His Messenger, and the believers [are God's party]: God's party is sure to triumph [56] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 56)

In the previous verse, Allah says, 'Your allies are Allah, His Messenger and the believers...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 55), and in this verse, 'And whosoever takes Allah, His Messenger, and those who have believed, as Protectors...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 56) Thus, on the one hand, Allah grants His protection and support to the believers, and on the other hand, the believers should seek protection and support from Allah. This lays the general rule that Allah protects those who take Him as a Protector, just as He loves those who love Him, '...people whom He loves and who love Him...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54). This makes clear the issue of Allah's support. To Him belongs the omnipotent Power that has no limits; He can bestow it on all His servants, but He assists with it those who struggle for His cause, as He says: '...If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you...' (*Muhammad*: 7).

The two verses together explain how Allah helps His servant. He is the Ally of those who ally themselves with Him, His Messenger, Muhammad, and the believers, and He ends the verse by the general statement: '...the *hizb* (party) of Allah will be the victorious.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 56)

The word *hizb* means a group of people who come together for a particular cause. People would not unite their powers and thoughts for a cause unless they have agreed that it is a good thing. What about a group of people who unite for the cause of Allah? They must be the victorious party. It was the custom of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that, 'If anything *hazabahu* (occupied his thought), he would hasten to observe *salat* (prayer).'

(1) Cited by Ahmad and Abu Dawud on the authority of Hudhayfah

Prophet Muhammad thus taught us that whenever a matter concerns us, we should turn to Allah and seek Him as an Ally and Protector, while we exhaust all the possible means we have in our hands. We should take our guidance from the teachings of the Prophet; he was never concerned for transient worldly matters, but his main concern was delivering the Message of Allah to people. He turned to Him at times of hardship to implore His support. He stood before Allah to observe *salat* (Prayer) whenever he faced a difficult matter and declare that his means were exhausted and that he could not face that difficulty without His assistance. Thus, Allah always granted him victory over all difficulties. If we do the same whenever something is hard on us, we will find Him there.

When the believer's means do not avail him, and he has expended all his effort on something but in vain, he should hasten to observe *salat* (prayer), and Allah will dispose his affairs in the best way. When you have exhausted all means and get no result, turn to the Creator of all means: Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*. However, it does not befit a believer to sit back, do nothing and just implore Allah does everything for him. Allah has created means and causes; these are His Hand outstretched for His servants and we are commanded to employ them for achieving our ends. If you do not use those means and causes, then you have rejected Allah's Hand, so how then can you implore His help and expect to be answered? While you exhaust all possible means, turn to the Creator of all means: 'Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another god beside Allah? Little notice you take!' (*an-Naml*: 62) Glory is to Him who relieves the distressed and has no partners in His dominion; He says: 'Say, "No one in the heavens or on earth knows the unseen except Allah." They do not know when they will be raised from the dead.' (*an-Naml*: 65)

Someone may say, 'I call on Allah, but He does not answer me.' Perhaps you have not yet used all the means at your disposal. You must struggle and persevere first; you must do your best, while you pray to Allah to help you. Only when there is nothing you can do you can just pray to Him, and He will respond to you.

So long as Allah tells us that His party will be the victorious, we should take it as an unquestionable fact. This verse makes a plain statement of fact: 'And whosoever takes Allah, His Messenger, and those who have believed, as Protectors, then the party of Allah will be the victorious.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 56) Allah *Glorified is He* knows all that exists in His creation, and no Quranic statement of fact can ever contradict an actual fact of the universe. Why then do we see the believers sometimes defeated? If you see people who are apparently 'the party of Allah', yet they are not victorious, know that they have deceived themselves and deceived people into thinking that they are on the Straight Path when actually they are not, for Allah says: 'And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners.' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

This is a statement of fact Allah makes in the Quran. Muslims are granted victory against the enemies of religion when they truly take Allah as their Ally. If they are afflicted with defeat, it means they are not truly 'the party of Allah'. We have a clear example of this from the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. At the Battle of Uhud, he commanded the archers to stay in a particular position. Seeing that the believers were on the cusp of defeating the disbelievers and were starting to claim the battle spoils, the archers went down to get their share. They thus disobeyed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who had commanded them, 'Even if you see the birds snatch us up, do not move until I send for you. Even if you see that we have defeated our enemy, do not move until I send for you.'⁽¹⁾ When they disobeyed the command of Prophet Muhammad, were they truly the party of Allah who fought for His cause? No; they were heedless then; they were distracted from their sublime end by worldly gains. The fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was with them did not suspend Allah's practice with His servants. Had they been victorious despite their disobedience of Prophet Muhammad, they would not have taken his commands seriously ever after. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted them to experience the pain of temporary defeat in order to discipline them and teach them to always hold fast to the commands of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. That temporary defeat was for the good of all Muslims: victory on that

(1) Cited by Ibn Ishaq in *As-Sirah*

occasion would tempt all into persisting in disobedience. Allah says in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ
أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكَافِرَ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ كُنتُم مِّنْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

You who believe, do not take as allies those who ridicule your religion and make fun of it – whether people who were given the Scripture before you, or disbelievers – and be mindful of God if you are true believers [57] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 57)

The way in which the people of the Book mocked the people of truth was a kind of antithetical reaction. When irreligious people see a devout person who observes *salat* (prayer), transcends mundane desires like chasing women, displaying high morality, etc., they may laugh at him to mislead him into thinking he is in the wrong. They would love to dissuade him from the Straight Path so that he would follow them.

Suppose a man, even though persistent in evil doing himself, had an impious friend, and that friend asked his sister's hand in marriage, would he marry her off to him? Even though they are friends and equally corrupt, he would reject the proposal and would rather give his sister in marriage to a righteous man. He would not deceive himself. He would not trust his impious friend with his own sister; he must know his friend too well for that!

Moral values remain the same. When a person who adheres to the truth meets with people who follow falsehood, they would spare no effort to mislead him. Desirous to persist in their own corrupt ways, they would at least mock him to shake his faith and lead him astray. Wrongdoers like to entice others into the same trap; a drug addict would like all people to be like him and have nobody to tell him he was in the wrong. The Creator of all beings, the One Who knows them best, tells us about this in the Quran: 'The wicked used to laugh at the believers— they would wink at one another when the believers passed by them, joke about them when they got back to their own People' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-31). They would not only mock the believers, but they would accuse them of being misguided: 'and say, when they saw

them, "These people are misguided," though they were not sent to be their keepers.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 32-33) What will be their requital on the Day of Resurrection? Allah says: 'So, today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers as they sit on couches, gazing around. Have the disbelievers (not) been repaid for their deeds?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-36) Will Allah not claim for the believers their right? Yes, He will. So beware of trusting those who mock religion, make a jest of those who act upon it, and hypocritically claim to have faith. Allah has already warned us: 'O you who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 51).

In the verse we are dealing with, He warns us against taking as ally whoever mocks Allah's religion, and He ends the verse by saying: '...be mindful of Allah if you are true believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 57). Faith should make its followers alert. Do not take the Jews and Christians as allies, or those who falsely claim to be believers, seeking to gain the benefits Islam offers, and the rights it guarantees, whereas faith has not entered their hearts. Mindfulness of Allah is to embrace His religion and guard it against the cunningness of its enemies who try to deceive the believers by affecting their faith. Allah says in the following verse:

وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ اتَّخَذُوهَا هُزُوًا وَلَعِبًا ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ

When you make the call to prayer, they ridicule it and make fun of it: this is because they are people who do not reason [58] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 58)

It is worthy of mention that this noble verse proves that the practice of *adhan* (the Call to Prayer) has been legislated by the Quran. This is an argument against those who say that *adhan* was legislated by Prophet Muhammad and that this verse only endorses the legislation.' When you make the call to prayer (*salat*), they ridicule it and make fun of it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 58). When they heard the *adhan*, they would say, 'They are crying out like donkeys!' Allah says, describing their conduct: '...this is because they are people who do not reason' (*al-Ma'ida*: 58). Reason is what makes one choose between alternatives; it is the process of weighing pros and cons and making the best choice.

Caprice is what spoils reason and dazzles it into making a wrong choice. It is what leads a person astray. Therefore, a true believer must let the check of reason withhold the reckless impulse of caprice. The Arabic word for 'reason' is 'aql which is derived from the same root of 'iqal which means the cord used for tying a camel's feet so it cannot bolt. Reason should be employed to restrain caprice, not to justify it. When one's thoughts are devoid of reason, they only allow caprice to dominate behaviour. It is through reason that one realizes that serving caprices is only a waste of one's life. Death comes suddenly, and what benefit can one have then by pursuing desires and whims? Most people now do not live longer than a hundred years. The end of the world is, to you, the day when death comes. Allah conceals the time when each will meet his end so that everyone may continue to persevere in worship, so long as he does not know when he meets his Lord. It can be at any moment. Those who use their reason thus sacrifice transient worldly pleasures for the sake of the Hereafter. If the disbelievers use their reason, they will realise that by taking this stance against faith and submission to Allah, they are only sacrificing eternal peace by their defiance of their Creator. Allah then says:

قُلْ يٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَآبِ هَلْ تَنقِمُونَ مِنَّا إِلَّا أَنۢ ءَامَنَّا بِٱللَّهِ وَمَا
أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنۢ قَبْلُ وَأَنۢ أَكْثَرُكُمْ فَسِقُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Say [Prophet], 'People of the Book, do you resent us for any reason other than the fact that we believe in God, in what has been sent down to us, and in what was sent before us, while most of you are disobedient?' [59]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 59)

The word 'Say' here is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Allah addresses His Messenger, He is also addressing all the believers, so we must also say: '...People of the Book, do you resent us for any reason other than the fact that we believe in Allah, in what has been sent down to us, and in what was sent before us, while most of you are disobedient?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59) Why do the people of the Book resent the believers? Is faith something to be hated by followers of the previous messages which actually came from the same source?! Here, Allah *Glorified is He* poses

a question which they are unable to answer. We, Muslims, believe in Allah, His Messengers, what He has revealed to us and what He had revealed before, so what is in all that to arouse resentment? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told the Jews that he and those who follow him believe in Allah and His Messengers—including Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* son of Maryam (Mary) Allah *be pleased with her*—so they were severely enraged! Why do the people of the Book hate the fact that Muslims believe in Allah?

An example of this is when someone invites you to do something impious or to go an obscene place, and then you refuse, so he hates you for it. So you say to him, ‘Do you hate that I am upright in my behaviour?’ We know that an honest man is a treasure to those who know him. A harmful thing is what deserves to be hated. As for faith in Allah, it is a praiseworthy thing because it teaches one how to have good conduct with all of creatures. Religion commands us to protect the dignity of others, not to transgress against their property and lives, not to backbite them, to reject bribery, to be sincere in one’s work, to keep one’s promises, etc. What is it about religion that deserves to be hated?! When one’s hatred of another stems from the fact that the latter is good and righteous, this is illogical and unjustifiable since what causes his hatred should actually have inspired his love. Imagine someone telling you, ‘There is nothing to fault in such person except that he is chivalrous’; is this a flaw?! It is as though the speaker searched his mind to find fault with the person he were speaking about yet it was in vain, so he would criticize his merits. In fact, this is only praising that person! That reminds me of a mechanism in Arabic rhetoric where one praises someone or something through apparent dispraise. Someone might say, ‘There is nothing to fault in such person except that...’, and when you hear this you expect that what comes next will be an unpleasant attribute, and then you are surprised to hear a praiseworthy trait. This is real praise.

So Allah says: ‘Say (Prophet), “People of the Book, do you resent us for any reason other than the fact that we believe in Allah, in what has been sent down to us, and in what was sent before us, while most of you are disobedient?”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 59) You say, O people of the Book that you believe in the Torah;

then you should be aware of how faith disciplines souls and protects them from evil, for you have experienced faith. You have believed in Allah and His Messengers until Musa (Moses), but you rejected 'Isa (Jesus); Muslims believe in Allah, what He has revealed to them (the Quran) and all His Messengers, including Musa, 'Isa and Muhammad, so what is there to hate in that?! Hating the believers only on account of their faith only proves that the issue of faith is unclear in their minds. It means faith is not truly established in their consciousness. They not only hate the believers, but they show disrespect for Allah by ascribing to Him attributes of imperfection, saying: '...Until we see Allah face to face...' (*al-Baqara*: 55), '...Allah is poor while we are rich...' (*Al-'Imran*: 181) and: '...Allah's hand is shackled...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64).

This tells they only hate the fact that Muslims believe in Allah in the way that befits His perfection, for they failed to attain correct faith in Him. Besides, if they truly believed in the Scriptures revealed to them, they would not have distorted them; if they truly believed in Allah, they would have believed in every Messenger He sent, including 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. No one of sound disposition would hate true faith which proves that their dispositions have been corrupted. O people of the Book, if you hate the followers of faith, what power do you have over them? You do not have the power to harm them, but if Allah hates you, He has absolute Power to avenge us against you. So your hatred of us is worthless, and what business of yours is it that we are believers?

For argument's sake, we say to the people of the Book: Even supposing that your hatred of us could avail you anything, and you had the ability to harm us, you will incur a worse outcome for your attitude anyway; namely, Allah's punishment. We do not need to mind your hatred of us, but you should consider what you will face when Allah hates you, for He is Able to do everything. Thus, even if you could do us any harm, the harm you do to yourselves by incurring Allah's hatred is much greater, so it is a losing bargain you are making.

This is why Allah says in the following verse:

قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذَلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ لَعَنَهُ اللَّهُ وَغَضِبَ عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمْ
الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتِ أُولَٰئِكَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ عَن سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٦٠﴾

Say, 'Shall I tell you who deserves a worse punishment from God than (The one you wish upon] us? Those God distanced from Himself, was angry with, and condemned as apes and pigs, and those who worship idols: they are worse in rank and have strayed further from the right path [60] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 60)

For argument's sake, let us suppose that your plot against us, O people of the Book, could bring on us evil consequences. Know then that what awaits you is far worse: the punishment which Allah has in store for you. This supposition, furthermore, is only for argument's sake; it is like when Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad to tell his opponents: '...either we (who believe in Him) or you (who deny His Oneness) are on the right path or have clearly gone astray!' (*Saba'*: 24) Allah's Messenger is undoubtedly on the right path, and his opponents have undoubtedly gone astray, but Allah commanded him to say so just for argument's sake; it is meant to call his opponents to reflect on the Message which if they do, they will find that Islam is the right path and that they are the party that has gone astray. Thus, this is not an implicit acknowledgement that those who have rejected the call of Prophet Muhammad may be rightly guided. It is only a call on which to reflect. Allah ended the previous verse by saying: '...while most of you are disobedient' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59). This is a reference to the fact that few of them probably consider accepting Islam. Therefore, Allah would never make a generalization that all of the people of the Book are disobedient; He gives an opportunity to those who probably think of embracing true faith.

In the verse, the news of their punishment comes: 'Say, "Shall I tell you who deserves a worse punishment from Allah than (the one you wish upon) us..."?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 60) So there is something even more harmful in store for you; namely, Allah's rejection, for it was not right for you to hate us on account of our faith '... Those Allah distanced from Himself, was angry with, and condemned as apes and pigs...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 60). Is that all? Is this all the punishment they get? No. This is apparently meant to give them hope of receiving Allah's

Mercy—after incurring those punishments. However, Allah deprives them of this false hope of deliverance, as when He says about them: ‘...announce to them a painful torment.’ (*Al-’Imran*: 21) In this manner, Allah means to let them entertain a false hope of being forgiven, and then gives them news of what they should actually expect, which makes the admonition more painful.

This is like a prisoner who asks for a cup of water, so the guard brings him a cup of water and moves it close to his mouth then pours the water on the ground. His action first instils hope in the soul of the prisoner that he would drink, so when he pours the water on the ground, this torments and devastates the prisoner. If the guard simply refused his request for water, the prisoner would simply despair which is ‘one of the two reliefs. We notice the same thing when a man waits for the verdict of his execution or acquittal, and this period of waiting is filled with anxiety. And when they weigh this man, they find that he is losing weight; but once he has been sentenced to death, he begins to gain weight because despair is one of the two reliefs. So the expansion and contraction of the soul is the toughest and cruellest thing it can experience; this is why the True Lord says: ‘Give them tidings of a painful punishment.’ (*Al-’Imran*: 21) Mention of glad tidings causes the soul to expand, but then it is followed by contraction.

Another example is found when the True Lord says: ‘And if they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like murky oil, which scalds (their) faces.’ (*al-Kahf*: 29) That is, they will be tormented in such a way as will make them beg for water, and then they will be given water which, instead of saving them, will make their torment even worse. And here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say, “Shall I inform you of (what is) worse than that as penalty from Allah?”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 60)

The word *worse* here is a comparative; yet this does not mean that the believers are in a bad state as well; rather, it is a case of going along with the rival and supposing that what he says is correct, just for argument’s sake. Yet, the thing which is ‘worse’ is expressed in Allah’s saying: ‘(It is that of) those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He became angry and made of them apes and pigs and slaves of *Taghut*. Those are worse in position and further astray from the sound way.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 60)

Why is the fate of those people so bad? Because they hate the conduct of the believers and could not give vent to the rancour in their hearts by punishing the believers; but Allah hates them, and He is very much able to punish them. Their fate will be as the True Lord describes: 'those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He became angry and made of them apes and pigs.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 60) Rejection means that Allah dismissed them from His mercy, and this means that they were denied anything that is good.

An example to illustrate this—and Allah is beyond compare—When a servant works for a man who pays for his lodgings, food and clothing, yet this servant does not fulfil the rights of service properly, his master will not *be pleased with him* and will dismiss him from his job. And when the employer dismisses his servant, he will tell everyone that this servant did not do his job properly, and no one will ever hire him again. This is 'condemnation', and thus we see the difference between being dismissed from mercy alone without being punished, as opposed to the condemnation continuing so that the reason for the dismissal is announced publicly. This means that after dismissing them, Allah sent His condemnation and wrath upon them, so that His rejection of them would never be revoked.

Allah *the Exalted* announces to the people of the Book: 'My dismissal of you from My mercy, and My continued condemnation of you, is a mighty evil.' As we know, Allah's condemnation has consequences in every aspect of life. He would prevent guidance from finding their hearts by sealing them so that faith cannot enter and disbelief cannot leave; or He would turn them into apes and pigs. And if we ask where their descendants are, the answer is that they did not procreate after they were transformed, but rather, they were transformed and made to be seen in their transformed state, and then they were caused to die.

Are we to suppose they were the ones who violated the Sabbath, or who worshipped the golden calf or those who disbelieved after the table of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was sent down? They are all of those. Or the meaning of 'apes' here is that they have the attributes of apes, such as frivolity, quick movements and nakedness; or their characters and natures are like that of pigs, for they are as filthy and malodorous as a pig; and one notable character of a pig is that it does not jealously guard its female, this is also the case with

some of them; it has become prevalent amongst them to send their daughters into prostitution, besides other evil acts.

Given this understanding, it would either entail a literal transformation took place, which would not have continued to exist but would have been confined to a specific time so that people would see them transformed after which they would die and it would be over; or their conduct is like the conduct of apes and pigs.

The True Lord continues: ‘and slaves of *Taghut*.’ Worship means obedience to what is worshipped in all that it commands and forbids; and the ‘*Taghut*’ refers to those who beautify evil, hypocrisy, and the consumption of foulness and sin. And their fate is, as the True Lord says: ‘those are worse in position and further astray from the sound way.’ And indeed this is the reality in which they live, which is pure evil, and they do not even consider crossing over to the right path.

And when we read the verse in full, we know that they are in a state of heedlessness of the way of true guidance because ‘sound way’ means the paved way which leads directly to the goal. The roads of the Arabs would lead either across sand or between mountains, and they would always walk in the middle of the road so that they would not be harmed by unstable sands which could cause them to slip and fall down steep banks, or by rocks falling from mountains which could land on them. That is why the True Lord said: ‘A speaker among them will say, Indeed, I had a companion (on earth), Who would say, Are you indeed of those who believe That when we have died and become dust and bones, we will indeed be recompensed? He will say, would you (care to) look? And he will look and see him in the midst of the Hellfire.’ (*as-Saffat*: 51-55) That is, he will be in the middle of the fire.

And the True Lord then says, about those who have incurred His wrath:

وَإِذَا جَاءُوكُمْ قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَخَلُوا بِالْكَفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوا بِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

When they come to you [believers], they say, ‘We believe,’ but they come disbelieving and leave disbelieving – God knows best what they are hiding [61] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 61)

These are the ones who mock the religion and make a jest of it. When they come to the believers, they harbour disbelief; and when they sat with the

Messenger of Allah, they would depart the gathering with the same disbelief. That is, disbelief remained with them when they came and when they left, and it is as though the time they spent with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* did not avail them anything. It was possible that a man could go to Him as a disbeliever and sit with him, and later be touched by guidance in the course of sitting with him, and so leave as a believer.

An example of this is Fudala ibn 'Umayr Al-Layth who came to assassinate the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in the year of the Conquest of Mecca. When the Messenger of Allah passed by Fudala, he said: 'What were you thinking to yourself?' He said, 'Nothing, I was invoking Allah.' So the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* smiled and said: 'I ask Allah to forgive you.' And He placed his hand on Fudala's chest; and later on, Fudala said: 'By Allah, by the time he removed his hand from my chest, there was no one on the face of the earth more beloved to me than him.'⁽¹⁾

He was touched by guidance, and thus he came with disbelief but left with the deepest of faith. These people, on the contrary, came with disbelief and left with the same, as though they only came out of hypocrisy—this is indicated by the True Lord's words: 'And Allah is most knowing of what they were concealing.' This indicates that they were hypocrites in claiming to have faith when actually they harboured disbelief all along. What 'they would conceal' was that their coming to the Messenger of Allah was out of pure hypocrisy. This was a specific trait of those who said that they had attained faith, when actually they only entered Islam hypocritically because their disbelief was settled firmly in their hearts and could not be shaken. The repetition of the pronoun 'they' in the words of the True Lord is to refer specifically to their disbelieving nature. In other words, it is as though their action of coming in a state of disbelief and leaving in the same state was something inevitable; therefore, the True Lord exposes them: 'Allah is most knowing of what they were concealing.' The superlative form 'most knowing,' implies that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew they were hypocrites because of the illuminations and insights Allah has given him. But the Messenger of Allah's knowledge did not reach the level of the True Lord's, for Allah's

(1) Narrated by Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr in (*Ad-Durar*) and Ibn Hajar in (*Al-Isaba*)

knowledge is intrinsic, whereas His Messenger's knowledge was a grace from Him. So the True Lord's words 'most knowing' do not deny that some people might have known that they were hypocrites. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was well aware that they were hypocrites, and Allah was fully aware of what they were concealing. To conceal means to suppress one's true emotions so that they are not visible to others. And to attempt to conceal is not a natural thing to do because it requires force. Their disbelief was close to revealing itself, so they would try to conceal it by doing their best not to be exposed; but nothing can escape Allah's knowledge.

The True Lord then says:

وَتَرَى كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْآثِمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ
وَأَكْثِلَهُمُ الشَّحْتَّ لَيْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

You [Prophet] see many of them rushing into sin and hostility and consuming what is unlawful. How evil their practices are! [62] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 62)

Hastening into sin means that they were already sinners to begin with. Hastening would therefore imply that they were in the first stages of sin and then they raced to the final stages of it. So their misguidance was plain from the onset, and it is as though their disbelieving nature exposed them despite their efforts to conceal it. They found themselves vying with one another to commit sin – that is, their conduct tended towards disbelief. The True Lord *Glorified is He* made them lax in concealing it, so they did things which exposed them even more clearly than their speech did because sin has different stages: the stage of speech and the stage of action—and action reveals more than speech.

The term 'many of them' means it is likely that there may have been faith in the hearts of a few of them, and this absolved any of them who were thinking about embracing true faith. They also vied with one another in aggression. If sin covers any kind of crime, whatever it may be, then aggression means a sin in which one person violates the right of another. An example of this is the person who harbours jealous hatred: he sins against himself, and therefore he suffers from internal conflict until he is completely consumed.

As we know, jealousy is a personal sin which is not subject to any legal punishment. It is said that it is 'the one crime whose punishment precedes it, 'which is the opposite of other crimes. All crimes occur before their punishments except hatred and envy, for the one who hates is punished for his hatred before it even begins because the only reason he hates is that his heart and emotions are pained when he sees the one he hates progressing in life. This is why the Hadith goes, 'If someone hates you, it is enough a consolation for you to know that he is miserable when you are happy.' So the person who sins against himself does not harm anyone else with his sin; but the one who is guilty of aggression, on the other hand, violates the rights of others. This can occur in two ways: those who commit aggression by giving the right of one person to another, and those who commit aggression by being silent when they see someone else's evil-doing. The evil-doer is consumed by his lust for evil, but if someone sees him doing evil and remains silent instead of reproaching the evil-doer, it is also a kind of aggression; for the evil-doer has a personal motive for committing evil, while he who remains silent does not have any personal motivation for being silent. So who is more evil? It is the one who remains silent instead of telling the evil-doer that he is guilty of evil.' And you see many of them hastening into sin and aggression. 'Notice that the word 'hasten' is as the same as the word 'compete' in the sense that there are people racing one another in sin and aggression, as though sin and aggression are goals upon which their hearts and minds are set.

'And the devouring of (what is) unlawful. How wretched is what they have been doing.' The word 'unlawful' here means all wealth which is unlawfully earned, whether through bribery, usury, theft, embezzlement, robbery, or plundering. All of these things and their likes are forms of the unlawful. They involve taking the rights of others. If done secretly, this is theft; if done hurriedly aiming to snatch another's goods, this is robbery; and if the owner of the item follows him and argues with him and tries to get it back, this goes from robbery to forcible seizure; and if someone is entrusted with looking after something but then takes it, this is embezzlement –and all of these are forms of 'devouring of (what is) unlawful'; and this is vile conduct indeed.

The True Lord then says:

لَوْلَا يَنْهَاهُمُ الرَّبَّانِيُّونَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْإِثْمَ وَأَكْلِهِمُ
السُّحْتَ لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

Why do their rabbis and scholars not forbid them to speak sinfully and consume what is unlawful? How evil their deeds are! [63] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 63)

The ‘godly scholars’ are those whose every action is ascribed to Allah, and the ‘rabbis’ are those who are schooled in religious matters; yet, neither one of such groups forbids those amongst the people of the Book to commit sin and perpetrate evil. So, how could these men of Allah and rabbis appoint themselves spiritual leaders without doing their duty by advising the people? This confirms the fact that the godly scholars and rabbis desire nothing more than the power of having authority over people.

The godly scholars are the leaders of the Christians, and the rabbis are the leaders of the Jews; and amongst the Christians and Jews, there were people overcome by the desire to consume all that is evil, commit tyranny, and make sinful accusations. So why did not those who ascribed themselves to Allah do anything to forbid this, though they have made their livings from being appointed the task of protecting Allah’s way of guidance from human deviations? Was it not their duty to forbid evildoers and sinners from evil and sin?

The evildoer has a desire to profit from his evil; but as for godly scholars and rabbis, why do they not do anything to prevent this? It must be that they were glad with sin, tyranny, and devouring all that is evil. The cause of their gladness was that if one of these people was righteous in his conduct and his judgements, he would have been jealously protective of the religion, yet none of them objected to these deviations because no one would blame him when everybody deviates. The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the words ‘Why do not’ at the beginning of this verse as an exhortation; that is, He is encouraging the correct action. The godly scholars and rabbis should have forbidden them from devouring all that are evil making sinful assertions and committing tyranny. And then the precision of the Quranic expression – as always – is manifested when the True Lord says: ‘How wretched is what they have been practising!’

In the previous verse, the True Lord spoke about the conduct of the majority of the people of the Book, saying: 'How wretched is what they have been doing!' So the True Lord makes a distinction between what they practise and what they do. The former is concerned with the godly scholars and rabbis. We know that every part of the human body has its own function: the eye sees, the ear hears, the hand touches and performs actions, the foot walks and the tongue speaks. Moreover, the parts of the body are of two kinds: there is the tongue the function of which is speech, and the rest of the body parts the functions of which are actions. This is shown when the True Lord says: 'Grave is hatred in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do.' (*as-Saff*: 3)

So speech is contrasted to action, and both speech and action are kinds of deeds. Since the things which the majority of the people of the Book do in this regard are comprised of both speech and action, the True Lord therefore says: 'How wretched is what they have been doing!'

Concerning the godly scholars and rabbis, He said: 'How wretched is what they have been practising.' There is a difference between the one who does something and the one who practises it: if a man's robe gets torn, he gets a needle and thread and sews it, which is merely engaging in the act of tailoring. On the contrary, only the one who does this professionally is called a 'tailor.' The one who does something professionally is named after his profession because he does it well; as for the one who only does it once, it is clear by the way he does it that he is not a professional.

The godly scholars and rabbis had adopted the matters of religion and priesthood as a contrived profession and became adept in it; and this is what made all the legislative bodies in the world turn away from the Law of Heaven to the law of earth. When we study the history of law, we find that the original sources of law were the priests who ascribed themselves to Allah and Revelation. They would judge between people, but they became corrupt, and society saw that they would give one judgement for a particular case but then give the opposite judgement for an identical case, taking bribes for it and privileging certain people over others. Therefore, people saw that the priests could not be trusted, so they abandoned the priests and began to make laws for themselves which were very different to what the priests gave them. Thus, this

marks the transformation from the laws of the priests to a society which no longer adhered to any religion because of how the priests' judgements deviated from justice and how they sold their judgements to the highest bidder, or judged in favour of people of influence. In this way, it became a matter of their contrivance, and vile indeed was what they contrived. The True Lord then says:

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ
يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ وَلِيزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا
وَالْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ كُلَّمَا أَقْدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ
أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

The Jews have said, 'God is tight-fisted,' but it is they who are tight-fisted, and they are rejected for what they have said. Truly, God's hands are open wide: He gives as He pleases. What has been sent down to you from your Lord is sure to increase insolence and defiance in many of them. We have sown enmity and hatred amongst them till the Day of Resurrection. Whenever they kindle the fire of war, God will put it out. They try to spread corruption in the land, but God does not love those who corrupt [64] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 64)

We know that the hand is a free-moving limb which can be moved right, left, up and down. It has fingers which each have their own Allah-appointed duty. If each one of us watches his finger as he does anything, he will see how they come closer to or go further from one another in a harmonious controlled motion which gets the task done. The fingers were created with joints and knuckles, each one a different size, in order to fulfil their function harmoniously. When you prevent this limb from doing what it is meant to do, you 'shackle' it. So the meaning of 'The hand of Allah is chained' is that Allah's hand – Allah forbid – is unable to move. They said this before the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and before Islam had come to destroy all of their falsehood. Jews spent their efforts in making the weapons of war, building fortresses yet, they were distracted from farming so their yields were poor in quality; and when harvest time came, they found

they had nothing. So a Jew named Finhas (Pinhas) said, 'Why has Allah withheld His hand from giving us? Allah's hand is chained.' We can observe that this was only a single person, yet the True Lord says here: 'the Jews say, "The hand of Allah is chained."' This means that when Finhas said this, they heard him, and not only were they pleased by what he said, but also agreed with it. Or it may be that when they saw the Messenger of Allah, at the beginning of the Emigration, forging bonds of brotherhood between the Emigrants and the *Ansar*; and there were nights when the Muslims had no food to eat, the Jews saw this and made fun of this by saying: 'Allah's hand is chained withholding sustenance from Muhammad and his people.'

Or it may be that they said: 'Allah's hand shall be chained in the Hereafter from punishing us because He will only punish us for a few days.' The one who allows himself to say that Allah *Glorified is He* can be affected by the actions of His creatures thereby disbelieves in Allah because he attempts to remove Allah from His due place. If Allah's Hand were chained, this restriction would have to have been performed by one of Allah's creatures; yet how could any of Allah's creatures tie Allah's Hand? They dared to speak so boldly about the Divine, and this was disrespectful of them, just as it was when they said: 'Indeed, Allah is poor, while we are rich.' (*Al-Imran*: 181)

When they said 'Allah's Hand is chained, 'and the True Lord *Glorified is He* responded to them: 'rather, both His hands are extended.' and said before this: 'chained are their hands;' does this mean the True Lord was supplicating against them? Of course, He was not, for He is the source to which all mankind turn with their supplications, and He is able to do what He wills with His creatures. But when the True Lord quoted their words, He was alerting the faithful mind who receives His words to the fact that whenever one finds an unfitting attribution describing Allah *Glorified is He*, he must dismiss these words before he even sees the response to them.

This teaches us that when we hear an attribution which is inappropriate, we must utterly negate it; for Allah *Glorified is He* does not supplicate against His servants because supplication is made by the weak who raises his request to the strong hoping that he will fulfil it for him. So if the True Lord says it, this either means it is a simple factual statement or a lesson for us. If it is a

factual statement, we should observe that Allah *Glorified is He* ordained miserliness for them when they said this from the very moment they said it; and if it is meant as a lesson to us, then it teaches us the conduct of faith, that is, we must rebut any attribution which does not befit Allah's Majesty.

There is another Quranic statement which raises a similar issue. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* acknowledged the longing of Prophet Muhammad and the believers to go to the *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*, He said to him: 'You will surely enter *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*, if Allah wills.' (*al-Fath*: 27) Was this a factual statement from Allah or a lesson to us? It was a lesson to us that we should do this whenever we yearn for something. Likewise, when He says here' and the Jews say: Allah's hand is chained, 'He *the Exalted* teaches us to say: 'chained are their hands, 'just as He taught us to say: 'if Allah so wills;' so that we attribute everything to Allah's power. Philosophers tried to define the power of divine will saying that Allah *Glorified is He* created the universe with natural laws which govern everything. Did the True Lord relinquish His authority when He created these natural laws and leave things to their own devices? No, and this is why He has ordained miracles which broke the natural laws to show us that those laws do not have the final word, but rather that Allah's Hand is still involved in His creation. For example, we find that He commanded fire which usually burns: 'O fire, be coolness and safety' (*al-Anbiya*': 69). And He commanded water, which usually drowns: 'Then We inspired to Moses, "Strike with your staff the sea," and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain.' (*ash-Shu'ara*': 63)

And He said: 'and We had inspired to Moses, "Travel by night with My servants and strike for them a dry path through the sea; you will not fear being overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor be afraid (of drowning). (77) So Pharaoh pursued them with his soldiers, and there covered them from the sea that which covered them. (78)'" (*Ta Ha*: 77-78).

The staff which was created from a dry tree branch was transformed into a snake, meaning that it was turned into something of completely different nature, from a plant into an animal. This is how the laws of nature are broken.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about those who claimed that His hand is chained: 'Chained are their hands, and cursed are they for what they say.'

They have been expelled from Allah's Mercy because they brought this on themselves by saying that Allah's Hand is chained, and He is able to refrain from giving them. Allah continues: 'Rather, both His hands are extended; He spends however He wills.' He gives to whom He wills. The word 'Hand', linguistically speaking, can mean both the body part and also 'favour'. When someone says, 'So-and-so gave me a hand which I will never forget', he means that someone did him a favour he will not forget. The reason why the word 'hand' is used in this way is that the hand is always used to give and take things. The word 'hand' is also used to indicate the concept of possession, as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'unless they forego the right or the one in whose hand is the marriage contract foregoes it.' (*al-Baqara*: 237) That is, the one who possesses the right to marry the woman forgoes his claim. And in the context of fighting, we find that Allah says: 'Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands.' (*at-Tawba*: 14)

Of the word, 'hand' can be used to refer to someone who had the role of performing a certain action, such as when the True Lord says: 'O Iblis (Satan), what prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My Hands?' (*Sad*: 75) Adam *peace be upon him* was the first man to be created, and all of us who came after him were created by means of human reproduction. Allah *Glorified is He* has honoured man by creating him with His Hands, and He has created everything with the word 'Be!' So the word 'hand' has many different meanings, and the Messenger of Allah said: 'The blood of all Muslims is equal in their law, and if the least of them promises protection they all honour his promise, and they are (as) a single hand above all others.'⁽¹⁾ That is, when all hands come together, theirs is the most powerful hand; and when we read the words 'Allah's Hand', do we take it to mean His favour, or His possession?' Blessed is He in whose Hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent.' (*al-Mulk*: 1)

Allah *Glorified is He* knows His Own Self best, so let us stop at the attribution itself and go no further. Yes, He has a Hand, and He has two Hands, but do not imagine that everything connected to Allah is the same as

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Al-Bayhaqi (in *Al-Kubra*), Al-Hakim (in *Al-Mustadrak*), Al-Hindi (in *Kanz Al-'Ummal*) and Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir*

everything connected to you; for it is true that you have existence now, and Allah *Glorified is He* has existence, but your existence is not the same as Allah's existence. Likewise, His Hand is not like your hand; and in order that we do not fall into anthropomorphism by saying that He has a hand like our hands, let us say that the meaning of 'hand' here is 'power' or 'favour'; and the supreme goal of this is to exalt the True Lord above all comparison. There are those who say that Allah *Glorified is He* has a Hand, but it is not like our hands because we must view every description of Allah in the light of the fact that 'There is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11), and interpretation is possible, just as it is when the True Lord said that He created Moses 'under His eyes.'

It is possible to accept every description Allah *Glorified is He* gives Himself just as it is given, by saying that He has a hand but it is not like our hands; He has existence, but it is not like human existence; He has an eye but it is not like other eyes. In short, every description of Allah *Glorified is He* must be viewed in the light of 'There is nothing like unto Him.' It is also possible for us to interpret the attribution by saying that it means 'favour' or 'power'. The True Lord says: 'Rather, both His Hands are extended.' What is meant here is His favour. He did not simply reply by saying that He has one hand which gives, but He gave the strongest rebuttal possible which is that He gives with both of His Hands. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'and amply bestowed upon you His favours, (both) apparent and unapparent?' (*Luqman*: 20)

He gives in an obvious way and He gives in a hidden way. Do not say that one of these means His right hand and the other means His left, for both of Allah's Hands are right hands.' Rather, both His hands are extended; He spends however He wills.' That is, He *the Exalted* could not be miserly. Even when the True Lord withholds, this is another form of giving and dispensing because the one who misuses a favour might thereby be led into trial and a bad end; therefore, Allah *the Exalted* withholds this favour from him to protect him from being led astray by it. This is why we find that the True Lord says, in the chapter *al-Fajr*: 'And as for man, when his Lord tries him and (thus) is generous to him and favours him, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me. (15) But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me. (16)'" (*al-Fajr*: 15-16). And then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* responds: 'No.'

So, giving is not a sign of honour, nor is withholding a sign of disgrace; and how could giving be a sign of honour when Allah might give unto you, but you might not fulfil the rights of this favour? How could withholding be a sign of disgrace when it might prevent you from going astray? Hence, sometimes when He withholds from you, He gives you something much more lasting, which is guidance. Thus, we see that His withholding is also a kind of giving.

People always think that Allah's bestowal only consists of what is positive, but they forget that there is also a negative bestowal (i.e. preventative). The True Lord spares you from misfortunes. Before, I have given the example of the man who makes sure that all his income is lawful, and is conscious of Allah *Glorified is He* in his work, and takes his pay and arranges his life's affairs within the bounds of this pay, this man might go home and find that his son has a slightly high temperature and because his income is lawfully earned and the cells of his body know this, he deals with the situation calmly and takes his son to a doctor at a charity clinic for a few pennies. The doctor prescribes a medicine costing only few pennies, and the boy is cured.

This man's situation is different from that of another man whose wealth is unlawfully-earned and who, when he sees that his son's temperature is high, finds a thousand bad thoughts running through his mind, and takes his son from doctor to another without believing what any of them say. Allah *the Exalted* granted the first man peace of mind by preventing paranoid notions from entering his heart and thoughts, whereas the second man ended up spending far more than what he had earned from his unlawful work. This means there is also such thing as a negative gift; and the gift which a man loves to receive is that of wealth which ultimately dwindles away to nothing. As for withholding, it prevents a man from committing sin, after which he receives his bliss in the Hereafter. We find that many people ask things from Allah, but they are not aware that Allah also gives by withholding. The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*, says: 'And man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty.' (*al-Isra'*: 11) This is why sometimes the True Lord gives His servant things for which he had been imploring Him, and then he finds out that they are actually bad for him. It is as though when the

True Lord has denied him what he wanted for a while, He was actually doing this to protect him.

Therefore, He is always dispensing His bounty, and He dispenses it as He wills. Allah *Glorified is He* has never been miserly, even when He withholds, because withholding at the right time is the same as dispensing. Thus, Allah's bestowal is always a blessing whether it is outward or inward. Also, if the meaning of 'Hand' is 'power', then Allah's hands are stretched out with reward for some and punishment for others; and He gives spiritual immunity to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* against all those who rebel against him and against every opponent and arrogant rival whether from the disbelievers or the people of the Book.

It is as though He *Exalted and Glorified is He* were saying: 'Prepare yourself, Muhammad, and have your community prepare themselves because those disbelievers will not be content to only hate you a little; rather, every time Allah favours you with additional guidance, they will envy you and hate you; and their opposition and rancour towards you will increase – so prepare yourself for that.' This imparts spiritual immunity, silences all the negative thoughts of the soul, and readies the soul to deal with anything which might happen, even if it is bad.

Let us make this easier to understand, not by way of comparison but simply to make it easier for the mind to grasp – for Allah is beyond compare. Let us consider what happened in Europe during the Second World War when Britain fought against the Nazis. Terrible destruction wreaked the British cities by the German bombers. Churchill stepped up to lead the British war effort saying to them: 'Terror and difficulty await you, so prepare yourselves to face these perils.'

If this happened in a war between two countries, then what do we think about the True Lord *Glorified is He* who knows how essential it is to test His community who would bear the banner of His perfect way of guidance? Therefore, He had to prepare Prophet Muhammad's soul and the souls of the believers who followed him to face up the envy, hatred, malice, plots and schemes of their enemies.

The True Lord says: 'And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. And We have cast among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection.' The True Lord *Glorified is He* would not have said 'among' unless there were more than one party here. The referral is either among the different Jewish sects, among the different Christian sects or among the Jews and Christians, especially since this group of verses began with the words: 'O, People of the Book.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59) So if the Jews are meant here, then enmity and hatred indeed exist among their different sects; and if the Christians are meant, then enmity and hatred also exist among their various sects. If it is taken to mean between the Jews as one group and the Christians as another, and this could also be the case—this enmity and hatred will never end and will remain among them until the Day of Resurrection.

Then, the True Lord says: 'Every time they kindled the fire of war (against you), Allah extinguished it.' This statement addresses what happened in the Islamic territories such as when the Jewish tribe of Banu Qaynuqa' broke their treaty after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had gathered them in the marketplace of Qaynuqa' and said to them: 'O Jews! Surrender yourselves, before Allah afflicts you just as He afflicted Quraysh!'⁽¹⁾ But they refused, saying: 'O Muhammad, do not be deluded by how you killed a horde of Quraysh who were greenhorns with no knowledge of warfare. By Allah, were you to fight us, you would learn that we are true men, and that you have never before encountered the like of us.' So the True Lord revealed His words concerning them: 'Say to those who disbelieve, "You will be overcome and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place."' (*Al-'Imran*: 12) So, the tribe of Banu Qaynuqa' was the first of the Jews to break their treaty with Prophet Muhammad, and they were fought against during the time between the battles of Badr and Uhud.

The reason for this was that an Arab woman took her wares to the market of Banu Qaynuqa' and sat next to a Jewish goldsmith in the market. The Jew tried to force her to unveil her face, but she refused. Then, the goldsmith knotted her clothing at the back without her noticing, so when she stood up,

(1) Narrated by Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Kathir

the whole dress came off and left her naked. They laughed at her, and she cried out. A Muslim man answered her cry and killed the goldsmith, but the Jews took hold of the Muslim and killed him too. This event caused civil strife to erupt, but Allah *Glorified is He* has extinguished the fires of this strife and exiled Banu Qaynuqa', and then exiled the tribe of Banu An-Nadir, who had the power in Medina because of their wealth and knowledge. The Muslims fought the tribe of Banu Qurayzha, and exiled the people of Khaybar, and the Muslims were able to take control of the valley of Al-Qura. All of this happened within the Islamic territories; so what happened outside it?

We have seen how they were destroyed by the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar (Bakhtansar), and then by the Roman, Titus. We know that they were dispersed throughout the earth in every place and time. Someone might say: 'If the True Lord says, 'every time they kindled the fire of war (against you), Allah extinguished it, 'why is the war between them and us still happening?' We say that the one who extinguishes the fires of war must be one of Allah's true soldiers; and when we really become Allah's true soldiers, this war will be extinguished.

The nearest example to us is our victory on the tenth of *Ramadan*. Our victory came when we fought under the banner of 'Allah is the Greatest!' Allah *Glorified is He* has rewarded those generals and soldiers who knew that the enemy was better equipped than we were, yet victory went our way because we entered with 'Allah is the Greatest' as our guide.

As for those who claim that it was a victory of civilisation, we ask: Which civilisation about which are you speaking? Islam is the wellspring of balanced civilisation, and one cannot make claims about 'civilisation', whilst outside the confines of Allah's religion. If we adhere to the principle of 'Allah is the Greatest', not just as a slogan, but also as a practical guide, then Allah *Glorified is He* would extinguish the fires of any war.

Allah *the Exalted* has established cosmological ways in His universe which give practical experience to those who harbour doubts about faith. An example of this is what happened when some of those who fought at the battle of Uhud disobeyed the orders of Prophet Muhammad and were almost routed as a result. At the battle of Hunayn, they said, 'We shall not be defeated today because of

our small numbers!’ And so Allah said: ‘Allah has already given you victory in many regions and (even) on the day of Hunayn, when your great number 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)

Allah *Glorified is He* has created these cosmological ways to alert anyone who is heedless of religion to that fact that the enemy will be able to defeat him in this state; for heedlessness leads to deviation, and deviation can never lead to victory. This is why the True Lord warns the forces of faith. As for the forces of disbelief, the True Lord wants them to be debased, so He sometimes allows them to defeat the believers when the believers are heedless; and all the believers have to do is to wake from their heedlessness, and they will be able to defeat the forces of disbelief. That will happen at a time when the forces of disbelief are in a state of arrogance and excess. There is a rustic proverb which explains it: ‘The believer cannot fall from a reed mat.’

The meaning is that humbleness protects one from delusions of grandeur and arrogance because the one who falls is the one who imagines that he has a high status on earth and, therefore, Allah *the Exalted* makes him blind to caution, as He says: ‘and to destroy with utter destruction all that fell in their hands.’ (*al-Isra*’: 7)

That is, to make everything come to ruin. When crafty politicians want to punish their enemies, they try to raise their enemies by being patient with them and giving them time until the enemy’s status rises high, and surprisingly, they expose them and reveal their bad conduct so that people no longer respect them. Therefore, we find that the Quran is completely direct about this matter: ‘So when they forgot that by which they had been reminded, We opened to them the doors of every (good) thing until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly, and they were (then) in despair.’ (*al-An’am*: 44) Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* gave them time and left them be so that they could amass wealth, build, prosper and rejoice in what they had gained; He has opened the doors of all good things to them; and life has shown us many examples of that.

We have seen powerful nations aiding our enemies, and the forces of East and West agreed for many years to aid the enemy, and we said to them: You

are now at the stage of 'when they forgot that by which they had been reminded; 'your enemies will soon move onto the stage of 'when they rejoiced in that which they were given, 'and after that, you will move on to the stage of 'we seized them suddenly, and they were (then) in despair.'

Later, the Soviet Union collapsed, and Allah *Glorified is He* took them to task all of a sudden by the hands of people from within, and many calamities befell those who had persecuted the people of faith. Hence, there is no need for anyone to be deluded by whatever he has attained. And the True Lord says: 'And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. And We have cast among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. Every time they kindled the fire of war (against you), Allah extinguished it. And they strive throughout the land (causing) corruption, and Allah does not like corrupters.'

They are always dejected because the True Lord does not allow them to satisfy all of their desires, and therefore they labour to spread corruption on earth by means of stealth. Whoever reads *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* will see that they were the creators of the theories which spearhead false ideas such as Marxism, Existentialism and Darwinism which were ideas formulated before so that their harmful effects would appear in non-Jewish peoples; as for the Jews themselves, they were pre-warned about such corrupt principles. They wanted to plot against the world, and this is how they labour hard to spread corruption amongst people. If we look at all the current deviations in the world, we will find that they are behind them all.

The unbridled capitalism came from the Jews, as did communism. All of those who claimed to be prophets after Prophet Muhammad only did so because of the actions of the Jews. Likewise, the organisations which hide behind names such as 'Masons', 'Rotary Club' and 'Lions' all come from the Jews. Yet, despite this, we see people who claim to be civilised and proud to be members of the Rotary Club. And when we ask them what they do at these clubs, they say that they engage in charitable activities and good works. So we say to them: 'Why do you not do good works in the name of Islam? Do you think that any good comes from outside of Islam?'

Every now and again, the world discovers that all its corruption has been caused by these people and their plots; and this is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* afflicts them with calamities from time to time because of how they labour hard to spread corruption on earth. This labouring to spread corruption takes many forms; sometimes it takes the form of scientific theories, sometimes it takes the form of extremism in political ideologies, such as unbridled capitalism and communism. All of those destroy people's lives. When people try a new ideology, they judge its success or failure by the good or the evil it brings them.

Russia, for example, used to supply the world with wheat from Siberia, but then it suffered from agricultural deficit and looks for others to sell it wheat. In countries where the unbridled capitalism rules, people lead an irresponsible lifestyle in the name of freedom. In Germany, on the other hand, we saw its capital Berlin divided into two halves, each half with its own life, but it was then united with consequent problems.

Some societies might place themselves in the hands of people who are even more malicious, such as the ruling parties in every country that does not follow a balanced system. We find that the members of such parties are like an organisation that embraces an ideology and its opposite so that no one can rebel against them. They have the workers under their control, and the factory of the capitalist is in their hands, and they live princely lives without anyone daring to question them.

Another example is the 'existentialist' philosophy which calls every man to affirm his own existence and was accompanied by a wave of pure liberalism and irresponsibility—for he did not understand the affirmation of existence as being founded on the responsibility of doing good deeds in life. They understood existence to mean the complete freedom of instincts—despite the fact that it is required of any man that if he wishes to stretch out his hand, he must stop his hand before it gets to the point where it would strike another man. Those people treated people like children, just like when the father gives his son a toy telephone, giving it to him so that he can take advantage of his energy before he becomes morally responsible; but the father would not let his son play with a real telephone. Yet, those people encourage adults to play and amuse themselves so that they do not get involved in serious matters.

An example of that is football: they hold championships for it, and apply serious rules to a mere game. Three hours before the match, you find that the security forces close the roads to the stadium which will host the match. If the referee makes a simple mistake, people become incensed and outraged, but when leaders and governments make thousands of mistakes, no one says anything. Why not? Because you have transferred your serious laws to games and sports and left what is truly serious without any laws at all.

Another example is the sporting attire young people wear; it covers the bodies of the men, but they do not cover the women's bodies. Why do they not also cover the women's bodies when playing sports? The goal is, naturally, to titillate people; and all of this is corruption on earth. 'And they strive throughout the land (causing) corruption.' What is curious is that their efforts to spread corruption on earth is disguised in truth, progress and civilisation, and certain Muslims come along and actually encourage this kind of corruption forgetting that the fundamental truth is: 'Allah does not like corrupters.' He created the universe in a state of soundness, and if you receive Allah's goodness according to the soundness of the world which you were brought into, you will make the best of your life and your work; and if you do not wish to increase the soundness of the world, you, at least, must not cause it to be corrupted.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* created the world in a precise order. You can observe this in those things wherein man plays no part, which we find to be of the utmost precision and soundness such as the sun, the stars, the seasons, and the wind. Corruption comes, however, when man interferes with things without the guidance of Allah's religion. So, corruption is what draws people away from Allah's guidance, and we find that some people follow their whims rashly and believe that their actions is what makes things better, and thus the True Lord's words apply to them: 'And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on earth," they say, "We are but reformers."' Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive (it) not.' (*al-Baqara*: 11-12)

This is the True Lord's judgement of them. They claim to be making things better, but they must cease their actions at once and stop spreading corruption. And after this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ ءَامَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَكَفَرْنَا عَنْهُمْ
 سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَآدْخُلَتْهُمْ جَنَّاتُ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٦٥﴾

**If only the People of the Book would believe and be mindful of
 God, We would take away their sins and bring them into the
 Gardens of Delight [65] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 65)**

These words indicate that all of the people of the Book are outside the confines of faith, and it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* says to them: Your corruption took place before the coming of Islam, and therefore Islam came to free people from corruption. You were given a way of guidance from Allah, but you have altered it, Allah *Glorified is He* has sent messengers to you but you dishonoured them and you contrived your own religious customs. Islam did not only come to guide atheists; it also came to guide those who were led astray by the leaders of the people of the Book. After Islam came, they fought it with orientalism, writing books to criticise Islam, but they found that people are turning away from them. Hence, they brought people who praised Islam, whilst involving in this praise what would corrupt the doctrine of the Muslims.

We find that some books speaking of Islam's greatness come from the West, but they attempt to criticise it surreptitiously. They might say, for example, 'Muhammad was a rare genius in human history', basing everything they say on the notion that what Muhammad brought was a product of human genius, not Divine Revelation. For example, there was a European man who wrote a book about the one hundred greatest men in the world and placed Muhammad at number one in the list. We say to him: Thanks, but why do you not believe in the Message of Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah? Your statement does not concern us in the least.

They have explicitly attacked us before, and now, they are trying to conceal their assaults. In addition, they have arranged for the young people from the Islamic countries to be educated at schools and universities in the West. Their intention was to make them spokespeople for their efforts to corrupt Muslims, although they only succeeded with a few of them. Therefore, we say to our youth, 'Beware of being spreaders of corruption while claiming to be reformers. Do not judge these actions by their cover, but look at what their depths

conceal.’ Remember that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say, “shall we inform you of the most miserable people, who will not gain in whatever they may do? (It is) they whose labour has gone astray in (the pursuit of no more than) this world’s life, and who none the less think that they are doing good deeds.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

If we pay attention to the instances of corruption in this world, we will find that the enemies of Islam have made a great deal of impact in that direction. The impudence of the Zionists has even led some of them to confess, ‘Allah’s chosen people can rest easy, since eighty per cent of the world’s media is under our control and cannot report anything without our approval.’

Allah says: ‘If the People of the Book would but attain to (true) faith and conscious piety, We should indeed efface their (previous) bad deeds, and bring them into gardens of bliss.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 65) With this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is presenting a chance for these people to enter the boundaries of faith if they ask Allah’s forgiveness for their past sins. They are encouraged to begin a better life of purity and virtue instead of a life of corruption and misguidance so that they can truly recognise what Allah said to Prophet Muhammad, ‘and (thus, O Prophet Muhammad), We have sent you as (an evidence of Our) grace towards all the worlds.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 107) We call on both Muslims and non-Muslims to follow these words to be granted this grace. Indeed, they will find in these words the revival of their spirits and the first steps to advancing themselves in the right path.

When Allah says: ‘If the People of the Book would but attain to (true) faith and conscious piety,’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 65) Allah is only calling them to heartily conviction and devoutness. The heart is the seat of our beliefs and sincerity. This means that the belief in the existence of the Supreme Deity, Allah *Glorified is He* settles in our hearts, and the belief in the message of this Supreme Deity is conveyed unto us by His messengers. Believing the teachings that the Messengers brought, with the clear understanding that we shall all return to Allah, should be reflected in our actions on earth. Faith and piety should inspire a man to perform good deeds and to steer clear of impious deeds. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Consider the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself, unless he be of those (group of believers) who attain to

faith and do good works, and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3)

One of the righteous Arab scholars said, 'Faith is like the stakes of a tent, and deeds are like its ropes.' Just as every house has a foundation of pillars and stakes to make it steady, the Arab tent is made of thick pieces of fabric held up by wooden stakes and fastened to pegs by ropes. The Arab Bedouins used to untie these tents and load them on the backs of camels to move them from place to place. They would also choose fabrics that prevented rainwater from collecting inside the tent.

In the same manner, just like building a house, Allah *Glorified is He* has called upon the people of the Book to have faith and piety, so that He would efface their bad deeds. The Arabic word *kaffara* (efface) means to cover and conceal, and the Arabic word '*afw* (pardon) means to wipe away a mark. Hence, upon their belief, Allah *Glorified is He* will conceal and erase their bad deeds by pardoning them. They must utilize the message of mercy that Islam came with so that Allah *Glorified is He* may grant them forgiveness for their bad deeds in leading their followers astray.

They should have recognised that the coming of Prophet Muhammad was an opportunity for them to desist from their disbelief and falsehood. Prophet Muhammad came to grant this world spiritual enlightenment. He was sent to guide atheists to believe in the Creator of this universe and to direct those who strayed (from Allah's way of guidance) to His straight path. This is the definition of complete spiritual enlightenment. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَأَكْلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ
وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ مِمَّنْ أَمَّهُ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَاءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

If they had upheld the Torah and the Gospel and what was sent down to them from their Lord, they would have been given abundance from above and from below: some of them are on the right course, but many of them do evil [66] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 66)

If they had adhered to their unaltered Torah and Gospel and had faith in the Quran, it would have been better for them. The Torah was the Scripture of

the Jews, while the Gospel was the Scripture of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. After these scriptures (or books), Allah sent down the final and all-encompassing book, the Noble Quran. Allah wanted them to have faith in the glad tidings mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel that informed them of the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*. The faith in the unaltered former scriptures would lead to their faith in Prophet Muhammad and what Allah has revealed to him.

The Jews themselves had warned the Arabs that Prophet Muhammad would arise one day. They warned that that they would follow him and reign over the Arabs with his message. However, when Prophet Muhammad was sent, the Arabs believed in his message before the Jews. Allah *Glorified is He* has said: '...and (bear in mind that) that they (the Jews) used to pray for (and foresee) victory over the disbelieving (pagan Arabs). Then, when there came unto them that which they recognized (the truth and Prophet Muhammad), they denied it.' (*al-Baqara*: 89)

The natural path of the people of the Book, who had faith in the unaltered Torah and Gospel, was to believe in the Quran because their earlier Scriptures entailed descriptions of Prophet Muhammad. 'Abdullah ibn Salam had been a Jewish rabbi before embracing Islam. He said about Islam, 'I knew that Prophet Muhammad was the prophet we were waiting for, the moment I saw him, just as I knew my own son. Nay, my acquaintance of Muhammad's character was even more solid.'

Allah *Glorified is He* has promised the people of the Book that having faith and observing piety would not only erase their sins and grant them salvation from the hellfire, but would allow them to enter the Gardens of bliss. Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* knew that many of them were pure materialists who cared only for this worldly life. Thus, He has informed them that their faith would bring them material bounties in this world as well. Allah says: 'And if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all (the revelation) that have been bestowed from their Lord upon them, they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) Allah *Glorified is He* has offered them the material means of this worldly life. The believer is the one who works hard to utilise the means of this worldly life as well as he can,

with the aim of gaining the bliss of this world and the Hereafter. As for the disbeliever, he utilises these means only having this worldly life in mind, without thanking the Creator for providing them.

Allah *Glorified is He* wanted the people of the Book to have proper faith in the unaltered Torah and Gospel because this would facilitate their faith in the Quran. This was the way for their sins to be forgiven, and their path to paradise in the Hereafter. In addition, their faith would grant them worldly bounties because Allah *Glorified is He* does not hold His bounties from those who utilise the proper means.

Allah says: 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires (only) a harvest in this world, We (may) give something thereof – but he will have no share in (the blessings of) the life to come.' (*ash-Shura*: 20) Therefore, those who adhere to disbelief will only benefit from the means of this world, and will never receive any blessings in the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the disbelievers: 'For We shall (in the Hereafter) turn towards all the (supposedly good) deeds they ever wrought, and shall transform them into scattered dust.' (*al-Furqan*: 23) In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* clarified the fate of the disbelievers in the Hereafter. He stated what their fate will be in this ephemeral worldly life. If they utilise the worldly instruments, Allah will (justly) give them the results of their efforts.

Allah *Glorified is He* alone possesses omnipotent Power. He (alone) is able to prevent the physical laws from working, and to remove all the natural characteristics of matter. The farmer might utilise all his available resources, ploughing the earth, fertilising it and breeding the best strains of seed. However, a great storm might uproot his plants, a flood might drown his soil, or a swarm of lethal insects might consume his crops. The Creator, who possesses omnipotent Power, controls all these resources. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* who has established the laws of nature is also able to annul them. As a human being, you are a master in the universe by Allah's will, but you are also compelled to follow his laws in many ways. For instance, in this physical realm, illness might cause death to human beings, as might sudden accidents. Those decrees under the will of Allah can make man helpless and devoid of physical ability.

Allah *Glorified is He* has showed us that areas of land which have received rain for ages are sometimes struck by droughts. What does that teach us? Some people become deluded by the constant regularity of Allah's blessings; therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* occasionally holds some bounties back from people. Those events wherein He withholds His means occur so that man is not deluded in thinking that the forces of this material world have any sovereignty.

There are many examples of that in our lives. A farmer who owns many acres of land may find them infested with insects consuming his harvest, while his farming neighbour who owns a smaller piece of land may be graced with ampler harvest. The cause for that may be that his poorer neighbour is more righteous and pays regularly the purifying dues and alms from his harvest. Some farming people call these dues 'the land's shield'. In this scenario, the insects are among Allah's forces that consume the ill-gotten property, while leaving the lawful harvest without harm.

'And none can comprehend the forces of your Lord (Allah) except Him alone.' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31) Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* gives worldly means to everyone who strives appropriately, and gives additional support to the believers. 'And if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all (the revelation) that have been bestowed from their Lord, they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66)

Provisions, as we know, are of two kinds. The first kind is the direct provision and sustenance, and the second kind is the indirect instrument that delivers the direct provision. Direct provisions bring immediate benefit, such as the food we eat or the water we drink. On the other hand, the instruments include the money with which we buy our direct provisions. Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of worldly matters here so that we understand that His way of guidance only came to regulate man's motions in this life. The Hereafter is the reward for one's good actions here on earth.

After promising them paradise as a reward for their faith, Allah *Glorified is He* now extends to them the provisions of worldly life that give ease, comfort and happiness. The verse literally says: 'They would indeed eat from above them and below them.' Someone might ask, 'And how can they eat from above them?' Eating is the essential phenomenon of man's life because all the work a man

does can only be achieved following his basic existence. This existence depends on three constituents of sustenance which are food, water, and air. If we want to preserve this life, we must ensure the continuous delivery of these three factors. When we consider these three in order of importance, we find that a man might go without food for a month and may persevere without water for three to ten days. However, he cannot survive in the absence of air for a few minutes.

Allah *Glorified is He* in His compassion to humankind made human ownership of these essential constituents related to their levels of importance. Thus, we find that some people own the sources of food and have control over them. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has placed sufficient food stores in the human body that allow the body's systems to survive for a month without external nutrition.

Then, concerning water, we find the ability of humans to control the sources of water is less than their ability to control those of food. Allah *Glorified is He* has reduced human control over water because a man can only survive without water for a few days. As for air, Allah *Glorified is He* has not allowed anyone at all to have ownership over it because all humans needs air in all their breaths, as their bodies cannot store much air in their lungs. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* did not entrust other human beings to control the air we breathe.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 65) This means that if humans properly adhered to Allah's way of guidance, life's material means would yield to their wills. On the other hand, if man rebels against Allah's way, He will only grant him the low and worldly bounties of this life. Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* will resurrect him on the Day of Reckoning. These natural laws of the physical world certainly do not lie outside Allah's supreme control.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses all humankind with these words. If they respond to these verses, He will make it easy for them to utilise the materials He has granted them in this world. However, if they do not respond, He will withhold these material means. He is able to break their laws and neither the earth and the air, and nor any other force in His creation will be able to disobey His rules. If an entire community rebels against Allah's blessings, or

against Allah's orders, Allah will set their punishment as an example to others by withholding their worldly means.

Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed man to be the master of all the beings in the universe. However, man is also subject to Allah's physical decrees. For example, humans are subject to illness and mortality. A human might fracture a bone or drown in water. Thus, if human beings, the masters to all the other creatures in the universe (by Allah's will) are subject to the Divine word, 'Be!' spoken by their Lord, other subordinate creatures follow the same rules as well.

Allah *Glorified is He* is able to command the earth, 'Be barren,' and to stop the rain from falling. He is the One Who created the habitual processes of nature that are regularly observed. Did Allah not speak to all humankind saying, 'As your Lord will have inspired it (the earth) to do'? (*az-Zalzala*: 5) If Allah *Glorified is He* inspired the earth to reveal its treasures or erupt in earthquakes, then what should we deduce about His control of everything else? Everything runs according to Allah's Command, and they all sing their praises to Allah; however, man does not understand the language of the other beings. Allah says: 'But you (O men) fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!' (*al-Isra*': 44)

Allah's orders are understood by every being that is subject to His decrees—whatever the form or genus it might be. If Allah *Glorified is He* were to teach you about the response of everything in nature, you would understand the languages of all the other beings. An example of this is the story of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* who heard an ant say to its fellow ants: 'Get into your dwellings, for I fear that Solomon and his soldiers might crush you.' (*an-Naml*: 18) How did Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* respond to this ant's request? He said: 'O my Lord (Allah)! Inspire me so that I may forever be grateful for those blessings of You with which You hast graced me.' (*an-Naml*: 19)

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...And We caused the mountains to join (our Prophet) David in extolling Our limitless Glory, and likewise the birds.' (*al-Anbiya*': 79) The Quran also tells us that the hoopoe bird said to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon): 'For should not they (the tribe of disbelievers) come to adore Allah, (although it is He) who brings forth all that is hidden in the heavens and on earth.' (*an-Naml*: 25) So every creature in existence knows

about faith and Allah's Oneness. Everything in existence responds to its Lord, as does everything which sustains man's life.

What about those who rebel against Allah *Glorified is He*? Allah commands the worldly means to be withheld from assisting the disbelievers, and we see various manifestations of that in different nations and lands. A land might be known for its abundant rain, and then Allah alters the nature of its environment so that it suffers from drought. Another land that has sufficient technology to visit outer space might be unable to withstand a hurricane. All of this confirms to us that the Hand of the Creator *Glorified is He* controls the means of this world.

Therefore, Allah says: 'And if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all (the revelation) that have been bestowed from their Lord (Allah), they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) The last sentence in the verse literally says that Allah will grant them sustenance 'to eat' from above their heads and below their feet. That is, bounties will be granted to them from every side.

If what is meant by the word 'eat' here is direct sustenance, then it means that rain will pour from the skies to water the earth and grow crops for them. It could also refer to the trees, like the date palms as well as apple and orange trees that tower over us and provide their fruits from above. Furthermore, below our feet we will find vegetables and fruits that grow without having stalks above the earth, such as melons, cantaloupes and others. The fruits fallen from tree branches above us after they ripened should represent a profound message to us. If provision is sufficiently satisfying, it will fall to your feet, even if you do not seek it out.

If we understand Allah's words, '...they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) in a broader sense, we will perceive how Allah has placed secrets of provision above us, in the sky, and other secret blessings below us, under the ground. Do we not extract from the earth treasures that enrich our lives, by mining iron and copper or drilling petroleum? Thus, we find that everything known in our existence serves the preservation of the human species, and that this life is a gift from Allah *Glorified is He*.

If the people of the Book truly observed the Torah, the Gospel, and The Quran and followed their guidance, Allah *Glorified is He* would grant varied

forms of blessings to them. Allah *Glorified is He* affirms this in another verse when He says: 'Yet if the people of those communities had but believed and observed piety (being consciousness of Us), We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of the heaven and the earth.' (*al-A'raf*: 96)

We can observe how Allah *Glorified is He* has given certain people ample blessings, but they use such blessings with extravagance and tyranny. Then, our Lord leaves them in their inebriety until they rise to great heights before striking them with a punishment that only *the Almighty* can deliver. Our modern life is the best witness to this intoxication and lavishness of some people. Every nation that has used Allah's blessings to refuse His commands and act against His guidance ended up sinking into corruption. Its inhabitants became fierce enemies to one another and destroyed their provisions with their own hands. The experiences of real life confirm the truth of this fact, as if Allah *Glorified is He* is telling us to take heed, if we possess insight!

Allah says: 'And Allah propounds (presents to you) a parable: (Imagine) a town which was (once) secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) The meaning of the Arabic word *qarya* (town) here is not merely the little village in the countryside which we know today. For the ancient Arabs, a town meant a place akin to a capital of a nation. The ancient Arabs were nomadic people, mostly roaming the wilderness without fixed homes. Their capital was a town that contained a small number of houses. This is why the Quran calls Mecca *Ummul-Qura* (the 'Mother of Towns').

Here in this verse, Allah gave a parable of a town which was secure and at ease. Its sustenance arrived abundantly from several places. This meant that its provisions were not intrinsic or self-provided, but was collected from foreign lands. In the times in which we live, we find that all the riches of the world pour into certain towns. When the people of such town refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings, what happened? 'Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear.' (*an-Nahl*: 112)

We can observe this phenomenon in several lands that received Allah's blessings and then responded to them with ingratitude. Their own inhabitants opened the doors of ruin upon themselves, and Allah *Glorified is He* caused these towns to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear.

Now, the literal meaning of the Arabic words used in these verses is, 'He (Allah) clothed them in the garment of hunger and fear.' When we consider the Arabic word *libas* (garment) used here, we can see how the pains of hunger and fear are pictured as garment that enveloped these towns, just as garments envelop the body. That is, Allah *Glorified is He* unleashed hunger upon them so that they could not find any means of sustenance, and then fear was sent upon them. The fear could be a result of the enmity they showed towards one another, for their mutual enmity was severe. It could also mean their fear from foreign enemies. This is very similar to the events actually happening in our times.

How does a person show ingratitude towards Allah's blessings? It may be by concealing these blessings and using them to disobey Allah *Glorified is He*. In that form, it is similar to *kufir* (disbelief) in Allah *Glorified is He* which means 'To conceal Allah's existence.' Ingratitude may also be when a person is being lazy and indolent in deriving these blessings from the places where they are thought to be.

The corruption which exists in the world today has mostly been caused by these two types of people. The first type of people is those who are slothful to seek out the blessings which Allah has placed in His universe. The second group are the people who work hard to extract these blessings, but then assign the credit to their own selves, without giving anything to the weak. They also use these blessings to commit sin.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Yet if the people of those communities had but believed and observed piety (being consciousness of Us), We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of the heaven and the earth. However, they disbelieved, and so We punished them with what they (themselves) had been doing.' (*al-A'raf*: 96)

He *Glorified is He* also says: '...And if they would but truly observe the Torah and the Gospel and all (the revelation) that have been bestowed from their Lord upon them, they would indeed partake of all the blessings of heaven and earth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) This is a general judgement, but were there people who actually fulfilled it? Indeed, there were, and some of them acknowledged the truth of that and followed the right path. Allah *Glorified is He* describes these righteous people: 'Some of them do pursue a right course.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66)

The right course is a purposeful linear path that leads directly to a particular goal without straying.

So, Allah's true words, 'Some of them do pursue a right course,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 66) indicates that a group of the people of the Book followed the right path, while others did not. These words also indicate that Allah *Glorified is He* always leaves in His universe and creation a modicum of good.

This tiny amount of integrity might exist in the weakest of people who have no influence, prestige, or power in this world. Were it not for those people, Allah would destroy the world and all those in it. Prophet Muhammad explained this matter when he said, 'Were it not for servants of Allah who bow to him in prayer, babies who suckle and wild beasts that roam (on the earth), torment would have been poured upon you copiously and pressed tightly.'⁽¹⁾ Allah allows the seeds that preserve the good to persevere in His creation.

Therefore we find that there are those who say, 'As humankind increases its disbelief and aberration, Allah *Glorified is He* increases His aid to (the good in) them.' There might be a nation of atheists, except a single believer who is truly devoted to his Lord. For this devout servant, Allah may preserve the air and water of this land. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Some of them do pursue a right course; but as for most of them – vile indeed is what they do!' Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَأْتِيهَا الرُّسُولُ يَلْغَىٰ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ مَا بَلَغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ
وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Messenger, proclaim everything that has been sent down to you from your Lord – if you do not, then you will not have communicated His message – and God will protect you from people. God does not guide those who defy Him [67]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 67)

This verse begins with a command from Allah to His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*. One of the aspects of the greatness

(1) Narrated by At-Tabarani in (*Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*) and Al-Bayhaqi in (*As-Sunnan Al-Kubra*)

of the chosen one, Prophet Muhammad, and the high rank he holds in Allah's sight, is that Allah has addressed all the messengers by their names alone, except for Prophet Muhammad. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'O Adam, convey unto them the names of these (objects of creation),' (*al-Baqara*: 33) and said: 'O Moses! Verily, I am Allah.' (*al-Qasas*: 30) He also spoke to other prophets saying, 'O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116), or saying: 'O Noah! Disembark in peace.' (*Hud*: 48) Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* called every messenger by his name without attaching any attribute to it. However, He did not call Prophet Muhammad by his name, but rather called him by an attribute: 'O Messenger, 'O Apostle' or 'O Prophet.'

It is as though this meant: 'O Messenger of Allah, all the teachings of the divine Messages have been combined in your message because you are the bringer of the religion which will last until the end of time. After your message, there will be no more messages sent to the earth except the understanding of the Book of Allah which might be granted by Allah to certain people.'

Another aspect of the greatness of Prophet Muhammad is that Allah vowed by Prophet Muhammad's life, and Allah *Glorified is He* never vowed by the life of any other human being except Prophet Muhammad. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* can vow in whatever manner He decrees. However, we notice that He vowed by the wind, the brightness of morning, the night, the angels, but He had never vowed by the life of any human being except when He said: 'By your life (O Prophet), they are truly blindly stumbling in their delirium (of desire)!' (*al-Hijr*: 72) That is, by your life, O Prophet Muhammad, they (the people who disobeyed Prophet Lut (Lot)) are bewildered and confused.

Similarly, to indicate Prophet Muhammad's glorified standing in Allah's sight, Allah *Glorified is He* addressed Prophet Muhammad here as 'O Messenger'. Since Prophet Muhammad is the final messenger who came to confirm what the previous Scriptures had revealed, this means that all the bounties presented in the Scriptures before the Quran are encompassed in the Quran. In addition, the Quran also imparts more bounties that are required for the benefit of contemporary life.

Allah's Command in this verse is initiated with the words 'O Messenger'. This means that he is sent by Allah with a way of guidance for His creatures.

However, Allah continued His command with these words: ‘Announce all that has been bestowed (and revealed) unto thee by your Lord.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) So why did Allah order His Messenger to announce the message, when the task is clear in the initial words ‘O Messenger’. Is the whole purpose of a messenger not to announce a message by the One Who has sent him?’

In saying this, Allah *Glorified is He* knows that His Messenger will not hold back any part of the message. This verse means that Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to give an excuse to His Prophet in front of the people. He wanted to inform the followers that, if Prophet Muhammad announced unto them something which some of them disliked, he was only doing so in obedience to Allah’s Command. Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* was not constructing this message by himself. In addition, Prophet Muhammad does not benefit from this message. They must receive his rulings attentively as if they had received it directly from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad: ‘For unless you reveal it (the message) fully, you will not have delivered His message (at all).’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) Thus, he is obliged to deliver the message as it is, without even minor changes, as Allah *Glorified is He* wants His perfect religion to be delivered without fault.

The structure of faith requires these words to be spoken so that the message is delivered without fail. Therefore, it must also be completely implemented to mend the faults of this world and repair the corruption caused by man’s ways. Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed His religion and its laws so that the world is operated in the way that He has ordained without any imbalance. Therefore, Allah says: ‘For unless you reveal it fully, you will not have delivered His message (at all).’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* gives His Messenger Prophet Muhammad complete immunity. Allah has only sent forth the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*, for the best of people.

Allah *Glorified is He* created Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* and gave him His way of guidance. Prophet Adam was obliged to convey this guidance to his progeny. However, some generations of the children of Adam did not heed to this guidance. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has sent messengers to

remind them of it. A messenger would only come after corruption had widely spread among the people. Allah *Glorified is He* had placed within the human mind three aspects of consciousness. The first aspect is that of self-reproach and conscience that refuses evil deeds (*an-nafs al-lawama*). The second aspect is that of evil and misguidance that incite us to commit misdeeds (*an-nafs al-amara bil-sou'*). The third aspect enjoys constant peace and serenity (*an-nafs al-mutma'ina*).

The purpose of the conscientious self-reproaching mind is to refuse all the allusions made by the misguided part of our mind. If the self-reproaching mind does not admonish this misguided mind, its evil will be encouraged and will persist unchecked. As for the third, the peaceful mind, it is the part of our minds that desires to follow Allah's way of guidance.

An example of the three aspects of the mind is a man who has passionate urges to commit a sin. He may commit the sin and then, later, regret it, reproach himself, and repent from the sin. If he does that, this man will have acted as his own deterrent. However, if the soul which enjoins evil gains control over him, there will be no deterrent in his mind from further misguidance.

What if corrupt thinking gains control of the general public and the people no longer forbid one another from committing evil? Because of that, Allah *Glorified is He* has sent a succession of messengers with new miracles to bring the world back to righteousness and His way of guidance.

Allah *Glorified is He* did not send any messenger without letting them know that their job is to convey His message. In the verse we are currently examining, Allah is giving His Messenger an excuse when conveying commands that his people might dislike, for the Messenger's role is only to announce Allah's orders. Allah says, 'For unless you reveal it fully, you will not have delivered His message (at all).' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67)

A message requires a sender Who here is Allah *Glorified is He*. It also requires a recipient who here is humankind, and a messenger who here is the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. The message's content is then revealed for the Messenger to announce.

In similar Arabic lexical structures, we find that the word *arsala* (to send), as in 'I sent a messenger to a receiver', has two objects. The first object is the

messenger or the person who is sent. The second object is the receiver or the person to whom the message is meant. One object is direct and the other is indirect. The indirect object is joined to the verb with a preposition. The Arabic preposition used here is *ila* (to). Indeed, the messenger knows that he has been sent from Allah *Glorified is He* to the people for their own benefit. Certainly, no part of this message gives any benefit to Allah *Glorified is He*. If you see this verb followed by the preposition 'to' (*ila*), know that it is specifying the destination to which the message is being sent. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and (He will make him) a messenger to the children of Israel.' (*Al-'Imran*: 49) This clarifies that Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was sent with a message of guidance to the children of Israel that was meant for their own benefit. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We have sent you (O Muhammad) as an apostle unto all humankind.' (*an-Nisa*': 79) That is to say, 'You have been sent for the benefit of humankind.' The proposition *li* (unto) here implies both meanings: benefit and destination. '... For unless you reveal it fully, you will not have delivered His message (at all)' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67). Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has prevented the delivery of Prophet Muhammad's message to be incomplete in any way, just as His way of guidance is comprehensive and faultless.

Someone might say that people might not adhere to all the obligations that Allah requires of them at their proper times and places, such as prayers, for example. This is a result from our failure to organise our lives in accordance with Allah's way of guidance. It is a duty of society to organise people's daily jobs in the time between dawn and the MIDDAY Prayers. This time can efficiently be made sufficient for compulsory activity and work. Most labour should end at midday. In this way, people's work will not clash with Allah's orders, and their activities will not be hindered or interrupted.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And Allah will protect you from the (disbelieving) men.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) These words in the Quran are unavoidable because messengers are only sent after evil and corruption have become rampant and widespread. Had corruption not become the norm, Allah *Glorified is He* would have left society to restrain itself. He would have left the 'self-reproaching souls' to restrain the 'souls which enjoin evil' so that the 'souls at peace'

would regain control of human behaviour. However, when corruption fills the world, Allah sends a messenger with divine guidance to amend the human state. Thus, it follows that the evil members of society will not simply leave the Messenger alone, but they will resist his endeavours. Such a society desires the scales of existence to be unbalanced because its leading members benefit from corruption and evil. Therefore, they seek to defend corruption, and if someone comes along to give justice to the weak and the oppressed, he will certainly encounter difficulties caused by the powerful and the corrupt.

These evil schemes will be primarily directed to the messenger's person. Since the messenger enjoys direct revelation from Allah, he will be able to bear this resistance as Allah *Glorified is He* had prepared him for this mission. Then, these difficulties will start to overcome the followers of the messenger, so Allah *Glorified is He* extends His spiritual aid to them so that they too are able to bear such hardships.

Allah has protected Prophet Muhammad's safety in all those events, as Allah has said: 'And Allah will protect you from the (disbelieving) men.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to His Messenger: 'Be at peace, O Muhammad, for the One Who sent you to guide humankind will not allow anyone to harm you. I will extend your life until your message is complete. You might experience pain and hardship or encounter difficulties in the course of your mission, but you are divinely protected.'

The extent of some of these difficulties that Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* encountered were narrated to us. Were his teeth not broken at the battle of Uhud and his face injured? When his finger bled in an injury, he said: 'You are but a finger that bleeds, and all you have encountered is for Allah's cause!'⁽¹⁾

When Allah *Glorified is He* has said to Prophet Muhammad: 'And Allah will protect you from the (disbelieving) men,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67), this did not mean that Prophet Muhammad would not struggle and suffer in Allah's Cause to spread His message. Allah *Glorified is He* was telling His Messenger that,

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*

despite the hardships, his life would be protected. Allah *Glorified is He* did not prevent His Noble Messenger, Prophet Muhammad, from suffering so that no one who later called to Allah's way would ever suffer more than the pains suffered by Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*.

Let us listen well to what 'Aisha, the Mother of Believers, *may Allah be pleased with her*, is narrated to have said about this verse. She said: 'Prophet Muhammad stayed up late one night, and I was by his side. I said, "O Messenger of Allah, what ails you?" He said: "Would (it happen) that a good man from my companions guards me at night." At that moment, she continues, 'I heard the sound of a sword, and Prophet Muhammad said, "Who is that?" A voice replied, "It is Sa'd and Hudhayfa. We came to guard you." So, Prophet Muhammad slept until I heard his breathing. Then, this verse was revealed. Prophet Muhammad raised his head at *Qubbat Adam* and said, "You can leave, those who are standing in guard, for Allah *Glorified is He* has protected me.'"⁽¹⁾

A Belgian researcher spent a great deal of time studying the biography of Prophet Muhammad. When she reached this point, she stopped and said, 'Even if this man was deceiving all the people, he would not have deceived himself about his own life. Had he not been convinced that his Lord would indeed protect him, he would not have done that.' So this was a practical application of the trust he had in his Creator *Glorified is He*. The Belgian scholar added, 'Therefore, I can say with complete certainty: There is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He* and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' The woman embraced Islam because of her reflection on one single moment from the life of Prophet Muhammad.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'Behold, Allah *Glorified is He* does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67) We know that guidance means taking a direction that leads to the desired destination. Guidance is also any aid that helps a person who seeks direction to reach their destination. The disbelievers plotted against Prophet Muhammad and constructed schemes against him. Allah *Glorified is He* banned every way to them and aided His Messenger against them. Allah's succour of the

(1) Narrated by *Al-Qurtubi*, and *Muslim* narrated the likes of it

believers at the Battle of Badr was a practical manifestation of His divine words: 'How often a small soldier has overcome a great soldier by Allah's leave (and will)!' (*al-Baqara*: 249)

Indeed, despite their plots to get to Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, there was no evil plan or scheme which could result in killing him. Another manifestation was on the day when Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca, and Allah *Glorified is He* blinded the sight of the young men who intended to kill Prophet Muhammad. They wanted to kill him together so that his blood indemnity would fall on all the tribes, but they could not see him as Allah *Glorified is He* cast a veil over their sights. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* made them unable to carry out their plans. It is as though He were saying to them: 'You will never be able to stop Muhammad from delivering his message, neither openly, secretly or covertly. In fact, you are serving the message even as you attempt to destroy it.'

Their actions against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at the onset of his mission affirmed the strength of his message. Then, Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca. His guide on his emigration journey was a disbeliever named 'Abdullah ibn 'Urayqit. This showed us that one person's disbelief was transformed by Allah to guide Prophet Muhammad to safety.

Although he was a disbeliever, 'Abdullah ibn 'Urayqit was not tempted by the bounty offered to betray Prophet Muhammad, and he did not deliver news of the Prophet to the idolaters of Quraysh. However, the disbelievers still did not take admonition from any of these events. Likewise, sheep covered the tracks of the Prophet and his Companion. Also, the hooves of Suraqa's horse sank in the ground as he attempted to harm the Prophet's procession.

Allah's forces were on the side of Prophet Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah. Thus, we saw how Allah *Glorified is He* did not guide the disbelieving folk to the goal which they sought which was to kill Prophet Muhammad, and nor did He guide them to the right path. Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

قُلْ يَٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُقِيمُوا ٱلتَّوْرَةَ وَٱلْإِنْجِيلَ
وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَٰكِيْدَت كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ
رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَيْنًا وَكُفْرًا فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى ٱلْقَوْمِ ٱلْكَٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾

Say, ‘People of the Book, you have no true basis [for your religion] unless you uphold the Torah, the Gospel, and that which has been sent down to you from your Lord,’ but what has been sent down to you [Prophet] from your Lord is sure to increase many of them in their insolence and defiance: do not worry about those who defy [God] [68] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 68)

As we know, ‘Say’ is a directive given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*. An announcement follows this directive from Allah *Glorified is He* to the people of the Book. It tells them that they are bereft of guidance because they have not properly observed the Torah and Gospel. Instead, they have corrupted their Scriptures and have not believed in the Quran, the perfected message of Divine Guidance revealed to Prophet Muhammad (ibn ‘Abdullah).

Allah *Glorified is He* says ‘You have no valid ground for your beliefs...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 68). The Arabic words literally mean, ‘You have nothing of solid ground (that holds your belief).’ The word *shay'* (thing) means the least important object of any class of materials. For instance, a piece of straw is a ‘thing’ and a leaf is a ‘thing’. That which is called a *shay'* (in Arabic) is the flimsiest of beings.

Thus, Allah’s words: ‘You have no valid ground for your beliefs,’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 68) mean, ‘Do not think that when you apply some particular element of the Torah or Gospel’s teachings, while concealing and ignoring the remaining commands, that you have thereby attained some kind of guidance. You have no guidance at all until you truly observe the Torah and the Gospel, and then believe in the Book which has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad. You cannot simply take the parts of Allah’s way of guidance that please you, and leave aside the portions that do not please your desires.’

Furthermore, knowing that a *shay'* (thing) is the lowest level of existence, these verses explain to them that they have sunk to the lowest level of existence because they have no guidance.

Allah *Glorified is He* adds: 'Yet, all that has been bestowed upon you (O Prophet Muhammad) by your Lord is bound to make many of them more stubborn in their arrogance and in their denial of the truth.' (*al-An'am*: 68) This means that they will not remain on a certain steady level of arrogance and disbelief. In fact, every time that Allah *Glorified is He* reveals a verse of guidance unto His Prophet, and every time He protects him, they will become even more obstinate in their misguidance. Their stubbornness should have been weakened, and their hearts softened by further guidance, but their hatred and abhorrence for the religion of Islam only intensified.

Khalid ibn Al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with him* who had once led the pagans in their military expeditions against Islam, one day said to 'Amr ibn Al-'As *may Allah be pleased with him*: 'It is clear (now) that the matters of power are now on Muhammad's side.' Then, they both embraced Islam despite the power and status they enjoyed amongst their people. When Khalid and 'Amr saw the calamities which befell anyone who opposed Prophet Muhammad, irrespective of status and rank, they embraced Islam. This is the natural position of a logical mind that contemplates matters without any hatred or prejudice.

As for the disbelieving minds that are bent on hatred and prejudice, every verse that is revealed to support the believers will only serve to agitate rage and bitterness. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*, had to prepare himself to face these disbelievers.

O Messenger of Allah, you are not facing a limited force, but a growing force of evil. Every revealed verse guides those who have any goodness in their depths, while increasing the resentment of those who are utterly bereft of any goodness. Their evil increases with their sins and crimes, while the good people lessen their crime and relinquish their pasts.

We have the best example of this in the story⁽¹⁾ of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* told us that Prophet Yusuf's brothers said: 'Truly, Yusuf (Joseph) and his brother (Binyamin (Benjamin)) are dearer to our father than we are, even though we are so many in number. Behold, our father is surely suffering from an aberration!' (*Yusuf*: 8)

(1) The story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph)

After that, they said to their father: 'Why will you not trust us with Yusuf (Joseph)?' (*Yusuf*: 11) Then, they began to plot and plan against their brother. They said: 'Let him go out with us tomorrow that he may enjoy himself and play.' (*Yusuf*: 12) The first plan that they had, as Allah *Glorified is He* tells us was: 'Slay Joseph.' (*Yusuf*: 9)

To slay means to force the soul out of the body, and this is the worst level of evil. However, they backed down from this first plan and said, 'Or drive him away to some (faraway) land' (*Yusuf*: 9) for they did not want to slay him. Thus, they were satisfied with the idea of leaving him in a faraway place, imagining that a caravan would pick him up, and thus they would separate Joseph from his father. So, their first plan was to kill him, and then they ended up thinking of a way that confirmed his survival: 'One of them said: "Slay Joseph, or else drive him away to some (faraway) land, so that your father's regard may be for you alone."' (*Yusuf*: 9) The third stage of planning was when they said: 'Cast him into the dark depths of this well.' (*Yusuf*: 10) A well contains water, and so many people will pass by this source of water. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* showed us how goodness came from the depths of evil plots.

Thus, Allah's true words, 'but what has been sent down to you (Prophet) from your Lord is sure to increase many of them in their insolence and defiance' (*al-Ma'ida*: 68) mean that many of them will sink deeper into evil (O Prophet Muhammad). So prepare yourself (Prophet) for this.

We may observe here that Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed for the possibility that a minority of them might eventually embrace the true faith. He spoke only about the majority of the disbelievers and not all of them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Nay, feel no sorrow for the people who deny the truth.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 68) Thus, do not grieve over them, O Messenger of Allah.

Nevertheless, despite the animosity and hatred of the disbelievers to his mission and all their attempts to harm him, Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*, never ceased to supplicate for their guidance. He used to constantly say, 'O Allah, guide my people, for they know not!'⁽¹⁾ He also never

(1) Narrated by Az-Zabidi and As-Suyuti

ceased to say: 'Perhaps Allah *Glorified is He* will produce from their progeny those who will worship Allah alone.'⁽¹⁾ Indeed, this proved to be the case.

After the first battles between the Muslims and the disbelievers, some companions would say to one another: 'I am sad that 'Amr escaped from me and I did not kill him.' Another would say, 'I am sad that 'Ikrima escaped from my grip,' and a third would say, 'I do not know how Khalid ibn Al-Walid managed to escape.'

Allah *Glorified is He* did not allow the early Companions to kill those fierce warriors because He was saving them for Islam, and the inability of the Muslims to harm these men allowed them to aid Islam later on, by carrying the sword to defend it and spread its message. When 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl⁽²⁾ may Allah be pleased with him finally received the injury which ended his life, he laid his head and asked Khalid ibn Al-Walid may Allah be pleased with both of them 'Is this a death which would make the Messenger of Allah (Prophet Muhammad) pleased with me?'

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* prevented the early Muslims from killing them in the earlier battles because in the later battles, they would become forces that fought for Islam's cause with their military prowess. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* kept them alive to serve His message. Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مِنْ ءَٰمَنِ بِٱللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ ٱلْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَٰلِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

For the [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Sabiun, and the Christians – those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds – there is no fear: they will not grieve[69] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 69)

There are four kinds of people who do not believe in the message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him*. This verse is one of the three verses in the Quran which share a similar structure. The first verse is in

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

(2) The story of the martyrdom of 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl

the chapter of *al-Baqara*, the second verse is here in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* and the third verse is in the chapter of *al-Hajj*.

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, those who have embraced (testified) faith (in this Divine Book), as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians and the Sabi'un – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Lord; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 62) We can observe here that in the original Arabic of this verse, the word for Sabi'un is *as-sabi'een* in the Arabic accusative case.

Here in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For, verily, those who have embraced (testified) faith (in this Divine Book), as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the *Sabi'un* and the Christians – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 69) Here, the word for *Sabi'un* is *as-sabi'un*, in the nominative case, and is mentioned before the words 'the Christians'.

In the chapter of *al-Hajj*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, as for those who have embraced (testified) faith (in this Divine Book), and those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Sabi'un, and the Christians and the Magians (on the one hand), and those who are bent on ascribing divinity to others but Allah (on the other hand) – verily, Allah will decide between them on Resurrection Day: for, behold, Allah is a witness unto everything.' (*al-Hajj*: 17)

Here, four groups of people are mentioned in all the verses. In the verse of the chapter of *al-Hajj*, Allah *Glorified is He* adds two more groups. We can see that the information given in each verse is different as is the wording. In one case, the Christians are mentioned before the Sabi'un, whilst in another the Sabi'un followers are mentioned before the Christians. Additionally, in one case, the word Sabi'un is in the Arabic nominative case (*Sabi'un*), whilst in the other it is in the accusative case (*Sabi'een*).

As for the different information given, the verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara* tells us: 'All who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Lord; and no fear need they have, and

neither shall they grieve.’ (*al-Baqara*: 62) In the verse of the chapter of *al-Ma’ida*, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘All who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 69) The verse in the chapter of *al-Hajj* says: ‘Verily, Allah will decide between them on Resurrection Day: for, behold, Allah is a witness unto everything.’ (*al-Hajj*: 17)

All three verses are presenting the same concept in diverse ways for different purposes. We may observe here that Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...embraced (testified) faith.’ The word faith in the verse refers to the spoken faith and does not refer to the genuine belief of the heart. These verses speak of many groups and faiths. The verses mention the hypocrites as well as those who follow the Jewish faith (the followers of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*) and the Christians (the followers of Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*). The verses also mention the Sabi’un. Those were not followers of any prophet. They probably used to follow Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*, but then broke away from Noah’s faith and began to worship the stars, or they were people who broke away from Judaism and Christianity and began to worship the angels. Finally, there are the ‘Magians’ who are fire-worshippers.

So Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make a spiritual renewal in the world. All those who rush to embrace this Islam will be saved from the evil they did before the coming of Islam. Allah *Glorified is He* will forgive their past efforts that led people astray and ruled them unjustly.

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, Allah *Glorified is He* says ‘... (they) shall have their reward with their Lord,’ (*al-Baqara*: 62) which means that after forgiving them for the sins they had done, He will additionally reward them for the good deeds which were not annulled by evil. This was the explanation of the first two verses: those of the chapter of *al-Baqara* and that of *al-Ma’ida*.

We may observe that in the chapter of *al-Ma’ida*, Allah *Glorified is He* did not say: ‘...shall have their reward with their Lord.’ (*al-Baqara*: 62) Perhaps, this is because this was already stated in the verse of the chapter of *al-Baqara*. There are many examples of this in the Noble Quran, as when a general statement is explained in the light of a specific statement elsewhere.

As for the verse in the chapter of *al-Hajj*, Allah *Glorified is He* pronounces therein: 'Verily, Allah, will decide between them on Resurrection Day: for, behold, Allah, is a witness unto everything.' (*al-Hajj*: 17) It appears that (many of them) will never embrace the true faith or do righteous deeds. Thus, these verses were revealed as novel and clarifying contracts of creed in this world.

Prophet Muhammad came to renew the religious affairs on earth. Allah *Glorified is He* says about those who testify faith only with their tongues, namely the hypocrites: 'For, verily, those who have embraced (testified) faith,' (*al-Baqara*: 69).' Those who have embraced faith' is the subject of the sentence, and it is in the Arabic accusative case because of the use of the particle (*inna*) ('verily') which always makes the noun following it accusative. Yet, Allah *Glorified is He* follows the particle *inna* by mentioning the noun *As-Sabi'un* in the nominative state instead of the grammatically traditional accusative state *As-Sabi'een*. Why did Allah place the nominative noun instead of an accusative noun, when this breaks the usual rule of Arabic grammar?' Verily, those who have embraced (testified) faith (in this Divine Book), as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians and the *Sabi'un*...' (*al-Baqara*: 62).

In this occurrence of the word Sabians, it is put in the accusative case – *sabina* – without breaking the rule of *I'rab* (desinential inflection). In one instance, we find the word 'Sabians', preceding the word 'Christians,' while in another instance it follows it. Here, we must become acquainted with the period in which the Sabians lived. They existed before the coming of the Christians. So, if we want to know their chronological position, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions them before the Christians; and if we want to know their rank, we read elsewhere in the Quran that they come after the Christians. It follows that, when chronologically viewed, the True Lord mentions them before the Christians; and when categorised in terms of their numbers and size as a nation, He places them after the Christians. This is due to the fact that their numbers were less, and they did not represent as large a community as the Christians did.

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the Sabians once in the accusative case and another in the nominative case to make us pay attention to this group of

people and recognise them. Breaking the usual rule of grammar is a way of drawing attention to what is being said. The Sabians were a people who worshipped the stars and the angels, which is a form of misguidance and error.

So, there were the Jews, who acknowledged the existence of One True Lord (Allah), and Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* conveyed Allah's Message to them. And then there were the Christians who also acknowledged the existence of One True Lord, and 'Isa (Jesus, son of Mary) *peace be upon him* conveyed Allah's Message to them. Last, there were the hypocrites who declared belief only with their tongues, although belief had not entered their hearts.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to draw our attentions to the fact that the *Sabians* were a people who stepped outside the scope of belief regarding the existence of an Unseen Creator, yet the True Lord is telling us that He will forgive them if they have correct faith and do righteous deeds. Faith in Allah constitutes an essential condition to acceptance and reward of righteous deeds. Here, Allah mentions them before the Christians to dismiss any doubt that He will not pardon them if they believe and do righteous deeds.

We may also observe that they are mentioned in a context where Allah ranks them alongside those who worship Allah's creation instead of Allah. Anyone who attributes divinity to anything other than Allah is akin to those who worship stars and go beyond the precincts of monotheism.

Allah *the Exalted* allows every human being to enter the arena of faith and begin a purification of their creeds by means of which everyone can attain to true faith and dissociate themselves from all forms of joining false gods with Allah. If the hypocrites, Jews, Christians and Sabians embrace true faith and do righteous deeds, they will receive recompense and reward from Allah. They shall have no fear of any punishment in the Hereafter or grief over what they have lost in this worldly life. Evidently, faith is coupled with righteous action because faith unsupported by righteous words puts it in the jeopardy of being lost – Allah forbid. Such faith is worthless. Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* wants faith to rule all acts of life through righteous deeds. He commands every believer to act righteously so that they can be rewarded by their Lord and have no fear or grief.

As for those groups who persist in their position of disbelief, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. For Allah is the Witness to everything. The word 'judge' indicates to us that Allah will give a judgement that separates the holders of right and truth from false ones. We know that the one who passes judgement only does so based on strong, irrefutable evidence. Evidence consists of confession, known as 'the queen of all proofs' in legal language, or the testimony of witnesses or the swearing of an oath. Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* will pass judgement between diverse parties and positions; to 'judge' or 'decide' here means to pronounce judgement. When the one who judges is also the one who has been witness to the case, his verdict will be just. Therefore, the True Lord says: 'Allah witnesses all things.' (*al-Hajj*: 17) The True Lord then says:

لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَارْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رَسُولًا كُلَّمَا جَاءَهُمْ
رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَرِيقًا كَذَّبُوا وَفَرِيقًا يَقْتُلُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

We took a pledge from the Children of Israel, and sent messengers to them. Whenever a messenger brought them anything they did not like, they accused some of lying and put others to death [70] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 70)

The Arabic word *mithaq* (covenant, pledge) means a seriously binding commitment. Pledges are only declared to be solemn if there is fear that they may be disregarded and breached. Many covenants of faith have been made. The first was that taken from all the descendants of Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah drew from the loins of the children of Adam their progeny and made them bear witness to His Godhead and Lordship.

'When your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, And (mention) when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, (saying to them), "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." (This) - Lest you should say on the day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware." (*al-A'raf*: 172)

Or the firm pledge of support for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that Allah took from all previous Prophets *peace be upon them all*:

“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).

Or the special pledge that was taken from every community to which a prophet or a messenger was sent. Also, every element of the religion entails a pledge. In Islam, we are committed to many pledges. Likewise, we also know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked to be pledged allegiance at Al-`Aqaba. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw that many ties linked him to the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj; just as the many ties that linked him to every people who longed for unity under the banner of a single faith.

On their part, the Jews considered the Arabs of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj to be mere barbarians and servants who worked for them. They deemed leadership as belonging entirely to them. Every time they differed with the Arabs, they would threaten them with the imminent coming of a messenger in whom they would believe, and then they would slay them all.

Both tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj tried to win the Jews to their side. Al-Aws made a treaty with Banu Qurayzha, and Al-Khazraj made treaties with Banu An-Nadir and Banu Qaynuqa`. Still both of them were threatened by the Jews with the coming of this new Prophet. Therefore, both Arab tribes were eager to meet and get to know Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It happened that during the pilgrimage season, a delegation of six men arrived, and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* invited them to embrace Islam. They announced their belief in him saying: ‘We have left our people and there is not worse enmity and evil between any people than that between them. We hope that Allah unites them through you. We shall go to them and invite them to your cause, and present to them this religion which we have accepted from you. If Allah unites them through it, no man shall be dearer than you’

The delegation revisited Mecca during the pilgrimage season of the following year. Their number increased to twelve men. The pledge they made was that none of them should associate anything with Allah, or steal, or commit unlawful sexual intercourse (adultery or fornication), or kill his children, or commit slander or disobey the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in any of the good things he enjoined. They returned to Medina accompanied by Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr *Allah be pleased with him* who went to teach them the Quran. In the third year, seventy-three men came along with two women, Nusaiba bint Ka'b, known as Umm 'Umarah, and Asma' bint 'Amr ibn 'Adi. They all pledged allegiance to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which heightened the apprehension of the Quraysh. In this pledge, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them: 'I covenant with you on the condition that you protect me from anything you protect your women and children from.' At response, Al-Barra' ibn Ma'rur took hold of his hand and said: 'Indeed yes, we swear by Him who has sent you with the Truth, we shall protect you from whatever we protect our kindred from. So, accept the pledge of our allegiance, O Messenger of Allah. For by Allah, we are men of battle and arms.' Abu Al-Haytham ibn At-Tayyihan interrupted and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, there are ties between us and certain men (meaning the Jewish tribes) which we shall sever. But if we do this and then Allah grants you victory, will you return to your own people (meaning the Quraysh) and leave us?' Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* smiled and said: 'No! Rather, blood for blood, and forgiving of blood for forgiving of blood. You are of me and I am from you. I will fight whom you fight and I will make peace with those with whom you make peace.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* then stretched out his hand and they pledged allegiance to him. The second Pledge of 'Aqaba comprised a promise of Paradise to all who made this pledge and honoured it – and they all did honour it.

These were some types of covenants and pledges. When the True Lord tells us in the verse under discussion that He took a solemn pledge from the children of Israel, this means that it was a firm and binding covenant: 'Verily, we took the covenant of the children of Israel and sent them Messengers. Whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves desired not- a group of them they called liars and others among them they kill.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 70)

The True Lord received a solemn pledge from the children of Israel and sent messengers to convey His Law and Message to them. However, every time a messenger came to them, they would first debate to decide whether the law of guidance that he brought from Allah was to their liking or not. If they did not find it to their liking, they would kill the Messenger of Allah or deny him. They did this, even though they were bound by a solemn pledge to follow any Messenger of Allah once he produced a miraculous sign of his prophethood and brought Allah's Law that would give guidance and direction to their lives.

But the children of Israel rebelled over and over against the teachings of the Messengers because they did not find them to their liking. The first form of rebellion was denial, which was the first step in the course of violating their solemn pledge. They did not stop at merely rejecting and denying the Messengers of Allah, but they tried to isolate the Messenger so that his teachings would not get through to the people and guide them. Therefore, their rejection did not stop at denial, but went as far as killing the Messenger for bringing a message that did not conform to their likings and disliking.

First, what is the meaning of the Arabic word *hawa* (vain or egotistical desires, inclinations, likings)? It derives from the three-letter root 'ha-waw-ya'. This root has three derivatives: *hawa*, *hawa'* (air) or *huwiyy* (falling down). All these pronunciations signify 'permeation' and 'inclination'. The word *hawa* means a liking and inclination of the soul to a thing. You may feel passionate about something in your soul, associated with strong cravings, even though the thing you want may be disagreeable, unacceptable, or unlawful.

But does *hawa* only signify negative desires? No, because there are positive kinds of desires, as those motivated by faith, which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us when he said: 'None of you (truly) believes until his desires (or inclinations) are in line with what I have brought.'⁽¹⁾ So it is possible that desires are towards good things; in this case, the desire becomes the motivator and director of the soul towards the truth. As for the word *hawa'* (air), it means the gas mixture that is inhaled and exhaled to provide vital oxygen to nourish the body and keep it alive. A popular saying

(1) Narrated by Al-Baghawi in *Sharh Al-Sunnah*, At-Tabrizi in *Mishkat Al-Masabih* and Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi in *Kanz Al-'Ummal*

expresses it this way: 'I approached as a breath subtly moves in and out, 'which denotes that the approach was subtle and unnoticed. We know that when we eat something we like, we enjoy its taste. Also, when we drink something we like, we taste its flavour. But breathing is involuntary and imperceptible; so when we breathe in something we like, it produces a subtle sensation.

There is a third derivative from the same root *ha-waw-ya'*, and it is pronounced as *huwiyy*. The verbal form of the word is *hawa/yahwi* means 'to fall down' or 'drop'; such as lowering a bucket into a well. So, what kind of *hawa* about which is this verse talking?

The True Lord says: '...whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves desired not - a group of them they called liars and others among them they kill.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 70) Accordingly, the *hawa* being referred to here is the desire of the soul, devoid of guidance from Allah. It establishes itself as the power that controls the behaviour of this soul and leads it into disobedience of Allah. But did the True Lord *Glorified is He* leave the human soul without any means of protection? No, because He sent Messengers who conveyed His law, summarised in the commandments of 'Do' and 'Do not do'. In this way, guidance can watch over and direct the soul's inclinations.

Yet, if the True Lord willed that His Law should be a guardian over the soul's inclinations, why did He create the soul at all? The answer is that Allah *Glorified is He* created the soul because, through its existence, the human beings shall have desire towards truthful and lawful aims which result in the perpetuation of their species and the earning of honest livelihood and gains. So instinct exists; Allah created it to perform a certain function in life; and, by means of His Law, He keeps it protected from deviating from its proper purpose.

Some people may suggest that since Allah *Glorified is He* created the sexual instinct, why should it not be left to freely express itself? Our answer is that one has to be conscious of Allah and learn that the sexual instinct is meant to ensure the perpetuation of human life. To use it in ways that anger Allah causes ruin to the human species. It is a deviation from Allah's Way of guidance and it has punishable consequences.

This is similar to the instinct for food. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has created it to preserve human life. He did not give it to us so that we consume

ourselves with gluttony and greed. Likewise, He did not give us the instinct for curiosity to spy on one another, but rather to discover the secrets of the universe and develop new techniques for the benefit of humankind. Every instinct exists for a specific purpose; and the moment it swerves from its original purpose defined by Allah *Glorified is He* the Divine Law intervenes and objects. Every instinct should be used within a certain sphere. The Divine Law has not come to eliminate instincts, but rather to elevate them so that people use them to bring benefit, not harm, themselves, and others.

An Arabic proverb says: 'Vain desire is the bane of reason.' When two people, an oppressor and an oppressed, stand before a judge to present their case, a fair judge is the one who lifts the injustice off the oppressed, even if he favours or is inclined towards the oppressor. Therefore, we find that the True Lord made His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* infallible; for He says: 'He (Muhammad) does not speak from his own desire.' (*an-Najm*: 3)

People who do not look deeply into the previous Quranic words will fail to notice the perfect usage of diction, so they may ask: 'Since the True Lord corrected Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then how could he not have spoken out of desire?' Our answer to this is that you do not understand Allah or His Messenger well enough. When Allah corrected His Messenger, this was not because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went against a judgement that Allah had placed, nor did he change a Judgement of Allah to make it suit his own personal opinion. Rather, he used to exert his human capacity to reach a ruling on a certain issue according to what he saw as right. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* would amend this ruling, so Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would pronounce the amendment just as Allah had sent it down to him. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never went against any of his Lord's Judgements. All the amendments that Allah gave were associated with cases without precedents. Every amendment came as an improvement to a legal decision that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* arrived at by his independent human reasoning. Private inclinations played no part in the issue.

The saying of the True Lord, 'He does not speak from his own desire' (*an-Najm*: 3) informs us that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never received a ruling from Allah which he contradicted deliberately

by his own desire. All the corrections or amendments that Allah made were concerning cases that had no precedent or pertinent guidelines from Allah to rule on. Therefore, we notice the kind tone that the True Lord uses to correct the decision of His Messenger such as when He says: 'Allah forgives you (Prophet)! Why did you give them permission to stay at home before it had become clear to you which of them spoke the truth and which were liars?' (*at-Tawba*: 43)

The pardon in the previous situation was not due to a contravention of a divine ruling, but it was a kind pardon; because Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* exercised his independent human reasoning to determine the ruling on issues that had no precedents in the divine law. Another example is found in the saying of the True Lord: 'O Prophet! Why do you ban (for yourself) that which Allah has made lawful to you...?' (*at-Tahrim*: 1)

The Messenger of Allah, in this particular situation, forbade himself certain things that he did not forbid the people. Here, the True Lord told him not to forbid himself the things which He has permitted him. Thus, this admonition was in the favour of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Zayd ibn Haritha *may Allah be pleased with him* was asked to choose between remaining with Messenger Muhammad as his slave or to return to his family, he preferred to stay with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* who rewarded him by taking him as his own son. Adoption was a known practice among the Arabs, so the people started calling him Zayd, the son of Muhammad. When Allah wanted to annul adoption, He said: 'Name your adopted sons after their real fathers; this is more equitable in Allah's sight...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5).

The word *aqsat* (more equitable) means 'more just' which indicates that equity is interrelated with justice. When someone is described as equitable, it means he is just. Equity was thoroughly administered by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and indeed Allah's Judgement was even more equitable. This means that what Messenger Muhammad did was equitable by human standards, but Allah wanted him to follow the most equitable course.

Accordingly, the saying of the True Lord, 'He does not speak from his own desire' (*an-Najm*: 3) cannot be objected by someone who opposes the

teachings of Islam. To an opponent of Islam who asks, 'Allah would correct Muhammad, so how could it be said that Muhammad did not speak out of his own desire?' We answer him first by asking: Do you know what 'judging by desire' denotes? To judge by desire would mean that a person knew well Allah's Ruling and went contrary to it by his own will and desire. This was something our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never did. Any correction from Allah *Glorified is He* was reported by no one other than the Messenger of Allah himself. This shows how absolutely honest he was in conveying Allah's Message.

The True Lord *the Exalted* says about the children of Israel: '...whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves desired not-a group of them they called liars and others among them they kill.' (*al-Ma'ida: 70*) So there were two groups: the first group consisted of those who were unwilling to have faith in Allah's Law because of their private inclinations which resulted in their denying the Messengers. The second group consisted of those whose souls were filled with fierce opposition and strong enmity towards the Messengers of Allah. They feared that if the Messenger lived, he would convey his message to other people. Therefore, they attempted to kill the Messenger.

Denial is the first stage of opposition. There were those who dropped down into deeper levels of opposition and feared that the message might reach and convince other people, so they tried to kill the Messenger. Denial is to disaffirm a statement or an action. As for killing, it is to bring an end to life; the one who commits it adopts the most severe stance of opposition.

The precision of the Quran language emerges in Allah's use of the past tense in referring to one group and the present tense to refer to the other group: '...whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves desired not - a group of them they called liars and others among them they kill.' (*al-Ma'ida: 70*) This is because denial is an arrogant refusal to listen to the Messenger, while killing is an arrogant refusal to allow the very existence of the Messenger on the part of the deaneries. Killing is more heinous because it aims at obliterating any trace of the existence of the victim. Therefore, the act of denial is framed in the past tense, while the act of killing is framed in the present tense.

Killing, repugnant as it is, may cool down after a while. This is what makes society react angrily when a heinous crime is committed, but after the elapse of ten years and the execution verdict is finally issued, the people do not show any reaction. Some of them may even sympathize with the criminal. The True Lord, therefore, warns us that we should not wipe out from our minds the image of their killing of Messengers of Allah. Rather, we must always recall the atrocity of their crime and never feel sympathy for those who killed the Messengers. The scholars of the Arabic language say that the present tense can be used to evoke the image of an act in the mind.

The moment a fair judge rules that a man guilty of murder must be executed, he does not consider the murder a forgotten event just because it has been committed in the past, but rather, he brings it to his mind as though the blood is still flowing and the wound is still open. He is not judging something chronicled in the past, but something real in the present. It is as though the True Lord is commanding us to keep alive in our minds what has been committed. Another example of evoking vivid images in the mind is found in the saying of the True Lord: 'Have you (Prophet) not considered how Allah sends water down from the sky...?' (*al-Hajj*: 63) Allah sends down the rain and as a result: '...the next morning, the earth becomes green...' (*al-Hajj*: 63). Thus, Allah uses the present tense to keep the images vivid and fresh in our minds through a circumstantial and continuous description. The True Lord says, '...whenever there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves desired not-a group of them they called liars and others among them they kill.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 70) Yet, since Allah wills the Messengers to have enough life to completely deliver His Message, how could the True Lord say that these people killed their Messengers, when the Messengers of Allah cannot be killed, and only the Prophets can be killed? Our answer to this is that the Prophets are also Messengers, as proved by the following Words of the True Lord: 'We have never sent any messenger or prophet before you (Muhammad)...' (*al-Hajj*: 52).

Both the Messenger and the Prophet are sent by Allah. The difference is that the Messenger brings new religious teachings, while the Prophet is sent forth as a role model of guidance for an already revealed message. The True Lord *the Exalted* and then says:

وَحَسِبُوا أَلَّا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوا وَصَمُوا ثُمَّ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
 ثُمَّ عَمُوا وَصَمُوا كَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَاللَّهُ بَصِيرٌ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

**they thought no harm could come to them and so
 became blind and deaf [to God]. God turned to them
 in mercy but many of them again became blind and
 deaf: God is fully aware of their actions [71]**

(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 71)

The Arabic word *hasiba* means ‘to think’, ‘suppose,’ ‘deem’ or ‘consider’; but it means ‘to calculate’, ‘reckon’ or ‘count’ when it is pronounced *hasaba*. As for the noun *husban*, it means to think or suppose something is true. The people from whom Allah received the solemn pledge—the children of Israel—thought that denying and killing the Messengers would not bring trials upon them. This denotes that they did not have proper knowledge, but they thought it was likely that no trial and testing would ensue. The root meaning of the word *fitna* (trial or test), as we have said before, is to place gold in the fire to cleanse it from impurities. The word *fitna* also means ‘test’ or ‘trial,’ in which a human may either pass or fail. So, why did they think that they would not be tested in consequence of their behaviour? They were led into this assumption because of the mistake they made when they said: ‘...We are the children of Allah and His beloved ones...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 18).

Also, the mistake they made when they said: ‘...The Fire will only touch us for a few days...’ (*al-Baqara*: 80). They thought that Allah *Glorified is He* would only punish them for worshipping the golden calf and nothing else. This was an incorrect assumption. Religion has not come into the world simply to deliver a certain people no matter what they do, but rather, it has come so that every human can be judged and recompensed for their actions during this life. It is strange that they made this mistaken assumption and misjudged matters, even though they were experts in calculation and reckoning. Just calculation and reckoning is what determines whether something is true or false. The amazing point that can be made here that emphasizes Allah’s Mercy is that when the True Lord *the Most High* judges humankind. He says: ‘This is for you, and this is against you’, but when He provides for them, He

does so without measure or account. But they did not pay attention to this; the True Lord says of them: ‘and they thought there would be no resulting trial (or punishment)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 71). That is, they thought that the matter would involve no testing or accountability for anyone of them.

Concerning the part of the verse, ‘*wahasibu an-la takuna fit'natur*’ (they thought there would be no resulting trial), we know that the Arabic particle *an* (that) puts the following verb in the subjunctive mode. About this point, someone asked me about a Quran reciter whom he heard on the radio reading this verse and following it with the verb *takun* (to be) pronounced as *takunu* in the indicative mode, instead of *takuna* in the subjunctive mode.

I said to him: There were three prominent Quran reciters during the early eras of Islam, namely Abu `Amr, Hamza, and Al-Kisa'i. Each of them had his own distinctive style of recitation. Although we know that the particle *an* (that) makes the verb subjunctive, this rule only applies if the verb before this particle does not indicate knowledge, certainty, or assurance. The accusative particle (*an*) will not induce the following verb to take the subjunctive mode if it comes after a verb denoting certain knowledge, as in the saying of the True Lord, ‘*'alima an sayakunu minkum marda waakharuna yadribuna fil-ardi*,’ translated as, ‘He knows that there will be some among you sick, others travelling through the land...’ (*al-Muzzammil*: 20).

The prominent grammarian Ibn Malik expressed this rule in a poetic line in his *Alfiya*: ‘*Subjunctives are made by the subjunctive particles lan, kay and anna – unless it comes after a verb denoting certainty.*’ As for the particle *an* after verbs denoting doubt or probability, it can be followed by a verb in the subjunctive or indicative mode. Those who considered the verb as more indicative of uncertainty used the indicative mode, while those who did not view the assumption as closer to probability than certainty used the subjunctive mode. The methods of Quran recitation used by Al-Kisa'i, Abu `Amr and Hamza applied the indicative mode here because they considered that the assumption at this point was close to being certain, in which case the particle *an* would be meant for emphasis, not to introduce the subjunctive (i.e. empathic rather than accusative). It is considered a shortened form of the emphatic particle *anna*, termed *an al-mukhaffafah*. As for the word ‘*fitna*’

(punishment) in the part of the verse saying, “And they thought there would be no (resulting) punishment” (*al-Ma'ida*: 71), it is in the nominative case because it is the subject of the verb *takuna*, which is derived from the verb *kana* (to be).

The verb *kana* usually has a nominative subject and an accusative predicate, but here it has no predicate because this kind of *kana* corresponds to what is termed *kana at-tamma* (complete *kana*) rather than *kana an-naqisa* (incomplete *kana*). The reason we are mentioning all these details is because we need to have a precise understanding of the Quran. For example, when we read the True Lord's Words: '*wa-in kana dhu'us' ratin fanadhiratun ila maysaratin*' translated as: 'and if (the debtor) is in a hard time (has no money), then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay...' (*al-Baqara*: 280).

The verb *kana* (to be) here is a perfect tense verb; *dhu'us' ratin* is the subject of complete *kana* (*kana at-tamma*), so it needs no complement because the intended meaning is that if the debtor is found to be in straitened circumstances, then grant him time till it is easy for him to repay.

We should discern the meaning of 'complete' and 'incomplete' forms of verb *kana*. We know that every word we say is one of two things: either it is unused and unfamiliar or it is a used familiar word. A used word is that which, when said, has a distinctive, independent meaning that comes directly to the mind. If this word does not involve time, it is a noun, such as the words 'earth,' 'sun' and 'moon.' There are also words which do not have independent meanings like prepositions, such as *fi* (in). It is true that it indicates the notion of one thing being inside another, but still it does not have an independently understood meaning. Therefore, it must be attached to something else, such as when we say, 'The water is in the cup' or 'the pupil is in the classroom'. On the other hand, if a word has an independent meaning, and includes the element of time, it is a verb.

For example, when we just say 'sky', the element of time is absent here - the sky existed in the past, it exists in the present and it will exist in the future. As for the word 'eat', we understand that it comes from the concept of eating. It has an independent meaning, and time is part of its meaning. As for the word 'in', it does not have an independent meaning, and it must be added to another word to make sense. So every word has a meaning which can either be

independently understood or not. If it can be independently understood, we ask whether or not time is an integral part of its meaning; if it is, this means it is a verb (*fi'l*). But if time is not part of its meaning, this means it is a noun *ism*. Last, if the word does not have an independent meaning and needs something to be added to it to make sense, we call it a particle (*harf*).

This is how we can understand the different parts of speech. A verb is a meaning that includes time; for example, the word 'ate' means that someone consumed some food in the past. This is how we can understand the verb *kana* (to be); and if we use the word 'was' just to indicate that something happened in the past, such as saying, 'Zayd was travelling,' this means that the verb *kana* here is *naqis* (incomplete). In light of this, we can better understand the True Lord's Words: 'And if someone is in hardship, then (let there be) postponement until (a time of) ease.' (*al-Baqara*: 280)

If you want to express the concept of 'being' on its own without anything new added to it, the verb is 'complete'. If you want to express the concept of being with something added to it, then this verb is 'incomplete'. For example, when Allah says: '*wahasibu an-la takuna fit'natur*' (literally, 'they thought there would be no resulting trial'), this meant they thought that no trial would ensue, so the meaning is complete.

Here, the children of Israel acted as the pupils who went to school while unaware that there would be a test at the end of the year. So they spent the whole year without exerting any effort or studying. Instead, they just played around. This was a mistaken assumption, because religion did not come randomly or arbitrarily, but rather, it came to organise all the actions of life and to be applied by the believers. They should have accepted Allah's Religion and acted upon it according to its teachings. It is strange that they made this assumption and did not reckon things properly even though they were a people who mastered the knowledge of counting and calculation. They made assumptions *hasibu* (pronounced *ha-si-bu*), but they did not make any calculation or reckoning *hasabu* (pronounced *ha-sa-bu*). Examining and calculating matters properly are what determines and ensures their truthfulness.

For Allah, everything is based on just measurement and accounting; accounting for and against the servant.' And they thought there would be no

resulting trial (or punishment),’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 71) that is, they thought that they would not be tested. They thought that Divine Messages and laws did not present any test to them. Even when they learned the truth, they shut their eyes and closed their ears to it. We know that human perception abilities include hearing, sight, and mind: ‘It is Allah who brought you out of your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds, so that you might be thankful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 78)

So, the means of perception are hearing, sight, and mind. Seeing is a personal experience, whereas hearing is an act of receiving from others which makes hearing broader than seeing. Hearing is also the first sense that fully functions at birth. If we place something close to the eyes of a newborn, he does not move because he cannot see well. This may continue for ten days until he begins to see properly. But a newborn reacts to a sound that is close to his ear; hence, hearing is the first sense to come into being. Therefore, the True Lord first mentions the hearing, then the sight and the mind.

In this part of the Quranic verse, ‘so they became blind and deaf’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 71), Allah *Glorified is He* asks first about their personal act of seeing and does not ask about what they heard from other people.’ So they became blind, ‘that is, they even failed to see the things that concerned them and did not contemplate the signs of the cosmos, and nor did they listen to the glad tidings, warnings or guidance brought to them by Allah. They did not assent to follow them. Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* rebukes them first for the things which they should have seen for themselves. The ear hears things from other sources; therefore, Allah first rebukes them for not using their eyes. Even if we suppose that they could not see for themselves the cosmic signs, what was wrong with them that they did not try to look, not even after a Messenger came to them and urged them to look at Allah’s Universe and reflect upon it?

Suppose that they were heedless at first, and they did not care to look, why did they not wake up and listen attentively and positively when the bearer of glad tidings and warnings came to alert them? Thus, the words: ‘...so they became blind and deaf...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 71) are very logical here.

After that, Allah accepted their repentance, saved them from Pharaoh, and split the sea for them to cross. But as soon as they came out of the sea and

saw some people serving and worshipping idols, they said to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* 'Make for us a god as they have gods.' (*al-A'raf*: 138) Musa *peace be upon him* commanded them to repent, and Allah accepted their repentance despite their numerous sins. Then, Allah turned forgivingly and mercifully to them: '...Then Allah turned to them in forgiveness...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 71).

The Arabic word *tawbah* (repentance) means a fresh chance for sound souls to run back into goodness. Let us think; what would be the reaction of sinners if Allah had not allowed them to repent, leaving them without hope of forgiveness? They would have persisted in sin and felt that they were proceeding on the road to evil with no way of return. When Allah accepts the repentance of a sinner, it means that He wants to protect the society from his evil. Repentance has stages. The first step is Allah allowing forgiveness to be sought from Him, the second is the servant showing repentance, and the third is by Allah accepting his repentance. This can be found in the True Lord's words: '...He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return (to Him)...' (*at-Tawba*: 118).

What does it mean that Allah turned to them in mercy? He *the Glorious and Exalted* did not turn to them to accept their repentance until after they had repented. So, Allah's first turning to them was in the sense of first allowing them to repent, and then came their repentance, followed by the True Lord's acceptance of it. But although these people became blind and deaf in heart, Allah was still kind to them. So what did they do next? They turned blind and deaf once again: '...Then Allah turned to them in forgiveness; then (again) many of them became blind and deaf. And Allah is seeing of what they do.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 71)

The verb *fa'amu*, translated as 'became blind', is an action verb like 'ate', 'drank', or 'attended'; so where is its subject? The subject is *waw al-jama'ah* (plural masculine pronoun – which in Arabic comes after the verb in the form of the letter *u* attached to the end). Ibn Malik stated a rule for this issue: when an Arabic verb refers to two or more people, the pronouns referring to the plural or dual forms of the pronouns (*jama'* or *muthanna*) must be removed from the verb. You do not say *qamaa Zayd wa 'Amr* (Zayd and 'Amr stood up), but rather *qama Zayd wa 'Amr*, without using the dual verb form *qamaa*. Similarly, you do not say, *qamu at-talamidh* (the pupils stood up) with the

plural verb form *qamu*, but rather, you say *qama at-talamidh* with the singular verb because the word 'pupils' replaces the need for the attached pronoun. Ibn Malik said: *Remove all pronouns from the verb if it refers to two persons or a group (at least three persons) as the subject, such as faza ash-shuhada' (the martyrs attain salvation), wherein the verb faza is singular, not plural.*

That is, if the subject is dual or plural, all the verb dual and plural suffixes must be removed. As for the word *kathir* (many) here, it is either considered to be a substitute for the masculine plural suffix or a predicate of an omitted subject. The sentence would say if this subject is not omitted: 'the deaf and blind are *kathir* (many); or it could be a subject of the preceding verbs, in which case the clause is worded in the dialect of an Arab clan named Banu Al-Harith ibn Ka'b who would use the plural or dual suffixes, when the verb was attached to an apparent noun subject in the dual or plural form, such as *qamu ar-rijal* (the men stood), instead of the more usual form *qama ar-rijal*, with the singular verb followed by the plural subject.

Some people consider this to be syntactically similar to Allah's Words, '*wa-asarru an-najwa alladhina zalamu,*' translated as: '... those who do wrong 'conceal their private conversation...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 3) in which the masculine plural suffix *u* (they) is attached to the end of the verb *asarru* (conceal).

Concerning the part of the verse saying, '...then (again) many of them became blind and deaf,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 71) the True Lord says: '... many of them...' rather than (all of them) to allow for the possibility that a few of them were contemplating embracing true faith. The word 'many' draws our attention to the fact that the True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* did not ignore the minority who were thinking about embracing faith. This also emphasises and affirms Allah's previous statement: '...while most of you are disobedient.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59)

'...Then (again) many of them became blind and deaf. And Allah is seeing of what they do.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 71) The word *basir* (literally, 'one who sees') is like the word '*alim* (one who knows) meaning that Allah is witness over them – and the eye is the best witness.

The True Lord *the Exalted* then says:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۚ وَقَالَ الْمَسِيحُ
يَبْنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّهُ مَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ
عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن أَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾

Those who say, ‘God is the Messiah, son of Mary,’ have defied God. The Messiah himself said, ‘Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ If anyone associates others with God, God will forbid him from the Garden, and Hell will be his home. No one will help such evildoers [72] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 72)

There are three glorious verses that deal with this issue. The first is the verse saying: ‘They have certainly disbelieved who say, “Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary”...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 72) The second is the verse saying, ‘They have certainly disbelieved who say, “Allah is the third of three...”’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 73) And the third is the verse saying, ‘and (beware the Day) when Allah will say, “O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as two gods alongside Allah?” He will say, “Exalted are you! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, you would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is you who is Knower of the unseen.”’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 116)

Accordingly, the dispute over this issue consisted of three main positions: one group held that the Messiah *peace be upon him* was Allah; another group believed that the Messiah was Allah along with two other gods; a third group said that the Messiah and his mother *peace be upon them* were both gods; and to each group a rebuttal is given. This rebuttal is based on the simplest of evidence present before our eyes in living beings. The human, as we know, is the master of the universe and is served by all lesser beings. The humans need animals for obtaining subsistence, and they also need plants and minerals. This master, the human being, needs creatures that are lower than him. Therefore, rebutting the claim that our Prophet ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and his mother, Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her*, were gods, the True Lord *the Exalted* says: ‘...they both ate food (like other mortals)...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 75). This provides a proof of the clearest and most convincing character not only on the logical and philosophical level, but also on all other

levels as well. Since they had to eat to sustain themselves, they had need for lesser beings. Anyone who has need for lesser beings cannot be the Supreme Being or the One and Only Creator God.

The followers of these three groups disagreed with one another. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Say not: “Three (trinity)!” Cease!...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 171) The expression ‘the third of three’ is used to imply that some item is one of three others, but unspecified. Whenever three things are grouped together, any of them can be referred to as ‘the third of the three.’ This expression is quite unobjectionable except in respect to God. We cannot say ‘the third of three gods,’ for there is only One God. It is possible to say, with respect to Allah, ‘the third of two’ because Allah says: ‘...There is no secret conversation between three people where He is not the fourth, neither between five where He is not the sixth, nor between less or more than that without Him being with them...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 7).

So it is possible to say, ‘Allah is the fourth of three’, or ‘the fifth of four’, or ‘the sixth of five’, meaning that when He is present, the three becomes four, the four becomes five or the five becomes six. If we add an ordinal number to a cardinal number that is less than it is, this implies that it is the final addition to this group. So, if someone says: ‘Allah is the fourth of three people, who sit together’, this is correct. But if we say that they are all gods, this is unlawful and prohibited because God cannot be multiple; there is but One Sole God.

We may observe that the True Lord *the Exalted* did not say: ‘There is no secret conversation between two people where He is not the third’ because *najwa* (secret conversation) only involves three or more people. When two people sit together, they may speak with one another without secrecy. A confidential tone is only adopted to make sure that no one else hears. Hence, *najwa* means to impart or discuss matters in a confidential tone, and it takes place between a minimum of three people. Therefore, when mentioning it, the True Lord uses the lowest number to which it is applied. Thus, when you say, ‘the third of three’, this is correct as long as you do not mean three gods. The True Lord *the Exalted* wants to assert the falsity of the above claim through His Statement: ‘...they both ate food (like other mortals)...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 75). Food is one of life’s basic necessities and provides the energy needed for

life's activities. A man needs to preserve his life and to supply himself with the necessary energy. Food is a lesser entity than human beings are; it is at their service. Therefore, if both `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and Maryam (Mary) used to eat food, this means that they had need of lesser orders of creation. On the other hand, if they had not eaten, they would assuredly have experienced hunger and emaciation. This proves they were not gods. Some may say that, '...they both ate food (like other mortals)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 75) is rather an allusion to excretion, but we say that expulsion of body waste is not essential since in paradise Allah will feed us, but we will not excrete any waste; hence, this is not a sound argument. The True Lord always elevates the argument. The Jews said inappropriate things about the Messiah *peace be upon him*, things that did not befit his status as a Prophet and Messenger. They also said inappropriate things about Maryam (Mary) that did not befit her status as a virtuous woman elected by the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

The Jews were the opponents of the Messiah *peace be upon him*, whereas his helpers were the Disciples. Since he was unable to cause harm to his enemies or to bring benefit to his Disciples, how could he be a god? The Quran also says of Maryam (Mary), 'Mary, be devout to your Lord, prostrate yourself in worship, bow down with those who pray.' (*Al-'Imran*: 43)

The Messiah himself *peace be upon him* was always a devoted worshipper of Allah; a worshipper only worships that which is higher than him. God cannot worship Himself. If such a claim is made by those who attribute themselves to heavenly guidance and have faith in Allah and His Religion, what would the atheists—who have no connection with heavenly guidance and deny the existence of Allah—say?

It was the duty of those who claimed to be believers in Divine Guidance which was brought to them by Prophets in the form of law and teachings, to clear these ambiguities and agree among themselves on the truth. For example, the world already existed and was already being managed before the coming of Messiah *peace be upon him*. So, who was managing the world before he was born? Therefore, the True Lord wanted to settle this issue conclusively, forever; and the Glorious Quran teaches us to say: '...verily, (either) we or you are rightly guided or in a plain error.' (*Saba'*: 24) Could two contradictory positions

be true simultaneously? No, because one of them must be right, while the other must be wrong. Therefore, we say that what you say does not bind us, and what we say does not bind you; we will refer the matter to the God in whom we believe. And to end this issue once and for all, let us recall the True Lord's Instruction: 'If anyone disputes this with you now that you have been given this knowledge, say, "Come, let us gather our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, and let us pray earnestly and invoke Allah's Curse on those of us who are lying."' (Al- 'Imran: 61)

Let us ask Allah to send His Curse upon those who are lying to finally resolve this dispute between us, thus allowing neither of us to dominate the other. All matters are in Allah's Hands. Here we are, presenting our womenfolk, our children, and ourselves and making a single call, 'May Allah's Curse be upon those of us who are lying!' Inevitably, every time two contending parties mutually invoke Allah's Curse on the lying party, Allah brings out the truth instantly; however, no one among the people of the Book agreed to engage in this mutual invocation of Allah's curse on the lying party. The True Lord says:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ وَمَا مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنْ لَمْ يَنْتَهُوا عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾

Those people who say that God is the third of three are defying (The truth): there is only One God. If they persist in what they are saying, a painful punishment will afflict those of them who persist [73] (The Quran, al-Ma'ida: 73)

Consequently, those who do not refrain from saying so and declare their repentance will fall into disbelief and be made to suffer a painful punishment. The True Lord then says:

أَفَلَا يَتُوبُونَ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُونَ لَهُ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾

Why do they not turn to God and ask His forgiveness, when God is most forgiving, most merciful? [74] (The Quran, al-Ma'ida: 74)

Thus, it becomes necessary for anyone who makes such a claim to repent and seek the True Lord's Forgiveness. He *the Most High* then says:

مَا الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ وَأُمُّهُ
صِدِّيقَةٌ كَانَا يَاكُلَانِ الطَّعَامَ أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ
الْآيَاتِ ثُمَّ أَنْظِرْ أَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; other messengers had come and gone before him; his mother was a virtuous woman; both ate food [like other mortals]. See how clear We make these signs for them; see how deluded they are [75] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 75)

The word *afaka* (to be deluded or tempted away) means to be astray or to be led astray by someone else's influence. This signifies that Satan had insinuated this false idea about the Messiah into their minds because the Messiah *peace be upon him* was only a Messenger just like the other Messengers who had come and gone before him. His mother was described as a *siddiqah* (a confirmer and supporter of the truth) because she believed in the truth of what the Messiah brought from Allah. The proof of their humanity was that, just like all human beings, they needed to sustain themselves with food, drink, and clothing. The divinity which they claimed for them contradicts this fact. This is the very essence of *ifk* (delusion), where such beliefs make no sense to a mind that is free of passions. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا
وَلَا نَفْعًا وَاللَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٦﴾

Say, 'How can you worship something other than God that has no power to do you harm or good? God alone is the All Hearing and All-Knowing' [76] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 76)

The mind rejects acknowledging or worshipping anything other than the Creator because no one except Allah has the power to punish one's enemies or to benefit oneself or one's group and followers. This is proved by the fact that the enemies of the Messiah did what they did, and neither the Messiah nor his Disciples were able to cause them harm or do anything to help their own selves.

The True Lord concludes this verse by saying, '...But it is Allah who is the All-Hearer, All-Knower.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 76) 'All-Hearer' refers to speech, while 'All-Knower' refers to the thoughts that revolve in the mind. As for the thoughts in their minds, was it because of their avidity for temporal power—at any cost—that they said this? Allah knows best. If such words were uttered, He has heard them; and if such thoughts ran through their minds, He knew of them. A rational person deliberates his words before actually saying them, and there is intention behind every word. And Allah *the Exalted* is eternally Hearing and Knowing. The True Lord then says:

قُلْ يٰٓأَهْلَ ٱلْكِتَٰبِ لَا تَغْلُواْ فِى دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ ٱلْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُواْ أَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ
 قَدْ ضَلُّواْ مِن قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّواْ كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّواْ عَنْ سَوَآءِ ٱلسَّبِيلِ ﴿٧٧﴾

Say, 'People of the Book, do not overstep the bounds of truth in your religion and do not follow the whims of those who went astray before you – they led many others astray and themselves continue to stray from the even path' [77] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 77)

When talking about a common issue to both Christians and Jews, Allah addresses them together by the vocative: 'O people of the Book!' In case it is something specific to one group, He addresses it individually. The Arabic word *ghulu* (exceeding proper limits) means going to extremes in opinions, whether positively or negatively, either by overestimating or depreciating the status of an individual. Therefore, immoderation always triggers contradictions. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his companion 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* 'O' 'Ali, two kinds of people will be destroyed because of (how they see) you: one who loves you excessively, and one who hates you excessively.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* also said: 'O' 'Ali, no one loves you but a believer, and no one hates you but a hypocrite.'⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* also said, 'O' 'Ali, the aggressing faction will fight you.'⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated by At-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat*

(2) Narrated by Al-Hindi in *Kanz Al-'Ummal* and by Al-Hawarazmi in *Jami' Al-Masanid*

There are some people who exceed the bounds of proper love for 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* to the point of considering him a Prophet. Some even claimed that the revelation came to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by mistake, and that 'Ali was the one supposed to receive the revelation. Some even deemed 'Ali a god! All these are instances of overstepping the bounds of proper love and veneration for 'Ali.

As for the *Kharijites*, they called 'Ali a disbeliever. So, both sides went to extremes. Those who loved him raised him to the status of a Prophet or even higher than that; thus, they fell into *shirk* (joining false gods with Allah). Those who hated him labelled him a disbeliever and considered him outside the fold of Islam. Therefore, we must not overstep the bounds in our religion. We must not love a person to the extent of elevating him above the status of human beings, nor hate anyone so much that we reduce him to the lowest of stations. Rather, we must give everyone their proper due according to the position in which Allah has placed them because this is the way Allah honours them. 'Say: "O people of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Exceed not the limits in your religion (by believing in something) other than the truth, and do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray in times gone by, and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the Right Path.'" (al-Ma'ida: 77) A similar statement occurred in another glorious verse: 'O People of the Book, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth...' (an-Nisa': 171). For us to understand that the excessiveness referred to here is that of deifying human beings, the True Lord then says: '...The Messiah, 'Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), was no more than a Messenger of Allah and His Word, ('Be!' - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam and a spirit created by Him...' (an-Nisa': 171). Veneration for Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* must not be carried beyond due and proper bounds by either ascribing divinity to him or claiming that he was part of a trinity. If you had questions that led to this doubtful view because of how the Messiah *peace be upon him* was conceived without a father, you should understand that all things came into being by Allah's Command 'Be!' If you were to trace back the chain of human existence, you would arrive at a first human who did not come into being by procreation. That was Adam *peace be upon him* who was created from dust. Further, this entire universe

came into existence by a word - Be! Any physical causes for existence were embedded by Allah in this word which He spoke. Therefore, when we have another human being who was created by the same word ('Be!'), do not say: 'This is something incredible' because the entire universe was also created by this same word.' Verily, His Command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, 'Be!' and it is!' (*Ya Sin*: 82) If this perplexity was caused by the fact that the Messiah *peace be upon him* was born without a father, a matter which did not conform to the usual laws of procreation, this should not have been a cause of doubt because, at least, he was conceived by a mother – yet Adam *peace be upon him* was born without a father or mother. So, the logic is that if there were any perplexity at all on the creation of 'Isa (Jesus), then all the more so in respect to Adam. Indeed, a single word from Allah can bring life into existence. Life means the entry of the soul or essence into matter which endows it with movement, sensation, and essential characteristics of life. Hence, the word is spoken by Allah, and then the soul or essence comes and enters the matter. In the verse '... His Word, ('Be!' - and he was) which He bestowed on Maryam (Mary) and a spirit created by Him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 171), the part that says, '...a spirit created by Him...' is similar to what Allah says about Adam: 'So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) the soul which I created for him, then fall (you) down prostrating yourselves unto him.' (*al-Hijr*: 29)

Adam *peace be upon him* was a soul created by the direct command from Allah and so was the Messiah *peace be upon him*. In either case, there is no room for misconception. The True Lord asks those who identify themselves as believers in the Divine Scriptures, '...Say not: "Three (trinity)!" Cease! It is better for you...' (*an-Nisa'*: 171). If you claim a connection with heavenly messages, do not confuse people's thoughts with such misconceptions. You should have stopped yourselves at the honourable status that Allah has conferred on Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* the honour of being a good example for others. If he were anything other than human, he could not serve as a role model. An exemplar must be the same species as those who follow him. If he was a non-human, and people saw him worshipping Allah humbly, they would not feel themselves able to imitate his example.

I once said that, if a man saw a lion hunting in the forest and catching its prey, then would anyone who saw it think of making himself into a lion? No, but if he saw a brave knight at a battle hunting down his enemies, he would imitate him and try to be like him. Hence, a role model must be of the same species as his followers. Therefore, if a prophet was above human beings, he would not be appropriate as a messenger.

‘Say: “O people of the Book (Jews and Christians)! Exceed not the limits in your religion (by believing in something) other than the truth...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 77). The True Lord is speaking here to all the followers of the Scriptures because each of them fell into one of two extremist positions. The Jews falsely accused the Pure Chosen Virgin Maryam (Mary) *may Allah be pleased with her*, and the Christians overstepped the boundaries in the opposite extreme. The True Lord commands both sides not to overstep the proper bounds because the truth is irresistible; it remains firm without any alteration or contradiction. If a person sees something with his own eyes and is asked to describe it, he will describe it today the same way he will do tomorrow, or after one year. His account will remain factual because he has eye-witnessed it. This reality he has seen imposes itself upon him. But a liar does not remember what he has said earlier. He may fabricate a story and tell it differently the second time. It is a common saying: ‘A liar should have a good memory.’ Here, it is important to know that truth means that one’s narration about something is absolutely identical to reality. In other words, it means that the speaker is evoking something which really happened. As for the liar, he does not tell about something which really happened, so he cannot remember what lie he told the first time. Let us offer the following example to illustrate this point. A liar once sat and said: ‘Once we were travelling from the village to the city to get our requirements for the festival of *Eid Al-Fitr*, and the moon was as full as the midday sun.’ This last statement of this man reveals that he is actually telling a lie, for how could there be a full moon on the night before *Eid* which occurs in the first day of the month of *Shawwal* when the crescent can barely be seen? So, the one who tells of a true event does not change his story, whereas the liar, out of the confusion of events in his mind, does. Therefore, one should not say anything untrue because his lie will be undoubtedly discovered as a result of the contradiction in his speech. Yet, if this confusion

of statements concerns divinity, people will certainly have doubts about the religion they follow, and thus you will bear responsibility for leading them astray. Hence, those who bear the Divine Messages must be infallible so that they are not accused of confusion in the slightest. That is why we find in the Quran that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) asked Allah *the Almighty* not to make them—Prophets and Messengers—a plaything for those who are bent on denying the truth. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Our Lord, make us not (objects of) torment for the disbelievers and forgive us, our Lord. Indeed, it is you who is *the Exalted* in Might, the Wise.’ (*al-Mumtahana*: 5) But why did Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* make this supplication to Allah *the Almighty*? Because if he had said one thing and then done another, his people might have imagined – Allah forbid – that he was a liar.

Back to the words of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Say, “People of The Book, do not overstep the bounds of truth in your religion and do not follow the whims of those who went astray before you – they led many others astray, and themselves continue to stray from the even path,”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 77) They clearly indicate that even though they themselves were astray, they were not content with this, but rather tried to lead others astray. This is proved by Allah’s verse in the chapter *al-Baqara*, where Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Many of the People of the Book wish they could turn you back to disbelief after you have believed, out of envy from themselves (even) after the truth has become clear to them. So pardon and overlook until Allah delivers His command. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.’ (*al-Baqara*: 109) At this point, He *the Almighty* warns the people of the Book against that because if this is actually the case, they will be held accountable for their own misdeeds and for the misdeeds of those led astray by them. In the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘That they may bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear.’ (*an-Nahl*: 25)

Here, we should stress that there is no contradiction whatsoever between the aforementioned verse of the chapter of *an-Nahl* and that of *an-Najm* in which He *the Almighty* says: ‘That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of

another.' (*an-Najm*: 38) We have two kinds of burdens; one resulting from leading others astray and another resulting from man's own sins.

As for the saying of Allah, '...and do not follow the whims of those who went astray before you, 'it orders and instructs the people of the Book not to imitate those who followed their caprices before them. The Arabic word *Al-Hawa* (translated as whims), it refers to the strong inclination of the soul to do a particular act in an inappropriate way; this is why it is always used in the Quran to indicate the meaning of loss and error. For example, in the chapter of Sad, Allah orders Prophet Dawud (David) not to follow his own whim, lest it may lead him astray from His Way. Allah says: 'O David, indeed we have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow (your own) desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.' (*Sad*: 26) In addition, He *the Almighty* in the chapter *Ta-Ha* orders Prophet Musa (Moses) and says: '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*: 16)

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is related to have said: 'None of you (truly) believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought.'⁽¹⁾ That is, one must force his desire and whim to yield to the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. As a matter of fact, if one does so, it means that he has actually managed to restrain his own personal desire and whim. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and do not follow the whims of those who went astray before you- they led many others astray and themselves continue to stray from the even path,' so He forbids the people of the Book from following the whim which leads them astray, which meanwhile causes others to be led away from the Right Path. He *the Almighty* then says:

(1) Related by *Al-Baghawi*

لُعِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ عَلَى لِسَانِ دَاوُدَ
وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ

**Those Children of Israel who defied [God] were rejected
through the words of David, and Jesus, son of Mary, because
they disobeyed, they persistently overstepped the limits [78]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 78)**

This particular verse under discussion is meant to comfort Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by telling him how the previous Prophets and Messengers were opposed and rejected by them. Thus, He *the Almighty* wants to tell him *peace and blessings be upon him* that the denial of the people of the Book and rejection to him and to his Message is not something new or strange; it is clearly shown throughout their long history; they had already opposed and rejected the Message of Prophet Dawud (David), and so did they with the Message of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them*. So, you, O Messenger Muhammad, should learn from the examples of those Prophets and Messengers before you because the opposition and rejection of the people of the Book to Messengers and Prophets is not something which you alone have had to face, but rather, it is a part of their nature. Then, Allah *the Almighty* moves to a further level of offering comfort to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he would never feel any discomfort from them. Allah *Glorified is He* tells that He knows for certain that what they say certainly grieves Prophet Muhammad. Allah *the Almighty* states: 'We know that you, (O Muhammad), are saddened by what they say. And indeed, they do not call you untruthful, but it is the verses of Allah that the wrongdoers reject.' (*al-An'am*: 33) That is why we find the deniers of the truth entrusting Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with all their wealth and interests although they accused him of insanity, sorcery and telling lies. They even called him 'The Truthful and the Honest.' If they had the power of reason, they should have been dumbfounded by their own conduct and the way they barred people from attaining faith. Ironically, even though they accused him *peace and blessings be upon him* of all these false charges, and even though they stubbornly opposed him and his Message, they used to entrust him with their wealth and precious items. How strange and deviant behaviour

theirs is! Even though they knew for certain that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truthful and had truly been sent forth by Allah *the Almighty* they, following their caprice and whim, persisted in their error in order to hold on to their worldly, temporal power. They knew well that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was 'The Honest' a point which is clear in the fact that he ordered 'Ali Allah be pleased with him to stay in Mecca to return the trusts to their owners. Then, Allah *the Almighty* tells him *peace and blessings be upon him* that the deniers of the truth knew for certain that he is truthful, honest and of the most perfect moral character that could be ever seen; however, they rejected his Message since they realised that it would make them lose their worldly, temporal power. Allah *the Almighty* tells him *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *Glorified is He* also knew that those deniers of the truth had tried to tempt him away from delivering the Message by offering him power, authority and riches, confirming that if he *peace and blessings be upon him* had the desire for any of that, they would have given him all what he wanted, yet he *peace and blessings be upon him* chose to deliver the Divine Message honestly.

We know well that the disbelievers of Quraysh offered him kingship, wealth, authority and power on the condition that he *peace and blessings be upon him* detached himself from his Message; however, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* chose the Straight Path despite the difficulties he and his followers would encounter upon it—it is the True Path which has been revealed down to you from your Lord *Glorified is He*.

Having failed to seduce and tempt Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* away from his Message, the deniers of the truth placed an embargo on him and the believers to make them starve. Nevertheless he *peace and blessings be upon him* never abandoned his Message. If they had the human reason, they must have been aware that he *peace and blessings be upon him* desired nothing for himself; he neither asked for wealth, nor for authority or power. Not only that, but neither he, nor any of his family members, was allowed to take charity from anyone. At that point, they should have asked themselves why Muhammad would throw himself into this fierce battle, seeking neither fame, nor wealth, nor any worldly pleasures!

So, the deniers of the truth should have learned a lesson from that, for they offered him all these things, and yet he *peace and blessings be upon him* refused them all. He *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Seal of all the Prophets and Messengers *peace be upon them all*; therefore, he embodied all the goodness of the Prophets and Messengers who came before him. Further, we can say that he *peace and blessings be upon him* followed the example of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* when he replied to the gifts sent by the Queen of Sheba and said that what Allah had given him was so much better than all that He *the Almighty* had given them: 'So when they came to Sulaiman (Solomon), he said, "Do you provide me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Rather, it is you who rejoice in your gift.'" (*an-Naml*: 36)

Moreover, people were badly and gravely mistaken when they were unable to recognise that the major purpose of Divine Messages was to draw their attention to the Divine Guidance by means of which the course of life will run smoothly. In addition, they were mistaken when they were unable to be fully aware of the fact that they, first and foremost, were the only ones to benefit from this Divine Guidance. Notwithstanding, in case they disobey, they are the ones who will truly suffer from the results of their disobedience. That is why if anyone reflects this point objectively, he will fully realise that this Divine Guidance is for his own good. If we reflect on the example of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* we will find that he was given a kingdom the likes of which Allah would never give to anyone else again; He *the Almighty* subjected the wind and the jinn to his will; yet he would give the fine flour to his servants so that they could enjoy the best things and would keep the poorest flour for himself. This example actually offers a conclusive proof that Allah *the Almighty* sent down these religious Messages for the good and benefit of mankind, not Messengers and Prophets.

Back to the verse under discussion, the people of the Book fiercely resisted and stubbornly denied the Message of Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*; so, when they violated the Sabbath, Prophet Dawud (David) invoked Allah's Imprecation upon them; thus, He *Glorified is He* made them into apes and cursed them in the Psalms. In the same way, when they slandered Maryam,

the Virgin Mary Allah *be pleased with her* Allah cursed them in the Gospel. Here, it is important to know that they were afflicted with such divine punishments as a result of their transgression. That is why we find Him *the Almighty* concluding the verse saying, ‘...because they disobeyed, they persistently overstepped the limits.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 78) We should differentiate between ‘disobedience’ and ‘overstepping the limits’. Disobedience means that the person himself is the one who commits acts of disobedience; it does not affect anyone else. Overstepping the limits actually falls under the category of disobedience, but its impact reaches others. For example, the envious person only brings harm to himself, whereas the thief or the bribe-taker harms himself and others as well. This clearly shows the difference between ‘disobedience’ and ‘overstepping the limits’.

كَانُوا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوهُ
لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾

**they did not forbid each other to do wrong. How vile
their deeds were! [79] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 79)**

We know well that the careful observance of the Divine Guidance offers the absolute guarantee through which the course of life will run smoothly. In this regard, we should know that Allah *the Almighty* created man in a manner that enables him to strongly resist evil. That is why when one wants to satisfy his desires of sex, money, authority, etc., we find him trying to do that in whatever way he can. However, there is only one thing that can prevent him from doing so, which is conscience; it forces one to be on the track. Scholars believe that conscience is the nucleus of faith, and that it is what reproaches man when he commits a sin. Of course, this is the case if that person is religiously committed. This very point is crystal clear in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* where Allah *the Almighty* gives us a perfect description of the ever-changing human soul. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 30) This means that the son of Adam, Cain, killed his brother Abel. Yet, when the killer’s rage and rancour subsided and abated, he realised, as mentioned in the Quran, that he became one of the losers.

Here is another point in the story of the children of Adam; having killed his brother out of rage and hatred, Allah *the Almighty* sent a raven to show him how to hide his brother's body because he had no previous knowledge on how to do it. Thus, it is clear that the killer, Cain, went from a state of not respecting his brother's right to live to further wanting to honour his dead body. So, even though the human soul has its passions, it is balanced by the feeling of regret, which is shown when a person does something wrong or sinful. Therefore, we might find many people suffering hardships as a result of the sins and acts of disobedience they commit; meanwhile, we find them confessing these sins and misdeeds to anyone, irrespective of the fact that the one to whom they make their confession cannot do anything to remove the effects of these hardships because they have already occurred, and it is too late.

Here, a good question arises, that is, 'Why does man want to confess his sins to another?' As a matter of fact, he does so in order to relieve himself. We know for certain that any movement of the human soul has an effect which leads to a reaction. For example, when someone makes you angry, you react by taking revenge. That is why we find Islam instructing its followers to change position upon getting angry. That is to say, if someone angers you when you are standing, then sit down; and if you are already sitting, then recline, and if you are standing still, then take a few steps. In addition, Islam instructs them to make a special supplication, that is, 'Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector'. Then, one's anger will subside and gradually come to an end. It is clear now that Islam asks angry people to act like that to make the body get rid of the surplus energy which has provoked and given vent to anger; thus, one's anger subsides and fades away. That is why an Arab poet strongly advises all those who hear a complaint to be all ears to the complainer, saying:

Complaints must be made to those who are virtuous:

They will assist you, console you or commiserate with you.

In truth, when you show the complainant that you are willing to help, you put him at ease and help him to attain peace of mind. That is why the poet strongly advises the complainant to make his complaint to a virtuous person

who will listen attentively and who is actually worthy of keeping secrets. We know well that secrets must be guarded and kept just as precious items are kept in a safe. Once again, when one confesses, he relieves himself by directing his surplus energies to something else. Here is an important point, that is, when the human soul keeps on doing evil, and no one blocks it or forbids it, evil will spread and become prevalent; it is actually at this point that the Heaven intervenes by sending Messengers.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear that the reason for sending Messenger to these people is that they would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did. As a matter of fact, people's preventing one another from doing hateful and forbidden acts can only be accomplished by enjoining truth and patience upon one another. Furthermore, it is of great importance for the believer to be fully aware of the fact that he is safe from evil notions coming to his soul; we are all human beings and thus subject to continuous change of conditions. Out of Allah's Infinite Mercy, when an evil notion comes to the mind of a believer, he finds a fellow believer who does not have this notion and who will be able to offer him truth and patience. If this particular evil notion comes to the minds of both of them at the same time, both might agree to commit it; however, if it comes to the mind of only one of them and not the other, the latter will be able to enjoin truth and patience upon the first. In this way, believers will keep one another in check by mutual counsel; at one time, a person will forbid his fellow believer from committing evil, while, at some other time, he will be forbidden from doing the same act. This point is clear in the Quran in the chapter of *al-'Asr*, where Allah *Glorified is He* refers to this topic when He says: 'By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3)

The aforementioned verses indicate that Allah *the Almighty* does not single out a certain group of people to forbid others from doing evil. Likewise, He *the Almighty* does not assign the others to be always forbidden without any reciprocal role on their part; rather, He *the Almighty* tells that each one of us can prevent his fellow believer from committing evil if he inclines towards

that, and, in turn, be prevented by someone else if he inclines towards doing that. In this way, believers offer counsel and enjoin truth and patience upon one another. Linguistically, this particular act of offering mutual advice falls under the category of *al-mufa'lah* or 'reciprocity' which means a behaviour in which two people share the doing of the same act. That is to say that one of the two plays the role of the subject at a particular moment of time, while the other is the object and vice-versa. Arabs say: '*Zayd* cooperated with '*Amr* in doing a particular act.' Now, this particular formula of *al-muf'alah* indicates that the act is done by two or more people. It is easy, then, for the believers to mutually prevent each other from doing evil. Another possible explanation for this point is that one's soul, out of the subtle instinctive power within, prevents one from doing evil. Hence, it is clear now that this particular act of enjoining truth and patience may take place either within the soul itself or within the society.

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'They did not forbid each other to do wrong' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79) tells us that the Jews had already committed evil acts and misdeeds; then, we should ask a very important question, 'How could they have prevented one another from doing the hateful things they had done?' A possible explanation for this particular part of the verse may be given in the light of the fact that they did not prevent one another from doing the hateful things they intended to do, meaning that one of them (the Jews) saw his fellow preparing to commit evil but did not prevent him. We have a similar case in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* orders the believers to wash their faces and hands when they are about to pray: 'O you, who have believed, when you rise to (perform) prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6) This aforementioned particular verse does not mean that a person should begin his ablution after he has already started praying, but rather that he should perform ablution by way of preparing to offer prayers; that is, when you, believers, wish to perform prayer, you should precede it with performing ablution.

In addition, this particular part of the verse, 'They did not forbid each other to do wrong,' urges us to be permanently in a state of spiritual alertness.

In addition, it directs us to carefully consider whether or not we are following the Divine Guidance. That is to say that we should restrain ourselves from committing evil, and that we should also prevent our fellow believers from doing so, lest the ruling of this particular part of the verse on the Jews would be applied to us, the believers; it is as though this verse instructs us to live in a state of spiritual alertness and never get close to evil. In the same connection, the Arabic word *la-bi'sa* (translated as 'How vile') indicates an oath which gives emphasis. Here, we shall ask the following question: is this divine emphasis given in the same way that we, human beings, do? The answer is definitely no because we know for certain that there is nothing resembling Him *the Almighty*. In this regard, it is important to know that truth is established either by confessions, testimony or oath. For this reason, judges base their verdicts only on one of those three; namely, the defendant's confession, the witnesses' testimony and an oath. Yet, Allah *the Almighty* out of His Knowledge of all His creatures gives this particular ruling on the Jews. The absence of mutual prevention of evil involves both action and speech. Here, there is a very important point; that is, even though Allah *the Almighty* does not phrase this particular part of the verse as follows, 'How vile their sayings were,' the meaning of the verse under discussion refers to both of them. We certainly know that 'saying' is the act of the tongue while 'deeds' are the acts of the rest of the body parts; yet, both fall under the category of 'doing'. This point is clearly illustrated in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he says: 'Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then (let him change it) with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart — and that is the weakest of faith.'⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'How vile their deeds were,' indicates that they had already committed evil, both in speech and in action.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

(1) *Narrated by Muslim*

تَرَى كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ
لَهُمْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ أَنْ سَخِطَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِي الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

You [Prophet] see many of them allying themselves with the disbelievers. How terrible is what their souls have stored up for them: God is angry with them and they will remain tormented [80] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 80)

This particular verse draws our attention to the main reason why Allah *the Almighty* told His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the acts of disobedience on part of the Jews, including the fact they had been cursed on the tongue of David and Jesus, son of Mary. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell him *peace and blessings be upon him* that if he considered their affairs with him, he would fully realise that their disbelief and rejection to the previous Messengers and Prophets were not a matter of whim, but rather, their disbelief was an intrinsic part of their nature.

Let us illustrate this point more clearly; we know for certain that when Islam came, it faced and countered several different forces that used to corrupt people's lives, a thing which is totally against the Divine Guidance. Allah *the Almighty* made all the creatures in the universe subservient to man so that he would set the affairs of the land in order. Accordingly, people are supposed not to let the evil exert its negative impact on the good. This obviously indicates the main reason behind the sending down of the Divine Guidance to man. In other words, Allah's Guidance is meant to protect man's course of life from getting out of order. Thus, it is clear that our adherence to the Divine Laws is always for our own good. Here, we should stress that Allah *the Almighty* will not get any benefit from our obedience, nor does our worship add something new to His Attributes of Perfection which He *Glorified is He* already had even before He has created us. We know that it is He *the Almighty*, the One Who created us out of nothing and supplied us with His Sustenance. That is why it goes without saying that our adherence to His Legal Obligations upon us will not benefit Him in anything at all, for He is in no need of any of His creatures.

So, it is obvious that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to counter a number of disbelieving forces, including the polytheists

of Mecca, the Jews and the hypocrites. As for the Jews, they—based on the fact that previous Messengers were sent to them, that Divine Messages were already sent to them, that they were fully aware of the miracles of the previous Messengers and that they knew Prophet Muhammad's descriptions— were supposed to follow Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; yet, they did not. As for the hypocrites, they emerged when Islam became strong, thus they apparently declared their belief, while their hearts did not accept it.

Once again, the people of the Book were supposed to believe in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* since his way of guidance re-established the connection between the Heavens and the earth. We should know that the people of the Book used to tell the people in Yathrib (pre-Islamic Medina) that they would seek the help of Prophet Muhammad to defeat them; for example, it is historically related that they had said to the tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj: 'This is the time of a Prophet to be sent in confirmation of what has been revealed to us; when he comes, we shall surely follow him and kill you with him in the same way the people of 'Ad and Iram had been previously killed.' This point is clear in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah confirming that which was with them - although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved - but (then) when there came to them that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it; so the curse of Allah will be upon the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89) Their heavenly revealed Scriptures told them that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would come forth in a land of palm-trees that truly indicates the place where he was destined to deliver and convey His Message. So, it is clear right now that the Jews knew well the place where he would deliver his Message, his descriptions in their Books, as well as the nature of people he would counter and fight against. Yet, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to them with the truth, they lost their worldly temporal power which they, through corrupting and distorting the Divine Guidance, tried to preserve intact. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came forth with such Divine Message to turn people back to belief.

In that particular period of time when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered Medina, the people of Yathrib (pre-Islamic Medina) were

about to crown one of them king. As for the Jews, they exploited the disunity and divisionism among the two tribes of Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj to earn money, selling weapons and lending usurious loans. However, when Prophet Muhammad came, he united Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj, and thus the Jews lost their power and authority, which is why they—lest this new religion would move to Medina—tried their best to destroy it in the cradle, inciting the enemies of Islam in Mecca to get rid of Prophet Muhammad and the believers with him. This is definitively proved by the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Indeed, those who exchange the covenant of Allah and their (own) oaths for a small price will have no share in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and they will have a painful punishment.’ (*Al-’Imran: 77*) That is, the Jews have bought the life of this world in exchange for the hereafter. Ironically, they were content with trifling gain, including pride, power and rule.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. Ka’b ibn Al-Ashraf, one of the leaders of the Jews who possessed wealth and influence, went to Quraysh to speak to them of the absolute necessity of uprooting the new religion and getting rid of it, whereupon the people of Quraysh asked him: ‘You are from the People of the Book and you have knowledge of the previous Books. Which of the two religions is more guided than the other—ours or that of Muhammad?’ Ka’b then replied: ‘You are more rightly-guided than Muhammad!’ Amazingly enough, how could polytheists —idol-worshippers— be more rightly-guided than Prophet Muhammad?

Thus, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘You (Prophet) see many of them allying themselves with the disbelievers,’ (*al-Ma’ida: 80*) indicates clearly that the Jews had allied with the polytheists, their old enemies, against Prophet Muhammad, so that they would not lose their power and authority. Hence, they allied with each other to get rid of the new religion. Allah’s words, ‘*yatawallawan al-ladhin kafaru*’ (translated as ‘allying themselves’) mean that they gave them aid and succour over the believers. In addition, they falsely told them that they were on the right path, while Prophet Muhammad and his followers were not. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* swears and emphasises how terrible what their evil-enjoining souls had made alluring to them; a point which obviously indicates that they had no self-reproaching souls.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse with, 'How terrible is what their souls have stored up for them: Allah is angry with them and they will remain tormented' (*al-Ma'ida*: 80). This divine anger had led them to keep away from the path of guidance; thus, they will remain tormented in the Hereafter. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* was saying to them: 'Although you, O Jews, have taken a little enjoyment from this worldly life, you have brought upon yourselves the eternal misery which awaits you in the Hereafter.'

He *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَلَوْ كَانُوا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالنَّبِيِّ وَمَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَا
اتَّخَذُوهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنْهُمْ فَسِيفُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

If they had believed in God, in the Prophet, and in what was sent down to him, they would never have allied themselves with the disbelievers, but most of them are rebels [81] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 81)

This indicates that if the Jews had true faith in Allah *the Almighty* and in the Divine Guidance sent down to them, they would not have allied themselves with polytheists. Yet, most of those people, according to the verse under discussion, are rebels and iniquitous, whereas just the minority of them are not like this. He *the Almighty* then says:

لَتَجِدَنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا وَلَتَجِدَنَّ
أَقْرَبَهُم مَّوَدَّةً لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصْرِيكَ ذَلِكَ بَأَنَّ مِنْهُمْ
قَسِيصِينَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

You [Prophet] are sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with God; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians,' for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance [82] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 82)

In this verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* swears to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he will be fully aware of the

nature of both the Jews and Christians—two groups that share the same goal of opposing and rejecting Islam, but whose emotions towards him and the believers are different from one another.

The Jews—because they held considerable power during that particular period of time, to the extent that they were viewed as leaders—were more hostile towards Prophet Muhammad and his followers. As for the Christians, they did not have any dominance or temporal power, but rather confined themselves to their cells and monasteries worshipping Allah, so they did not show any enmity to those who were sent to devolve the temporal power of such tyrants to those who would surely establish justice.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* shows us the logical and strong reason behind this ruling deduced from the verse, ‘You are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, “We are Christians,” for there are among them people who devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 82) The Arabic word *qissisun* is the plural of *qass* and it refers to someone who devotes himself to learning (a scholar), whilst *rahib* is that person who devotes himself to asceticism. As such, it is clear that the mission of the ‘*qass*’ is to attain knowledge, whilst that of the ‘*rahib*’ is to implement what this learning demands by devoting himself to ascetic worship.

In this regard, we find Allah *the Almighty* praising two qualities of Christians, that is, there are from among them people who devoted to learning and ascetics. It is by virtue of these two particular qualities that they became closer in affection towards the believers; yet, this is actually the ruling in case they keep those two qualities. This is based on the rule that states: ‘The legal ruling is determined in the light of the presence or absence of the effective cause.’ So, since the Christians, neither for positions of power, nor for their haughtiness or pride, are not given to arrogance which can be explained in light of the fact that their religion helps them attain a higher spiritual rank. Let us quote the following statement of theirs to illustrate this point—Christians say: ‘If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn your left cheek to him’.

In addition, it is important to know that the real events of life definitively proved the meaning of the verse. The Jews showed bitter and extreme hostility

to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the extent that they plotted to kill him by dropping a rock on his head and by poisoning him. As a matter of fact, trying to kill your enemy thinking that this is the only way to get rid of him indicates clearly that you are not brave enough to face him alive; otherwise, you would not think of killing him. If someone does something like this, it actually proves that he is weaker than his enemy, for if he were strong, he would face him in the flesh instead of thinking about killing him. That is why it is said that the weak man is the one who believes that the life of his enemy causes hardship to him.

Jews at this particular period of time of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were so weak. We know well that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made his call public, some people followed him and believed in his Message, but their families persecuted and hurt them to the extent that people within the one house were divided into believers and disbelievers. Umm Habibah, daughter of Abu Sufyan, is a case in point; she attained faith, while her father was still a disbeliever. She then migrated with her husband to Abyssinia (today's Ethiopia). At this point, it is important to know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was extremely keen on the safety of those first believers because he knew that they would be the ones who would call to Islam later on. That is why he ordered them to migrate to Abyssinia to protect themselves—the first seeds of faith—so that they would shoulder the responsibility of disseminating the Message of Islam in the future; a spiritual mission indeed! Here, we can quote the great poet Ahmad Shawqi *may Allah rest his soul* who says in one of his collections known as *Aswaq Adh-Dhahab*: 'Courage might require one to be cowardly for a moment.' As a matter of fact, courage is supposed to be shown not only when facing one's enemy, but also when facing one's own soul. For example, if a group of strong people are all sitting together one evening when a drifter with a gun comes in and starts insulting them all, they will have to use artful means in order to seize him and eventually punish him.

Therefore, courage requires a person to be cowardly for a moment so that he is able defeat the enemy; this is actually the true meaning of cleverness and astuteness. We should affirm that faith does not mean suicide, but rather, it

asks believers not to get involved in any battle unless they are confident, even not fully, that they will defeat their enemy. That is why we find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* calling Khalid ibn Al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with him* 'The Unsheathed Sword of Allah, 'even though Khalid did not really win this particular battle, but he managed to withdraw the army of the believers, which is viewed as an act of victory. It goes without saying that ordering an army's retreat requires more strength than it does to be victorious since the victorious side has momentum with it, whilst the defeated side has the momentum against it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* stresses in the Quran that the acts of manoeuvres and plots are part of military skill because they give one the chance to face the enemy again afterwards. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Anfal*: 'And whoever turns his back to them on such a day, unless swerving (as a strategy) for war or joining (another) company, has certainly returned with anger (upon him) from Allah, and his refuge is Hell - and wretched is the destination.' (*al-Anfal*: 16)

Supported by the divine revelation and guidance, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* chose Abyssinia to be the destination of his migrating Companions. He did not command them to go to any of the Arab tribes because he knew well that all the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula feared Quraysh which was in full control over the pilgrimage season. That is why it was expected that none of those tribes would ever dare to oppose it. Because of this, Messenger Muhammad did not choose any of these tribes to be the destination of his companions. But why did he choose Abyssinia in particular? The answer to this question is clear in the following statement of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* where he says: 'Go to Abyssinia, for there is a king there who does not allow that anyone should be wronged in his presence, so stay in his land until such time as Allah shall make for you a means of relief from what you now are suffering.'⁽¹⁾

Imam Az-Zuhari related another narration which reads: 'When the Muslims had increased in number and the idolaters' persecution had begun, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: "Disperse in Allah's

(1) Narrated by Ibn Ishaq

Land, for He *the Almighty* shall bring you together again”, whereupon they asked, “Where shall we go, O Messenger Muhammad?” He pointed his hand towards the land of Abyssinia and said: ‘There!’⁽¹⁾

Carrying out the order of Prophet Muhammad, the Companions crept out in the dead of night to set off to Abyssinia. When Quraysh heard about this, they tried to intercept them and bring them back to Mecca to continue their persecution against them, hoping that this would make them leave Islam. But because the Will of Allah *the Almighty* cannot be challenged, He made everything easy for the believers so that they arrived in Abyssinia and they were safe from the plots of the disbelievers.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the knowledge that Allah has given him, was fully aware of the affairs in the neighbouring territories; thus, he was perfectly able to distinguish just rulers from unjust ones; this is proven by the fact that when the Companions carried out his *peace and blessings be upon him* order and migrated to Abyssinia, they felt secure about their lives and religion. The Quraysh became enraged; they wanted to take the people back from the Negus, the king of Abyssinia, so they sent their leaders with gifts and presents for the king.

The delegation of Quraysh, including ‘Amr ibn Al-’As, ‘Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi’a and ‘Imarah ibn Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, travelled to Abyssinia and asked the Negus to give them the Muslims who had emigrated to his land, meanwhile accusing them of having forsaken the religion of their forefathers to adopt a new religion opposing all other religions. They also told the Negus that the Muslims were slandering Jesus and his Virgin mother, but the Negus refused to believe a word of them, which is why he asked to hear from the emigrants themselves; so, Ja’far ibn Abi Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* approached and said:

‘O King, we were a people of ignorance who worshipped idols, ate carrion, committed indecencies, severed family ties, mistreated neighbours and the strong amongst us would exploit the weak. We did all this until Allah sent us a Messenger from amongst us whose lineage, truthfulness, trustworthiness

(1) Narrated by ‘Abd Ar-Razzaq

and chastity were known to us, and he called us to uphold Allah's Oneness and to worship Him Alone, and to forsake the stones and idols which our forefathers worshipped alongside Him. And he commanded us to speak the truth, honour our trusts, keep our family ties, treat our neighbours well and abstain from the property and blood of others. He forbade us indecency, lying, usurping the orphan's wealth and falsely accusing chaste women. He commanded us to worship Allah Alone and to associate nothing with Him. He commanded us to pray, to give alms to the needy and to fast. And we believed in him, had faith in him and followed him in all that he brought from Allah Alone, with whom we associate nothing; we deemed unlawful all that he made unlawful to us; we deemed lawful all that he made lawful for us. So, our people declared enmity against us, tortured and abused us to make us leave our religion and return to idolatry instead of worshipping Allah *the Almighty* and to indulge in all the foul things we used to. And when they dominated us and restrained us and came between us and our religion, we came to your land, and we chose you above anyone else, hoping that we would not be wronged in your court.'

The Negus was fully aware of the fact that the Quran attested that the Messiah *peace be upon him* was a pure and honourable Prophet, so he did not listen to the lies of the delegation of Quraysh. The heart of the Negus became filled with faith, and he was not too proud to believe even though he was a king; thus, he stood in the way of the attempts of Quraysh to get the companions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* back to Mecca. When the Negus heard what had been revealed to Messenger Muhammad in the chapter of *Maryam*, he said: 'Indeed, these words and those which Jesus brought shone forth from a single source!'

In this regard, it is important to know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fully realised that faith had settled in the heart of the Negus; this is definitively proven by the fact that when the husband of Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufyan converted to Christianity, she remained Muslim even though she loved him dearly. At this point, she *may Allah be pleased with her* had to separate from him. As a matter of fact, Umm Habiba's insistence on adhering to Islam indicates clearly that her immigration was made sincerely only for attaining the Pleasure of Allah *the Almighty*.

As a result, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to honour Umm Habiba and the Negus, so Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the Negus to offer Umm Habiba his marriage proposal. This is actually based on the fact that the Negus was a 'man of trust' who did not deny the true information about Mary (Maryam) in the Gospel, bravely declared the veracity of the verses of the Quran on Mary *may Allah be pleased with her* and rejected to give the emigrants to the polytheists of Mecca. For all of these reasons, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked the Negus to offer his marriage proposal to Umm Habiba after her husband had become Christian. As a matter of fact, this single incident offers a number of good and interesting lessons; it actually tells us that the emigration of Umm Habiba was made for the sake of attaining the pleasure of Allah *the Almighty*. Had she been following her husband, she would have converted to Christianity like him. It also draws attention to the fact that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not speaking from his own desire when he had said before that the Negus would not allow anyone to be wronged in his presence. Here, we should know that when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was told about the death of the Negus, he prayed the Absentee Funeral Prayer for him.

Allah's words, 'You (Prophet) are sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with Allah; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians, 'for there are among them people who devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance' (*al-Ma'ida*: 82), tell you that, out of Allah's Grace, He made scholars and ascetics from the Christians. We have previously explained the difference between these two terms and said that the 'scholar' (*qass*), in this context, is the one who attains knowledge, whereas the 'ascetic' is the one who acts upon knowledge. Here, we should distinguish between the kind of scholar who do not put their knowledge into practice, from whom only knowledge can be taken, and the other kind that, out of fear of Allah, put their knowledge into practice. Those scholars who do not act upon their knowledge will surely be held accountable before Allah *the Almighty*; nevertheless, we shall receive knowledge from them and then practice it ourselves. At that point, we can quote the following poet:

Take my knowledge, and look not at my action:

Pick the fruit, and leave the wood for the fire!

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...for there are among them people who are devoted to learning and ascetics’, it gives the reason why they are kinder to Muslims. However, we are faced with a good question: does this truly mean that Allah *the Almighty* hold monasticism to be praiseworthy? If this is true, why does He state, ‘Which they innovated; we did not prescribe it for them except (that they did so) seeking the approval of Allah’ (*al-Hadid: 27*)?

In the aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Hadid*, Allah *Glorified is He* is telling us about the succession of Messengers until ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and the Gospel he brought. He *the Almighty* placed in the hearts of Jesus’s followers great compassion, tenderness and kindness; and how they invented monasticism as a way of increasing their worship, meanwhile confirming that He did not enjoin it upon them, but they had adopted it out of a desire for Allah’s goodly acceptance. He *the Almighty* then made it clear that some of them preserved it, whilst many other became iniquitous and forsook it. As a matter of fact, when Allah *the Almighty* issues a legal obligation, believers must perform it; as long as the believers keep on offering the recommended acts of worship which are not obligatory, Allah will increase the reward for them. We should know that if one really wishes to increase his reward from Allah, he must be insistent and persistent on offering acts of worship before Him *the Almighty*. Hence, it is clear that the Christians are not criticised and censured in this verse because they invented monasticism; rather, it is because some of them did not observe it properly.

Further, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...for there are among them people who devoted to learning and ascetics;’ it indicates clearly that there are those of them (the Christians) who devote their lives to knowledge, and others, monks, who are good models of the application of this knowledge. He *the Almighty* concludes the verse by praising their moral conduct, saying that they are not given to arrogance or pride. So, as long as they keep such characteristics, it means that they do not seek temporal power, and thus they will continue to be closer in affection to us (Muslims). If they abandon those characteristics and seek temporal power, it means that they have forsaken those attributes by

which Allah judged them as being closer to us in affection. He *the Almighty* then says:

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰ أَعْيُنُهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ
مِمَّا عَرَفُوا مِنَ الْحَقِّ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا ءَامَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

and when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]. They say, ‘Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses [83] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 83)

This particular verse indicates the accuracy of the Quranic style; that is, the Quran has already mentioned scientific facts on the human soul and how the body parts react even before psychology scholars began to study these phenomena by means of research, investigation and experimentation. Science proves that every body part has a particular function to perform: the eye sees; the ear hears; the tongue tastes and speaks; the nose smells, and the hand touches. Scientists, out of caution, called these senses ‘The Five Tangible Senses’. At this point, we should stress that there are other things such as hunger and thirst, a person perceives without knowing the mode or the source of sensation.

In this regard, it is important to know that scientists tried to discover how man differentiates between two weights, and they reached the conclusion that he does so by virtue of a particular sense called the ‘muscle sense’. When a person lifts something, he uses his muscles to the point where he is able to distinguish different levels of effort. In the same connection, they found out that man has a further sense called the ‘sense of dimension’, which allows one to sense the level of fineness or thickness of cloth, even if its thickness is only one tenth of a millimetre.

Therefore, it is clear that man has numerous senses by means of which he can perceive things. In truth, there are certain senses which exert effect on the human soul, such as love, affection, hatred and disgust, called senses of emotion. The enjoyment of the taste of a certain food or the dislike for something else falls under this category. If a person likes something, he will surely try it again. This entire process may be explained as bringing a reaction to an emotion which follows perception.

Thus, there are three different processes that are, perception by means of which one senses, emotion by means of which one feels and action by means of which one reacts. For example, one might perceive a beautiful flower in a garden, a process which might inspire the heart to feel yearning and love which are emotions. Here, you should know that you are free to perceive what you like and to feel whatever emotion you like, but you do not have the right to reach out your hand and pick the flower because the *Shari'a* forbids that, and the guard working in the garden will also prevent you from doing that. But no one will prevent you from looking at the flower and enjoying its beauty; we can reach the conclusion that perception regarding that particular act is allowed and so is emotion.

Reaction is the particular area governed by *Shari'a*. Once again, we stress that perception and emotion are allowed – all apart from the perception of feminine beauty, which the *Shari'a* declared prohibited. You might perceive a woman's beauty and then feel inclination and love to her; yet, if you react, how will you control yourself? We know that after the perception and emotion, you might either react or suppress; if you react, you will sully people's honour; and if you suppress, you will be emotionally devastated and hurt. Therefore, the Islamic *Shari'a* addresses this topic from the very beginning; it prohibits you from even perceiving it (that is, the unlawful feminine beauty). In doing so, it expressly ordered its followers to lower their gazes. This is based on the fact that sex is a very complex process whose elements cannot be separated from each other. In the case of the flower, the three elements of the process— perception, emotion and reaction—can be separated from each other, a matter which is totally different in the topic of sex in which one is supposed to do one of two, that is, either to be chaste or to obey his whim—two matters that cause him considerable harm. That is why the Islamic *Shari'a* prohibits the matter from the very beginning, at the stage of perception (of a woman's beauty).

Hence, it becomes clear now that this verse under discussion has revealed psychological facts on the matters of perception, emotion and action, which psychologists have only discovered recently. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and when they listen to...' which means that they knew about what has been given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through the organ

responsible for hearing, which is the ear. But what did they hear? The Quran gives us the answer and says that they (the Christians) listened to what had been sent down to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which is the main reason behind the existence of emotion, shown clearly in the fact that their eyes overflowed with tears. But how was their reaction? They actually asked Allah *the Almighty* to count them amongst the witnesses since they had already attained faith. Thus, we find that the Quran, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago, gave the sequential order of perception, emotion and reaction, even before science spoke about it. The Quran tells that when the Christians heard with their ears, there was an emotional response, and the change in their emotions was manifested by the tears overflowing from their eyes.

Here, we should distinguish between two things: the first is the eye's filling with tears, without these tears actually falling. Arabs say: 'His eye filled with tears', meaning that his eyes became teary, but the tears did not fall. The second is when tears actually flow from the eyes; overflowing only occurs when the container is completely filled, overfilling; so it is as if tears filled the eyes beyond capacity and then fell down—just like when we fill a jug or a cup with water all the way to the top and then add more so that it overflows.

The verse shows that the main reason behind their reaction was that they had recognised that the Quran was true. We notice that the Arabic particle *min* has been used frequently (three times) in this Quranic verse, as follows: *min ad-dam* (translated as 'with tears'), *mimma'arafau* (translated as 'because they recognised') and *min al-Haqq* (translated as '(they recognized) the Truth (in it)').

Therefore, the Arabic word *min* is used three times with a different contextual role, from which a particular meaning is understood. These different meanings, in turn, indicate the rhetorical compilation of the three phenomena of perception, emotion and reaction—an order which includes the three elements of the sensory phenomena which empirical science only discovered when it became acquainted with the anatomy of the body parts, their functions and how they are involved in the processes of perception, emotion and reaction.

What concerns us here is the reaction; the Christians asked Allah *the Almighty* to count them from the witnesses. This is very important because faith is something which concerns them personally, but being united with all those who bear witness to the truth is something which concerns others, too. As a matter of fact, this particular supplication of theirs indicates that believers will undoubtedly attain high ranks, for they will benefit from their own belief. In addition, they will shoulder the responsibility of disseminating the Divine Guidance to others and thus they will also get benefit; this point is proved by the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'You are the best nation produced (as an example) for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient' (*Al-'Imran*: 110).

That is, Allah *the Almighty* calls upon the *ummah* (followers) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: 'You, O followers of Prophet Muhammad, are the best community which has ever been brought forth for the good of humankind not because of your race or lineage, but because of the way of guidance you follow; and whoever follows the guidance of 'Do' and 'Do not do', thereby gives practical proof of his faith in Allah.' He *the Almighty* then adds, 'There are those of the People of the Book who attain to faith and become Muslim, but yet many of them are also outside the bounds of faith.' In another position of the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says that He *Glorified is He* says: "And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you. And We did not make the *qiblah* which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels. And indeed, it is difficult except for those whom Allah has guided. And never would Allah have caused you to lose your faith. Indeed Allah is, to the people, Kind and Merciful" (*al-Baqara*: 143).

So, the *ummah* (followers) which follows the teachings of Islam –the way of moderation – is the rightly-guided *ummah* which follows the path of righteousness and really practices its faith, for it is the religion which abrogates and amends all that had come before it. In addition, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the seal of all Prophets and Messengers, thus

his Message abrogates all the previous laws and methodologies. Furthermore, his life and the way he acted is an excellent model of spiritual behaviour that guides believers to the Straight Path. After reflection on the aforementioned verse from the chapter of *Al-'Imran*, we find that it sheds light on the topic of changing the direction of prayer from Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca. The verse says that the first command to pray towards Jerusalem was a test that was only passed by those who defer all matters to the Highest Commander, Allah *Glorified is He*. The execution of this order was really a difficult thing for all except those whom Allah has graced with His Guidance. Then, He *the Almighty* has ordered them to direct their faces towards the Sacred House in Mecca, which is the first House ever to be appointed for people.

So, since we, Muslims, are witnesses, and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a witness over us, this means that he testifies that we have disseminated the Message of Islam after him, and thus our reward will be doubled. We will be rewarded for the fact that we received the Message from him and believed in it; in addition, we will be rewarded for disseminating the Message of Islam after him. As a matter of fact, the believer is not a witness unless his witnessing is drawn from the witnessing of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself; a point which is clear in the aforementioned verse of *Al-'Imran*.

This is, the *ummah* (followers) of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the best which Allah *the Almighty* has ever brought forth since its members firmly adhere to the Divine Guidance manifested clearly in the order 'Do' and the prohibition 'Do not do'. By doing this, you, O Muslims, will have certainly applied the guidance in a manner that shows the sincerity of your faith in Allah. Yet, if the people of the Book were as true as you are in your faith, it would be better for them than what they are currently doing; but while some of them are reviewing the topic of belief in their hearts, most of them have iniquitously gone outside the confines of faith. So, Allah *the Almighty* has said, '...so count us amongst the witnesses; 'it is an admission that this particular group of Christians had already attained faith in Allah, while disseminating the Divine Guidance to others. Thus, it is clear that they became true Muslims

and followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is narrated to have said: 'No one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.'⁽¹⁾ Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran about the great reward prepared for those who disseminate His Message to others. In the chapter of *Ibrahim*, He *Glorified is He* says that the parable of a good word is like a good tree, firmly rooted, reaching out with its branches towards the sky and yielding its fruit at all times. Allah says: 'Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, (making) a good word like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and its branches (high) in the sky?' (*Ibrahim*: 24-25)

This means that a good word is like a fruit-bearing tree which benefits the people; it gives comfort, it has firm roots in the earth and branches which stretch up towards the sky, and it yields its fruits at all times by its Creator's Will. In truth, Allah *the Almighty* gives this tangible example as a parable to the people so that they may know the value of high spiritual truths. In other words, the one who speaks the truth, conveying the Divine Guidance to people, will bear the fruits of this good word, as long as there is a believer alive until we all meet Allah *the Almighty*.

The word *ash-shahidin* (translated as 'witnesses') refers to the person who conveys a message. As a matter of fact, when the believer asks Allah *the Almighty* to make him with those who bear witness to the truth, this means that he is requesting for himself a place alongside the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous. We should know that 'martyrdom' does not only mean that a person shall die in war; rather, it conveys the meaning of giving testimony. The same actually applies to those martyrs who sacrifice their lives for the sake of belief, for they are also viewed as giving their testimony to the fact that the reward they are going to receive in the Hereafter is more precious than everything in life which is a practical testimony.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ وَنَطْمَعُ أَنْ يُدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٤﴾

Why should we not believe in God and in the Truth that has come down to us, when we long for our Lord to include us in the company of the righteous?’ [84] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 84)

This particular verse under discussion includes a rhetorical exclamatory style which indicates that we must know for certain that attaining faith in Allah *the Almighty* is something which is for our own good because when we believe in Him *Glorified is He* He consequently confers His Favours, Graces, and Blessings upon us. That is why we should be fully aware of the important fact that belief is not meant to restrict our freedom or even prevent us from (lawfully) satisfying our desires, but rather, it is intended to make us enjoy freedom and satisfy our desires in a rational way which benefits us even after death.

So, it is clear that religion offers nothing but rational benefit. In this regard, it is important to know that a wise man shall benefit from his life in a manner that does not harm anyone; yet, in case this benefit does harm him or even others, Islam judges it unlawful and orders us to refrain from it. We should also take into account that one may not be destined to receive benefit or does not even desire it. In addition, the wise is the one who gives precedence to the benefit of others rather than his.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. A beggar may come to you asking for food because he has not eaten for two days. You have nothing but one pound in your pocket and you give it to him; this clearly means that you prefer him to yourself, thus you will fall under the saying of Allah in the chapter of *al-Hashr* in which Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘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).

By doing so, one follows the example of the Helpers (*Al-Ansar*, Medinan Muslims) who welcomed the Immigrants (*Al-Muhajirun*, Meccan Muslims) whose pure faith caused them to love all those who shared it and who

harboured no envy or hatred for the things which were given to the Immigrants such as battle spoils and the like. As matter of fact, the Helpers' ultimate objective was to please the Immigrants. In doing so, they preferred the Immigrants to themselves, giving from their properties even though they were in dire need, meaning that the Helpers freely chose not to fall under the category of misers. That is why Allah *the Almighty* saved them from the evil of miserliness, thus they became counted among the triumphant. As for the one who spends a pound in charity, Allah *Glorified is He* will reward him tenfold which is a considerable benefit. In the same connection, we should be fully aware of the fact that when the Sacred Law commands us to lower our gazes from unlawfully looking at other people's female relatives, this clearly means that we, by doing so, are preventing others from doing the same with our female relatives, which is a considerable benefit as well. So, it is unreasonable to think that religion restricts freedom, which is entirely not true; religion is actually intended to make us enjoy freedom and satisfy our desires in a rational way which benefits us even after death, and it also prevents us from foolish benefit.

I always like to give this example: suppose that a man has two sons, one of whom rises early and does what his father taught him. He makes ablution and prays, then goes to school after breakfast. As for the other son, he gets up late and goes out from the house to the coffee shop. Both sons want to bring themselves benefit but in different forms—the first boy wants to get the benefit in the long run, while the other wants to obtain immediate benefit. Ten years later, the first son graduates, becomes successful and is happy in life, while the other son becomes a parasite and is unsuccessful. That is to say, both of them sought benefit but in different ways.

At this point, I would like to stress the fact that we all love ourselves but in different ways; some may show this love in such way that makes them attain a long-lasting benefit to the extent that they may gain the reward of martyrs—a matter that is only achieved by being righteous—yet, there are others who mistakenly express this love by showing that they are the most greedy for life; they do this even though they actually die a thousand times before their death in the midst of this cowardliness; and thus they lose their dignity, whilst striving to preserve a life which they are powerless to extend even a single day. Here, Al-Mutanabbi, an Abbasid poet, may be quoted,

We all love life for ourselves,
And are keen and eager to preserve it:
The coward's love for life makes him cautious,
And the brave man's love for life leads him to war.

Therefore, the one who properly understands the ultimate objective of religion shall follow this pattern and act like those Christians who say: 'Why should we not believe in Allah and in the Truth that has come down to us'. That is why believers exert their utmost efforts to attain the higher spiritual rank of true believers. As for the Allah's words, 'we long for our Lord to include us in the company of the righteous' it indicates plainly that one of the essential characteristics of the believer is that he aspires to attain the rank of the righteous. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَنبَهُمُ اللَّهُ بِمَا قَالُوا جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

**For saying this, God has rewarded them with Gardens graced
with flowing streams, and there they will stay: that is the
reward of those who do good [85] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 85)**

This verse casts light on the 'Word of the Truth' that must be declared every time and place. It is uttered and declared by the powerful Abyssinian Negus to the prestigious men of Quraysh, who were steeped in falsehood; therefore, it is weighty. When the Negus listened to what has been revealed in the Quran on Mary *peace be upon her* he stated clearly that both the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and those of Prophet Jesus had come from one source. That is to say, he loudly and firmly declared the word of truth. At that point, we should fully realise that Allah *the Almighty* rewards well those who support the truth, even with a word, for He *Glorified is He* is the All-Thankful Who gives much in return for little. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Generous Who multiplies the reward of the doers of good.

Then, we should know well that speech, out of the fact that it has to do with behaviour, is of considerable importance. The words of the Negus were great, but he did not live long enough to continue to practise what he had said

and believed in. As a result of the truthful testimony he gave, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him to offer Umm Habiba *may Allah be pleased with her* his bid of marriage. The Negus then married her to him *peace and blessings be upon him* and even gave her dowry from his own property. Shortly after, he died. The rulings and teachings of Islam had not yet reached him so that he could practise them; therefore, it was enough for him to have said those words; a point which is proved by the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* offered the absentee funeral prayer for him when he died.

Let us offer another example to illustrate this point. Mukhayriq was a wealthy Jew whose heart was filled with Islam and belief, which is why he told the Jews that he would support Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with all his money and power. So, he went out to fight alongside Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he was martyred, although he had never offered a single Islamic prayer in his life. Thus, it is clear now that 'to speak the truth is to take the first step on the way of action'.

Back to the words of Allah *the Almighty* "For saying this, Allah has rewarded them with Gardens graced with flowing streams"; they indicate clearly that Allah *the Almighty* wants to strongly emphasise the fact that every matter of belief, even speech is judged perfect or not in the light of the circumstances surrounding their practise. For example, we know for certain that believers, while in Mecca, used to practise their faith with speech because most of the rulings were not revealed yet during that particular period, which is why Allah *Glorified is He* rewarded the believers simply for declaring the word of belief. This actually happened even though Allah *the Almighty* during that particular period of Mecca had not yet given the command to Prophet Muhammad to convey the Message to all the people of Quraysh; the command by virtue of which he *peace and blessings be upon him* was ordered to warn his nearest relations, 'And warn, (O Muhammad), your closest kindred' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 214).

Based on this, Allah *the Almighty* rewarded these people with the best of rewards and even called them *Muhsinin* (translated as 'doers of good'). This was also the case with the action of the Negus; he embraced the faith without even being called to it; he had done so even before Messenger Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him sent messages to the kings inviting them to belief, which is why Muslim scholars opine that the Negus was a doer of good because he embraced faith before he was even asked to do so. Here is a very important point, that is, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks about one of the ranks of faith, He *Glorified is He* also presents the contrasting image so that the advice is useful and constructive. So, if He *the Almighty* speaks about the denizens of paradise, He follows this by speaking of the denizens of hell, and vice-versa. As a matter of fact, when He *the Almighty* does so, the human soul will be able to properly understand the idea and its opposite. He *the Almighty* says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَحِيمِ

Those who reject the truth and deny Our messages will be the inhabitants of Hellfire [86] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 86)

In the Arabic language, the three words ‘*sahib*’, ‘*suhbah*’ and ‘*ashab*’ all impart the meaning of the company of others, an act which is subject to man’s free choice, for we have never heard that someone has been forced to become the friend of another.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Those who reject the truth and deny Our Messages will be the inhabitants of Hellfire,’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 86), it indicates that there is a mutual affection between the fire and its denizens, but this is not the intended meaning. As a matter of fact, this particular part of the verse may indicate that Allah *the Almighty* mocks at them. Another possible interpretation is that those people who deny the Truth will live eternally in the hellfire.

Having shed light on the affairs of the polytheists, the Jews and the Christians, Allah *Glorified is He* moves to talk about the believers. In doing so, He first clears up our minds by removing from them all that is connected to the deniers of the truth and their deviant ways, and then He conveys His Rulings and Teachings to us. Allah *Glorified is He* has actually done this when He began this chapter by ordering us to fulfil our obligations, ‘O you who have believed, fulfil (all) contracts. Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock except for that which is recited to you (in this Quran) - hunting not being permitted while you are in the state of *ihram* (ritual consecration). Indeed, Allah ordains what He intends’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 1).

As for the covenant of faith in particular, it is wholly superior to the falsehood of the polytheists. In addition, it has nothing to do with false statements of the Jews and Christians. Having instructed the believers to fulfil their obligation, Allah *the Almighty* then commands them to keep to the way of guidance by means of which the course of life will run smoothly. It is taken for granted that life is first and foremost preserved by food and drink, which is why He *Glorified is He* then allowed the believers to only eat the flesh of every beast that feeds on plants: 'Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock except for that which is recited to you (in this Quran)' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1).

Having instructed man how to preserve his life, Allah *Glorified is He* moves to state that believers are not allowed to eat certain kinds of animals. Here arises a very important question, which is: 'Why did Allah *the Almighty* create such animals which He declared unlawful?' If we answer this question in the light of our daily life, we will find that every manufacturer specifies the characteristics of the thing he makes. For example, the manufacturer of a plane designs his plane and precisely specifies the particular kind of fuel it runs with, so it cannot run on the fuel specified for cars. As long as man-made machines themselves get out of order when we misuse them, it thus goes without saying that those who believe that Allah *the Almighty* has created anything in this life for no use are mistaken; such creatures must have been created to perform a particular role in the universe, although we might not know how they are beneficial to us. The venom of snakes is a case in point. Even though it can kill man, Allah *the Almighty* inspired them to use it in getting rid of some microbes.

Therefore, it is clear that Allah *the Almighty* has created the universe by due measure. Let us offer another example to illustrate this point; we see crocodiles lying on the shores with birds in their mouths pecking at the food between their teeth, yet the crocodiles do not harm them in the slightest because these birds, out of the Great Wisdom of Allah alert the crocodile to the presence of hunters. That is to say that these particular birds obtain their sustenance and meanwhile protect the crocodile's life. The same applies to electricity, which is highly beneficial to us, yet if we misuse it, it causes death and destruction.

Further, we should stress the point that one should not ask why Allah *Glorified is He* made certain things unlawful to man. That is because everything

in this life is created by due measure and thus has a role to perform, although we might be unaware of that role. In the same connection, it is not right to use means in place of ends. By making things lawful or unlawful, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted man to get benefit from what is good for him. For example, the wisdom behind the prohibition of eating pork is that Allah *the Almighty* created pigs to consume and get rid of microbes, so man is in no way allowed to turn the means into ends. Here, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that modern scientific discoveries prove the truthfulness and veracity of Islam day after day.

Let us offer a striking example to illustrate this point; we find that diseases spread widely in those communities which eat pork and drink wine to the extent that there is a certain disease called ‘cirrhosis of the liver’ spreading in those lands. Here is a very good question, that is, ‘were we to postpone obeying the Order of Allah *the Almighty* on the prohibition of eating pork until laboratories were built?! Or was it enough for us to keep ourselves from what He *Glorified is He* made unlawful?’ It goes without saying that we must obey the Divine Orders for our own safety. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We will show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?’ (*Fussilat*: 53) In this regard, it is important to know that every day reveals to us a sign which confirms the veracity and truthfulness of Islam. So, no one should ask, ‘Why did Allah *the Almighty* create these creatures which He Himself declared forbidden?’ Once again, we stress the fact that they were created to serve as means, not ends. For example, Allah *the Almighty* created petroleum for us to extract fuel from it, but can any of us drink petrol? Hence, it is clear that declaring things lawful or unlawful is intended to achieve the maximum benefit for mankind, which is why whoever disregards this has no one to blame but himself. In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “Have you seen what Allah has sent down to you of provision of which you have made (some) lawful and (some) unlawful?”’ ‘Say, “Has Allah permitted you (to do so), or do you invent (something) about Allah?”’ (*Yunus*: 59)

This aforementioned verse of the chapter of *Yunus* tells us that Allah *the Almighty* is rebuking people for declaring unlawful what He *Glorified is He* made lawful and for declaring lawful what He *the Almighty* made unlawful.

That is to say, that doing something like this is against the Will of Allah *the Almighty* who knows best what is beneficial for man and what is not beneficial for him. Let us offer an example of what the Arabs used to do with certain kinds of camels which are *al-bahir*, *as-sa'iba* and *al-wasila* to fully illustrate this point. For *al-bahira*, a she-camel whose ears would be clipped so that no one would harm it, especially after it gave birth to five litters, the final being male; the Arabs used to leave it to graze freely without being mounted or milked. In addition, it would not be denied either pasture or water. They furthermore used to offer it as sacrifice for the gods. If we think carefully about the beneficiaries of such acts, we would find out that they are the idolatrous priests. The same applies to *as-sa'iba*; they voluntarily used to let it roam free. In addition, no one was allowed to mount it or even milk it. Once again, it was the priests who benefitted from this act as well. As for *al-wasila*, it is a she-camel born alongside a male, so they believed that it was connected with the bull born with it, which is why they would not slaughter the male for their gods. Likewise, they used to set a bull free after it had sired ten litters, and they used to say about it: 'Its back is protected', so it would not be mounted, loaded or prevented from any pasture or water. That is why Allah *the Almighty* reproached all of those customs, since Allah *Glorified is He* did not instruct us to act likewise.

In this regard, we should take into account that Allah, out of His great wisdom, made blood and carrion unlawful because He is the One Who declares what is lawful and what is not. In addition, sometimes we are able to define the Divine Wisdom behind a particular legal obligation, while other times we find it difficult to do so with another obligation. That is why He *the Almighty* says:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ ءَامَنُوْا لَا تَحْرِمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَاۤ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا
تَعْتَدُوْا ۗ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ

You who believe, do not forbid the good things God has made lawful to you – do not exceed the limits: God does not love those who exceed the limits [87] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 87)

So, it is crystal clear now that Allah *the Almighty* is the Only One Who has the right to declare things lawful or unlawful. That is to say that man has

nothing at all to do in this regard; for man sometimes deviates the way by declaring lawful what Allah made unlawful or by declaring unlawful what He *Glorified is He* made lawful.

Therefore, we must beware of forbidding what Allah has permitted or permitting what He *the Almighty* has forbidden. This point is fully understood in the following: we should not believe that Allah has declared what is unlawful to be lawful; we also should not say that Allah has declared what is unlawful to be lawful; we should not refrain either from doing what Allah has permitted out of the suspicion that it is forbidden; we should not pass a verdict on the prohibition of something, although Allah has declared it lawful. Finally, we should not forbid ourselves that which Allah has made lawful for us. Hence, it is prohibited for one to make a vow not to eat mutton or oranges because it is not permitted to make such a vow. This is based on the *Shari'a* ruling that forbidding things which Allah has permitted by means of vows is itself forbidden, a point which is definitively proved by the Quran in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O Prophet, why do you prohibit (yourself from) what Allah has made lawful for you, seeking the approval of your wives? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (*at-Tahrim*: 1). Thus, we must fully understand this point and then recognise its different stages, as follows: do not believe; do not say; do not refrain; do not give a verdict; and do not vow. Why not? That is because it is a kind of transgression.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'You who believe, do not forbid the good things Allah has made lawful to you- do not exceed the limits: Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 87) So, what is transgression? It is to go beyond the bounds of what Allah has forbidden or of what He *the Almighty* has permitted. That is to say, Allah *Glorified is He* loves those who stay within His bounds. That is why He *the Almighty* orders us in a particular position in the Quran not to go near to His limit: 'These are the limits (set by) Allah, so do not approach them' (*al-Baqara*: 187). Yet in another verse He *the Almighty* orders us not to exceed them: 'And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers' (*al-Baqara*: 229). So, what is the difference between these two orders? The meaning of these two orders goes as follows: with respect to things which are forbidden, we must not approach them; yet,

things which are permitted, we must not transgress them. This point is even evident in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he says: 'What is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, but between them are certain doubtful things which many people do not know. So, he who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honour blameless. But he who falls into doubtful things falls into that which is unlawful, just as a shepherd who grazes his cattle in the vicinity of a pasture declared prohibited (by the king); he is likely to stray into the pasture. Mind you, every king has a protected pasture and Allah's involved limits are those which He has declared unlawful. Verily, there is a piece of flesh in the body, if it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Verily, it is the heart.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, it is clear that every being in the universe has special qualities and a particular role to perform, which is why we must not turn the means into ends, for there are many creatures that are originally created to serve as means and thus should not be used as ends. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* commands us to take that from which we can directly benefit and leave aside those things which He has forbidden. Pigs are originally created to rid us of microbes, so we are not allowed to eat them. Yet, if people do so, it means that they turn the means into an end which is against the general maxim on using things in the light of the main reason behind their creation. Here, we should be fully aware of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who sets everything in order in the universe.

This is also proved by the fact that today's modern scientific discoveries reveal day after day the veracity and truthfulness of the religion of Islam, to the extent that they incline to it. As a matter of fact, Allah's judgement of things as lawful or unlawful suffices us, avoiding the hardships of attempting to reach the deep wisdom behind the permissibility or impermissibility of such things. That is why we, Muslims, firmly believe that Allah *the Almighty* based on His great wisdom, judged things lawful or unlawful; at a particular point in time, we will be fully aware of the deep and great wisdom behind such permissibility or impermissibility; a point which is proven by the words

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

of Allah *the Almighty* in which He says that He shall make them fully understand His Messages through what they perceive in the utmost horizons of the universe and within themselves, so that it will become clear to them that this revelation is indeed the truth. He *the Almighty* then adds that He is witness to everything 'But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?' (*Fussilat*: 53)

So, we reach the conclusion that we should not believe in the permissibility of what Allah has forbidden, neither should we say something like that, nor should we refrain from it or even issue verdicts based on it. Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His words, '...do not exceed the limits: Allah does not love those who exceed the limits.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 87) We have previously explained the meaning of the word *al-i'tida'* (translated as 'exceeding the limits') and said that it means to go beyond and violate the bounds in matters of permissibility and impermissibility. We should take into account that Allah *the Almighty* loves those who do not exceed His bounds. So, one should not even approach that which is unlawful, lest his soul incites him to commit sin. Moreover, by keeping oneself away from approaching what is unlawful, the believer guards himself against doubtful matters.

Once again, it is Allah *the Creator* Who has the absolute right to judge things lawful or unlawful, which is why we, the creatures, must obey His orders so that the course of life runs smoothly. This is exactly akin to what we do when we invent a machine which helps us make products with less effort. But when the manufacturer makes this machine, he also precisely defines the kind of fuel it runs on, which is why when someone uses a different kind of fuel, the machine breaks down. So, how do we think the Law of the All-Wise will look like?

As a matter of fact, when He *Glorified is He* tells us that the course of life will run smoothly only by accepting what He has made lawful and by keeping away from that which is forbidden, this means that we must obey Him *Glorified is He* for He is the One Who created us and knows best what is beneficial or not to us. In addition, we should stress that no one in the universe has ever claimed to have created his own self, which is why we must entrust the affairs of sustenance and the preservation of our lives to Him *the Almighty and the Creator*. That is to say that we must adhere to what He has declared lawful

and keep away from what is unlawful, for this actually achieves the maximum benefit for us in this life. Therefore, it is clear now that we are allowed to do particular things while not allowed to do other things. However, there are things which are not judged lawful or unlawful which is the *mubah* meaning that one will not be blamed for doing or not doing them. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* wants to tell us that since He is our Creator, He knows best what is beneficial and unbeneficial for us, which is why if we go against His Rulings, we will be judged 'transgressors'.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* in this verse under discussion addresses those who believe, saying to them that He created them and sustained them out of nothing, so that their lives will be preserved, which is why the believers must accept and act upon the Rulings of Allah *the Almighty*. That is to say that they are not allowed to deprive themselves of the good things of life which He has made lawful to them. In other words, Allah *the Almighty* says that we must act upon the instructions and teachings He gave us if we want the course of life to run smoothly. In this regard, if we carefully reflect upon the words of Allah *the Almighty* in which He tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with Allah; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians, 'for there are among them people devoted to learning-(scholars) and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance (*al-Ma'ida*: 82). We find that He *Glorified is He* gives us the reasons why they are to be praised and why they are close in affection to us. He *the Almighty* says 'among them are priests and monks and they are not arrogant' (*al-Ma'ida*: 82) When the Companions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard this verse, they wept copiously to the extent that ten of them, including Abu Bakr As-Siddiq, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab, 'Ali ibn Abi Taleb, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari, Salim (slave of Abu Hudhayfa), Al-Miqdad ibn Al-Aswad, Salman Al-Farisi and Ma'qil ibn Muqrin, gathered in the house of 'Uthman ibn Madh'un Al-Jamhi, decided to fast and not to break their fast, to offer prayer all night without sleeping, not to eat meat and fat and to remain celibate all their lives, that is, they wanted to lead an ascetic life. Yet, when news of that reached Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, he

called upon them, praised Allah and then said: 'What is the matter with people who say such and such? But I pray and I sleep, I fast and I break my fast and I marry women. Whoever turns away from my *Sunnah* is not of me.'⁽¹⁾ This statement of Prophet Muhammad goes hand in hand with the verses of the Quran under discussion in which He *the Almighty* prompts: 'O you, who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 87)

Careful reflection on the statement of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clearly indicates that it is logical and reasonable because if those Companions who decided to act like that wanted to refrain from the good things that Allah has permitted to lead an ascetic life like those who came before them, does that mean they will not offer prayer? Indeed, they will pray. We know for certain that prayer requires doing certain actions, which is why we need energy to perform them. In addition, we are required to cover our private parts while offering prayer; an act which cannot be fulfilled except by clothes; but from where can one get clothes? If we carefully examine the way clothes are made, we will reach the conclusion that it is a complex process which go through different stages including raising animals from which the wool will be taken, spinning the wool so that it can be woven; sending it to factories to tailor it, etc., all things which require us to exert great efforts. However, one is not aware of this complex process unless he is in need of clothes. So, if you, O man, want to spend all your time in worship, then you must not benefit from the work of those who act upon the teachings of Islam and follow the Divine Guidance, seeking to earn their living. Wrong are those who think that life goes like this!

Moreover, does the one who devotes himself solely to worship not have to eat? Indeed he does so that he has the energy to be able to can pray. We all know perfectly well how a loaf of bread is made. It is true that one can go to the bakery and easily buy his bread, but the process of making bread is complex and lengthy and goes through different stages, including getting the flour from the mill, which, in turn, gets the wheat from the warehouse. As for wheat, it was planted, ploughed, and harvested by farmers who, in doing so,

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari*

had to use machinery and fertilizers; that is, it is a process which requires exerting great efforts.

Further, it is evident now that man needs to do all those activities so that he can offer his prayer. At that point, we should say to those who want to withdraw from life that you are in no allowed to get benefit from the work of those who participate in making the course of life run smoothly. Here, we should stress a very important *Usuli*⁽¹⁾ maxim which reads, 'That without which an obligation cannot be fulfilled is itself an obligation'. Therefore, if the ruler sees that there is a particular job which is essential for the preservation of the human existence and for attaining a higher spiritual rank, but people are not eager to take it, he has the absolute right to command some to do so. In truth, every field of industry is jurisprudentially judged as 'a communal obligation', that is, if some do it, the rest of the community will not be blamed for not doing it, otherwise, the entire community will be blamed for not doing it.


Therefore, it is clear that we must exert our efforts so that the course of life runs smoothly. In this vein, I would like to stress the fact that all actions of life are integrated and complementary to each other. That is why Allah *the Almighty* orders the believers not to deprive themselves from the good things of life which He has made lawful for them because if they do so, it means that they take the role of the Lawgiver, thus transgressing His bounds by infringing His absolute and exclusive right to declare things lawful or unlawful.

Once again, out of Allah's great wisdom, Allah *Glorified is He* declares things lawful or unlawful for man's own good. Likewise, we should firmly believe that the existence of such forbidden things will help us get benefit, even if not directly. We have previously given the example of the snake and said that we can extract therapy from its venom. That is to say that the snake itself was, in essence, created to serve man. That is why we firmly believe that all the creatures in the universe are created to serve man. So, it is not right to ask Allah *the Almighty* why He has created such things, although He declared them prohibited.

(1) The name *Usuli* derives from the term *Usoul al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence). In *Usuli* thought, there are four valid sources of law: the Quran, Hadith, *ijma'* and '*aql*. *Ijma'* refers to a unanimous consensus.

Thus, we should not exceed the limits by declaring lawful what Allah has made unlawful or by declaring unlawful what Allah has made lawful. It goes without saying that the course of life will run smoothly in case we do not transgress the limits. When we consider the jungle, we see that every animal has a particular role to play. This role aims mainly at improving man's life. Here, we should stress the fact that when Allah *Glorified is He* has judged something to be forbidden, it does not mean that man will not get benefit from it; rather, he will do so but not in a direct way. As for that kind of provision which man gets directly, it includes what he eats and wears. As a matter of fact, we can also get this kind of provision through indirect means. Likewise, those things which Allah has declared unlawful are viewed as means to achieving the good of man, but not in a direct way.

Back to the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'You who believe, do not forbid the good things Allah has made lawful to you-do not exceed the limits...'; it issues an order to the believers not to judge lawful what Allah judged unlawful or to judge unlawful what Allah made lawful. It also gives an order to the believers to eat, without any extravagance, from the good things which He made lawful to them—a point which is affirmed in another verse in the Quran in which He *the Almighty* says: 'O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid (mosque), and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.' (*al-A'raf*: 31) Allah *the Almighty* then says:


 وَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ

**But eat the lawful and good things that God
provides for you. Be mindful of God, in whom you
believe [88] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 88)**

Before delving into the explanation of this verse, we shall first know what is meant by *ar-rizq* (translated as 'provision' or 'sustenance'). *Ar-rizq* is a term encompassing all what one benefits from including food, drink, clothes, education and moral characters of forbearance, bravery, etc. However, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'but eat the lawful and good things that Allah provides for you,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 88) refers mainly to food. That is to say, we must eat what is lawfully earned, which is the 'lawful provision'. This actually

means that there is another kind of provision which is obtained through unlawful means—the 'unlawful provision'. For instance, when a thief steals something, this means that he gets benefit through an unlawful way. Had he been patient, he would have obtained what he wanted without resorting to such unlawful act. Another possible definition for the term *ar-rizq* is that it refers to the provision which Allah has judged lawful. Here, scholars differed over which of the two aforementioned definitions is more accurate. In this verse, He *the Almighty* says, 'but eat the lawful and good things that Allah provides for you.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 88) Now, it is of great importance to differentiate between the following two styles; that is, 'eat what Allah grants you' and 'eat the lawful and good things that Allah provides for you'. The first sentence means that we are to eat all the provision given to us by Allah, which is not right; that is because reality tells that we cannot eat it all, for we eat only some and use the other to get more of it. We should take into account that food is of two kinds: that which can be used to make more of itself and that from which no more can be made. If we, for example, apply this to flour, we will find that it cannot produce an ear of wheat, so we cannot get more of it. Moreover, if we apply this to wheat itself, we will find that if man eats all the wheat he has, he will be no longer able to get more of it, which is why we must eat some of it while keeping some. In this verse, we are clearly ordered to eat some of the provision which Allah gives us so that we can save the sources of our sustenance. If man were to eat all the wheat he had, what would happen when he wanted to farm again? Therefore, the preservation of life necessitates that we save some of our provisions so that we can use them to make more and, thereby, sustain our lives.

We can deduce from the aforementioned example that 'lawful provision' is of two kinds: that from which we can get more, and thus a portion of it must be kept to use it later; and that from which we cannot get more, such as flour. In the latter case, we can eat some and save some for our future use. Illustrating this fact, Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the chapter of *Yusuf* about the King's dream. He *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, I have seen (in a dream) seven fat cows being eaten by seven (that were) lean, and seven green spikes (of grain) and others (that were) dry. O eminent ones, explains to me my vision, if you should interpret visions.' (*Yusuf*: 43) However, the dream

interpreters were unable to do so and said to him: ‘They said, “(It is but) a mixture of false dreams, and we are not learned in the interpretation of dreams.”’ (*Yusuf*: 44) As a matter of fact, the answer given by the king’s dream interpreters indicates that they were very confused because if it was a confusing dream, then this would imply that it was meaningless, a point which was negated when they said that they had no deep knowledge of the real meaning of dreams. That is to say, the dream was eligible to be interpreted; yet, they were unable to do so. Here, we should stress a very important point that is, it is not a condition that the person who sees a dream must be righteous, a point which is proved by the fact that the one who sees the dream here is the king. A very good question arises: Why did Allah *the Almighty* inform the king of such topics? We say that Allah *Glorified is He* might allow a person to see a dream as a way of honouring him or as a way of honouring the person who interprets it. In our case, Allah wanted to honour Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* by enabling him to interpret the king’s dream. What was unusual about the dream is that the emaciated cows ate the fat ones which was interpreted by Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* as an indication that they would sow for seven consecutive years as usual. He followed it by instructing them to store all that they reap, left in the ear apart from the little they would eat. ‘Yusuf (Joseph) said, “You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat.”’ (*Yusuf*: 47) That is to say that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* ordered them to eat a very little portion of the wheat, and not to take too much of it so that they would be able to benefit from it during the seven hard years, i.e. the years of drought. This interpretation from Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* instructed them that they should keep some of the wheat to get more of it in the future. By the way, today’s scientific discoveries definitively prove that the best way to preserve wheat grains is to leave them in their ears—likewise, to leave the seeds in the pod. In truth, the interpretation given by Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was precise because he aimed at preserving people’s and livestock’s lives during the years of famine; people would eat the grain, whilst the livestock would eat the leftover straw. Allah *the Almighty* guided them through Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* to the essential means through which their lives would be

preserved. The verse indicates that Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* instructed them to eat a very little amount of the wheat and to store the greater portion in their ears during the years of ease. However, what about the years of drought and hardship? Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* told them that, after the good years, seven years of hardship would come which would consume all but a little of what they stored up for them. 'Then will come after that seven difficult (years) which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store' (*Yusuf*: 48).

That is to say that the people of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) would eat during the seven years of famine a lot of the grain they had put in the stores and, meanwhile, keep a little so that they could use it in farming and, consequently, get more of it. Thus, the particle *min* (translated as 'of') in Allah's words: 'And eat *min* what Allah has provided for you (which is) lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers' (*al-Ma'ida*: 88) conveys the meaning of 'some'; that is, that we are ordered to eat 'some' of the lawful things which Allah granted us. However, if these things are of the kind which can produce more of themselves, then their species will be preserved. Let us suppose that there is a man who has some melon seeds and he plants them. When the fruits come, he eats them all together with the seeds; then, what will he plant for the following year? As a matter of fact, this man should have saved some of the seeds to plant, and as well saved some of the melons to give to his neighbour or to the needy.

Therefore, this particular part of the verse could be explained to mean that we should consider the preservation of the species and that we should give the extra amount of our lawful provision to the needy. Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse, 'Be mindful of Allah, in whom you believe.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 88) This means that one will not be blamed if he is conscious and fearful of Allah *the Almighty* in whom he firmly believes. That is because when one believes in Him, it means that he entrusts his affairs to a Powerful God. It is shameful to capitulate to the command of someone who is your equal, but to obey and yield to the command of the One Who is Higher than you is nothing to be ashamed of; rather, it is a source of honour and dignity.

This point is also explained clearly in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* with the sorcerers. When Prophet Musa (Moses) cast down

his staff, the sorcerers saw that it turned into a snake moving quickly. Here, we should stress a very important point that is, when a sorcerer practises sorcery, he is fully aware of the fact that the item he used in his practise, does not change; rather, it is people's sights that are deceived by that. So, when the sorcerers of Pharaoh saw that Prophet Musa's staff had actually turned into a snake, they fully realised that this matter was beyond human capacity. Consequently, they declared their belief in Allah, Lord of all the worlds, and Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron): 'They said, "We have believed in the Lord of the worlds"' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 47-48). That is to say they knew perfectly well that what Prophet Musa (Moses) did was beyond any human power. Finally, we reach the conclusion that all what the sorcerers of Pharaoh had done with people was an act of deceiving of their sights (an illusion). This point is proved by the saying of Allah in which He *the Almighty* says: 'He said, "Rather, you throw." And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him from their magic that they were moving (like snakes)."' (*Ta Ha*: 66) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He said, "Throw," and when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them, and they presented a great (feat of) magic.' (*al-A'raf*: 116) As for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he threw down the staff for the first time, he was afraid when he realised that the staff has actually turned into a snake, moving quickly. When the sorcerers threw down their ropes and cords, they did not turn into real snake, but what they did was but an act of deceiving people's eyes.

Let us offer another example to illustrate this point. Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* sent a message to the Queen of Sheba, Bilqis, ordering her and her people not to exalt themselves before him and to come to him in submission, 'Be not haughty with me but come to me in submission (as Muslims).' (*an-Naml*: 31) The answer to this was: 'She said, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness (for) me."' (*an-Naml*: 32)

It is, at that point, that the leaders were fully aware of the fact that the issue was political in all. Then, Allah says: 'They said, "We are men of strength and of great military might, but the command is yours, so see what you will command."' (*an-Naml*: 33) The statement of those leaders indicates clearly that political opinions must be given by astute and experienced

politicians who are able to take into account all the circumstances, including the action and the reaction. That is why we find that Bilqis handled the matter from a political perspective. Thus, she sent Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* a very precious gift to examine him, believing that if he accepted her gift, this would mean that he was a man who sought only the desires and finery of this worldly life. But when her messengers came to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* with the gift, he rejected it and said: 'Do you people mean to add to my wealth?' Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* added that what Allah has given him was so much better than all that Allah has given them adding that they rejoice in this gift of theirs. Then Sulaiman (Solomon) asked Bilqis's messengers to go back to the people who have sent them because he, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would most certainly come upon them with forces which they would never be able to withstand and would, most certainly, cause them to be driven from that land of theirs disgraced and humbled. 'Return to them, for we will surely come to them with soldiers that they will be powerless to encounter, and we will surely expel them therefrom in humiliation, and they will be debased' (*an-Naml*: 36-37). At this point, Bilqis became fully aware that she had to surrender to Allah *the Almighty*.

Lastly, we reach the conclusion that one might feel humiliation if he receives the order from someone who is equal to him; however, if the order is from another who is of higher rank or authority, there will be no humiliation at all. Here, we should emphasise that Bilqis had turned to faith with dignity: 'She said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah, Lord of the worlds."' (*an-Naml*: 44)

We notice that she did not say that she had surrendered herself to Sulaiman (Solomon), but rather, she said that she had done so with Sulaiman, to Allah, Lord of all the worlds; there was no shame in her faith, so her people did not think that she had humiliated herself by allowing another human being to rule her; rather, both, she and Sulaiman (Solomon), were ruled by Allah, Lord of all the worlds which brings no shame at all.

Back to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*, 'But eat the lawful and good things that Allah provides for you. Be mindful of Allah, in whom you believe.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 88)

That is to say that you, believers, are supposed to accept all of the divine teachings and rulings by virtue of your belief. In other words, as long as you have faith and obey the command from Him, in whom you have faith, this means clearly that you are fully aware of the fact that you entrust your affairs to the Only One Who is worthy. We notice that this verse opens with highlighting the quality of belief in the believers. Also, it is concluded with casting light on the same attribute; what is the wisdom behind that? In the beginning of the verse, Allah addresses them with this quality as to encourage them to act upon the Divine Order given to them, whilst the conclusion of the verse bears witness to their firm belief. He *the Almighty* then says:

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا عَقَّدْتُمُ الْأَيْمَانَ
فَكَفَّرْتُمُوهُ إِطْعَامَ عَشْرَةِ مَسْكِينٍ مِنْ أَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعَمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ
أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ذَلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا
حَلَفْتُمْ وَاحْفَظُوا أَيْمَانَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

God does not take you [to task] for what is thoughtless in your oaths, only for your binding oaths: the atonement for breaking an oath is to feed ten poor people with food equivalent to what you would normally give your own families, or to clothe them, or to set free a slave – if a person cannot find the means, he should fast for three days. This is the atonement for breaking your oaths – keep your oaths. In this way God makes clear His revelations to you, so that you may be thankful [89] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 89)

Allah's verse Allah does not take you (to task) for what is thoughtless in your oaths...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89) indicates that the Arabic word *yu'akhidh* (translated as 'take to task') derives from the word *aakhadha* which means 'to take to task'. We should explain that there is a difference between *akhadha* and *aakhadha*. If you say, 'I took him to task,' using the word *akhadha*, this means that you punished him severely because he had not entered into any kind of good pact with you; but if you use the word *aakhadha*, this suggests that there is some kind of interaction, which is why Allah *the Almighty* takes the disbelievers to task severely. But the question to be asked here is why would Allah *the Almighty* take the believers to task? It is because the believers are part

of the covenant, while the disbelievers are not; therefore, He *Glorified is He* takes them to task in the manner of a Mighty, Powerful One. Further, it is clear that there is a difference between the act of *al-mu'aakhadha* and that of *al-akhdh*. *Al-mu'aakhadha* means to punish someone for violating the pact between you and him by committing a crime which is forbidden under such pact; that is, he will not be punished unless he commits a crime which is forbidden under this pact. In addition, a prior warning must be issued before the meting out of the punishment. Therefore, the civil law states: 'There shall be no crime or penalty except by virtue of the law.' So, before issuing the punishment, there has to be a law which clearly states the crime and its punishment because to legally stipulate that an action is a crime, makes a person think twice about doing it. But if there is no law stating that the action is a crime, the person will be free to do it or not do it because it is permissible.

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Allah does not take you (to task) for what is thoughtless in your oaths...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89) clearly indicates the covenant made between Allah and the believers. As for the Arabic word *al-laghaw* (translated as 'thoughtless'), we find that it means to utter something with the tongue without the heart having firmly intended it. For example, people in Egypt, by virtue of their vernacular language, used to swear to Allah to do something or not. For example, if a person asks someone to have lunch with him, he might say: 'By Allah, you must come to have lunch with us', and so on. This is the meaning of *al-laghaw*. That is speaking without the heart firmly intending what has been said. Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who created us, and thus He knows us best; He *Glorified is He* out of His Eternal Knowledge, knows that sometimes we say things we do not mean. This is also proved when a mother supplicates against her only son, but she does so only with her tongue, while her heart rejects it; that is why we say in a popular proverb: 'I might supplicate against my son, but I hate those who say, *Amen*!'

So, out of the fact that He *the Almighty* knows us best, He knows that sometimes the tongue utters words without the heart having intended them, which is why He *the Almighty* says, 'Allah does not take you (to task) for what is thoughtless in your oaths...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89). Yet, He *the Almighty* adds that He will take us to task for our binding oath. When we see the word 'yet', we know that it indicates *al-istidrak* which means the affirmation of what is

suspected to be wrong or the negation of what is suspected to be right. As for the word '*aqqadtum* (translated as 'binding'), it indicates that the action is done with the firm resolve of the heart and that, before speaking the oath, the person has deliberated the matter in his mind and made the decision to take such position.

Hence, *al-laghaw* means to speak with your tongue what your heart does not intend. We gave an example of the woman who supplicates against her only son. As a matter of fact, we, in our daily life, may thoughtlessly say words and statements which may apparently indicate disbelief, but Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tells us that the actions must be based on sincere intentions. That is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* when commenting about that man who said, 'O Allah, you are my slave and I am your Lord, 'said: 'He commits this mistake out of extreme joy.'⁽¹⁾

Out of Allah's Infinite Mercy, He *Glorified is He* pardons our thoughtless oaths—point proved by the verse under discussion. As for the word '*aqqadtum* (translated as 'binding') it indicates that someone is utterly determined to do a particular act. When we want to exaggerate an action, we use a word which gives its perfect meaning very clearly. Bear in mind that we realise that the word '*aqqada* is not the same as '*aqada* (they both mean 'to swear', but ('*aqqada*) is stronger); the word '*aqqada* means that a person has sworn a firm, binding and solemn oath. Another example of this kind of linguistic emphasis is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *Yusuf*, wherein He *Glorified is He* says that she, Egypt's Chief's wife, *ghallaqat* (bolted) the doors.' She closed the doors and said, "Come, you.'" (*Yusuf*: 23) Someone might ask, 'would it not have been enough for Allah *the Almighty* just to say *ghalaqat* instead of *ghallaqat*?' We say: No, because He *Glorified is He* used the verb which strongly emphasised how firmly the door was bolted, since a door could be bolted in several different ways; it could be simply closed with the latch or with a bolt. However, using this verb in this context, indicates plainly that Egypt's Chief's wife bolted the doors very firmly and securely. The same applies to the Allah's words in this context; that is, the use of the phrase '*aqqadtum al-ayman*' means that you made your oaths and you

(1) Narrated by Muslim

mean it sincerely in your hearts. The particular meaning given by this verse is identical to that in a verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara* when Allah says: 'Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.' (*al-Baqara*: 225)

Concerning this particular verse of the chapter of *al-Baqara*, we notice that the hearts are said to have 'conceived' (*kasabat* which literally means 'acquired'); so, what do hearts acquire in such a situation? We know that the word *al-kasb* may indicate several meanings; it may give the meaning of earning money and adding it to one's capital and it may also indicate that someone has made a solemn and firm oath; that means he affirms with his heart what he swears. In other words, the oath is made by the tongue and the heart together.

As for the cause of revelation for this verse, it is narrated that when Allah's words were revealed, 'you, who believe, do not forbid the good things Allah has made lawful to you- do not exceed the limits: Allah does not love those who exceed the limits. But eat the lawful and good things that Allah provides for you. Be mindful of Allah, in whom you believe' (*al-Ma'ida*: 87-88), those Companions of Messenger Muhammad, who forswore good food, clothing, as well as marriage, and swore oaths to that effect, wondered how they could expiate their oaths; thus, this verse was revealed. This verse indicates that the forswearing of what is lawful is a thoughtless oath which does not need to be expiated. Nevertheless, we stress that one is not allowed to swear to do or not do something while he does not have the right to make such oath. For example, if one says: 'By Allah, I will not pray', this kind of oath cannot be judged as binding and thus needs no expiation. But if he says: 'By Allah, I will drink wine', we tell him to follow what the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'When you swear an oath and consider something else to be better than it, make expiation for your oath and do the thing that is better.'⁽¹⁾ In this verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...but He will impose blame upon you for (breaking) what you intended of oaths...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89). Therefore, the ruling on binding oaths is totally different from that on those made thoughtlessly. As for binding oaths, Allah

(1) Narrated by Muslim

the Almighty states that He will take to task those who make them and do not keep them. Yet, here arises a very good question: how would Allah *the Almighty* take them to task, although He does not explicitly state the details of the punishment? We say that Allah *the Almighty* out of His Infinite Mercy has concealed the punishment. In addition, He *the Almighty* has given us a way to avoid punishment by means of expiation; a point which is clear in the saying of Allah, ‘...the atonement for breaking an oath is to feed ten poor people with food equivalent to what you would normally give your own families or to clothe them, or to set free a slave— if a person cannot find the means, he should fast for three days...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 89). Thus, the atonement is a way of removing the punishment. Here, another good question arises which is: does this mean that one must make expiation as long as he has sworn an oath? The answer is definitely no, because the expiation is only required from those who break their oaths and fail to honour them. The expiation includes feeding ten needy persons with more or less the same food as you are wont to give to your own families, or clothing them, or freeing a slave or fasting three days for those who cannot afford to do the rest.

Scholars believe that defining the suitable kind of atonement for breaking an oath differs according to the condition of the one who breaks it. That is, it differs from one person to another. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point. It is narrated that the caliph of Andalusia broke an oath and wanted to make expiation, so he went to the judge Mundhir ibn Sa’id and asked him how he could expiate it, whereupon the judge said to him: ‘You must fast for three days.’ Another man was sitting there at that particular time and gestured to the judge, but Mundhir ignored his gesture. When the session ended, the judge went out along with that man who asked him, ‘O father of Sa’id, I have a problem with the judgement you gave. Why did not you tell the caliph that the expiation for an oath is to free a slave or to feed ten poor people?’ In response to this question, Mundhir replied: ‘Do you think that the Commander of the Faithful would be deterred by asking him to free a slave or feed ten poor people?’

This shows us that Judge Mundhir ibn Sa’id had thought hard to choose the expiation which would be the best deterrent; a matter which teaches us that the expiation is meant to rebuke the soul and, at the same time, efface the

sin. That is why Judge Mundhir ibn Sa'id felt that the rebuke was more crucial than the effacement of the sin because the caliph would not have been inconvenienced by feeding or clothing ten poor people, or even by freeing even more than one slave. Here, we should stress that the majority of scholars are of the opinion that one can choose fasting only when either feeding, clothing or freeing slaves is not possible.

As for feeding ten needy people, with more or less the same food we usually give to our own families, someone might ask if the equivalence refers to the quantity or the kind of food. We say that it should be considered both the quantity and the kind; if a man eats a single piece of bread for a meal, but he knows that someone else in his family eats three pieces, the average here is two pieces of bread, along with whatever is eaten with the bread, such as meat and fat. The same is true for clothing; the man who expiates his oath must clothe ten needy people with clothes that cover their private parts and can be used for prayer, such as a sarong and robe, or a long shirt and turban, or any other clothes which cover them properly. Finally, we find that the expiation of freeing a slave comes in the second-to-last position. Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'If a person cannot find the means, he should fast for three days.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89) This obviously indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* did not arrange these means of expiation in order of preference, but rather, we should choose from among them that which well suit our conditions.

Allah *the Almighty* instructs us, '...keep our oaths.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89) Thus, we must not break our oaths; but how can we keep them? We say that, first of all, one should not let an oath pass his lips rashly; secondly, one must try his best to fulfil his oath. This means that one should not swear an oath with his tongue and affirm it with his heart unless he is sure that he will make every effort to fulfil what he has sworn to do; this is the meaning of Allah's words, 'and keep your oaths.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 89)

Then, He *Glorified is He* concludes the verse with, 'In this way Allah makes clear His Revelations to you, so that you may be thankful.' To be grateful or thankful means that the one who receives blessings should praise the one who gave them to him. It is as though these rulings deserve thanks from us because they mean that thoughtless oaths are not punished. In addition, it allows the

expiation for those oaths which are sworn in earnest; two matters for which we should be thankful to Allah *the Almighty* since they relieve our hardships. The True Lord *Glorified is He* and then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَمُ رِجْسٌ
مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

You who believe intoxicants and gambling, idolatrous practices, and [divining with] arrows are repugnant acts – Satan's doing – shun them so that you may prosper [90] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 90)

‘Restriction’, such as when we say, ‘Zayd is nothing but hard working.’ This means that we have restricted Zayd’s character to that of hard working. But if we say, ‘None but Zayd is hard-working’, this means that we have restricted the attribute of hard working to Zayd alone. When you restrict a person to a particular attribute, they call this ‘restricting the described to a description’. When you say ‘Zayd is nothing but a poet’, this means that Zayd is a poet only; he is not a writer or an orator. But if you say, ‘No one is a poet but Zayd’, this means that there are no poets except Zayd; it is as if you are denying that all the others are poets and saying that Zayd alone is a poet; and he might also be a writer, an orator and a scholar alongside being a poet. So, when you see the word *innama*, know that it is a way of expressing restriction.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah), and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) This means that intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and the divining arrows are all —defilement, repugnant acts from the works of Satan, and a ‘loathsome thing’ is something which is vile, foul and impure. Foulness and impurity are things which can be physical, such as the intoxicants, or intangible, such as stone altars and the divining arrows. In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* groups the two things together. He does not specify whether ‘intoxicants’ means wine made of grapes or cider made of apples, but rather, He says ‘intoxicants’ to mean everything which intoxicates and clouds the mind. Some scholars are confused by how this

verse was revealed in a place where grape wine did not exist because they imagined that only wine intoxicates the mind, but the True Lord *Glorified is He* here announces absolute prohibition of all that intoxicates the mind. Why, then, are intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and the divining arrows are all repugnant acts from the works of Satan?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* created man and made him His vicegerent on earth and subjected everything in existence to him; then, Allah asked him to exclusively worship Him and to thrive on this earth. He *Glorified is He* wanted to ensure the safety of several things for man: the safety of his life so that no one would violate it by killing him or anything else; the safety of his mind so that he would not veil the tool by which he chooses between alternatives; the safety of his dignity so that no one would damage his reputation, and the offspring that thrived on earth would be pure; and the safety of his wealth so the fruits of his labours would be preserved, and no one else would take them such that workers would not be discouraged from working, and others would not take without doing any work, then becoming lazy and reliant on others. If a man used to earn money without working, work will become hard for him. Therefore, the preservation of wealth ensures that energy is not wasted, nor are rights violated, and that no one claims the rights of others, lest artificial incapacity spread throughout the world. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Who is it that would loan Allah a goodly loan so He may multiply it for him many times over? And it is Allah who withholds and grants abundance, and to Him you will be returned.’ (*al-Baqara*: 245) That is, although Allah *Glorified is He* is the Giver of all, He respects man’s labours, so no one may be happy to be unemployed. When unemployment spreads, Islam deals with the issue with great wisdom, asking the ruler to provide jobs for people so that they may not become accustomed to earning without working, lest society be harmed by this. With His magnanimous Sacred Law, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to protect man from everything that threatens his existence; hence, when He forbade intoxicants, prohibiting man from veiling his mind, this was because the intelligent mind is what makes man different from the animals.

Man is superior to animals in that he preserves his life with his mind, whereas animals preserve their lives with their instincts. Therefore, the animal only has one possible response if it is attacked—the dog bites the attacker,

and the cat scratches the attacker, while man, on the other hand, can choose between many alternative ways of responding to the aggression; he might strike back, he might kill or he might forgive.

An example of this is what we see in the countryside when someone rides a donkey and tries to make it jump over a little stream, but the donkey refuses to do so, and no matter how much the rider beats it, it refuses to jump because its instinct prevents it from doing that. As for man, he might be filled with delusion and imagine that he can jump over the stream; so, he jumps, but he might end up falling in the water. Boldness is a human trait, but not an animal one because of its instinct.

Another example from the animal world: the male buffalo approaches the female to smell her, and if he finds that it is pregnant, it does not come any closer. This is true for animals, but not for man. When the donkey eats his clover, for example, it stops when it is full and does not eat more, no matter how much his owner beats it because it is ruled by instinct. As for man, he might eat more than what he can manage.

Thus, we find that instinct is what protects animals, and mind is what protects man. That is why animals do not possess the ability to choose, but their instinct-based judgement is flawless. As for man's instinct-based judgement, it might well be flawed.

Allah *Glorified is He* has given preference to man over animals by giving him the ability to choose between alternatives through using his intellect; therefore, it is not right or proper for man to impair this ability by using intoxicants. If he impairs his ability to choose, his instincts will be of no help to him because they are not fit to protect him. Therefore, we find that he one who impairs his mind puts himself in a lower position than animals because the animal is protected by instinct, while man is protected by his intellect and, in this situation, he has impaired and veiled it. Allah forbade intoxicants because they veil the mind, and everything which veils the mind is an intoxicant, even if it is made from something which is lawful; this is because intelligence is the anchor of moral responsibility.

Allah has also prohibited games of chance, so let us reflect on the precision of the word which Allah chose to name gambling: *maysir* which is derived

from the word *yusr* which means 'ease'. He did not call it *ma'sar* derived from '*usr*' meaning 'difficult' because no one decides to gamble while realising that he will lose, and everyone who gambles does so because they hope to win. Therefore, He used the word which expresses the state of the gambler which is that he gambles because he dreams of winning; and if he does win, this will tempt him to gamble even more. Losing will also tempt the gambler to gamble more in the hope that he will win back what he has lost. The one who gambles might sell all that he owns to make up for his losses. Yet, despite this, the gains a gambler makes are trivial to him, and he spends them and fritters them away on things which bring no benefit; he might even spend them on things which cause him harm. So, what he wins does not count for him, and what he loses counts against him. Those who gamble with each other are not bonded by friendship or love, and each one of them is keen to get what is in the pocket of the other. In fact, this kind of game wastes energy which could be used to make a lawful income because to make a lawful income, one must work in life. Gambling wastes the energy of the one who wins because he does not have the desire to work; and loss wastes the energy of the loser because no matter how much he works in life, he is unable to pay back his debts.

So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to ensure that people receive no benefits from anything except the fruits of his hard work and labour; thus, Allah *Glorified is He* wants every person to support himself and his dependants by working in a lawful endeavour.

Allah *Glorified is He* also told us that *al-azlam* are repugnant acts —the work of Satan. *Al-azlam* were three arrows which the soothsayers possessed, one arrow with 'My Lord commanded me' written on it, a second with 'My Lord forbade me', and a third with nothing written on it. If a person wanted to travel, marry or conduct business, he would go to the soothsayer and ask him to draw these arrows for him; if the arrow came with 'My Lord commanded me', he would go ahead with his plans. If 'My Lord forbade me' arrow came out, he would not go ahead with his plans. If the unmarked arrow came out, he would draw the arrows again, until one of the two other arrows came out, either confirming the action or not confirming it. None of them could explain why, when 'the unmarked arrow' came out; it was not considered a command

beyond the bounds of prohibition and the permission for the individual to choose whether to go ahead with his plan or not. The True Lord *Glorified is He* made them forget this in order to show us that this was a false commandment, which the soothsayers had invented themselves. If anyone asked them, 'Who is the God that commands and forbids?' they would say, 'It is Allah who commands and forbids me.' Allah knew that they indeed were liars.

When Allah *Glorified is He* forbade us from these things, He wanted man to develop his ability to choose between alternatives. A man must deduce, solve, and study the information that he has in order to extract the conclusions; he must not neglect the power of perception which chooses between alternatives. Intoxicants veil the mind; gambling causes man to be ensnared in the clutches of delusion, while the stone altars impair the ability of a man to work and make him subjected to the soothsayers. If you ask a man who drinks alcohol why he does it, he will say, 'I want to drown my sorrows.' But to drown one's sorrows is not to end them; the only way to end them is to face these sorrows, using the means at one's disposal. If your means are not strong enough, then seek the assistance of the One Who created all means, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Is He (not best) who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Little do you remember?' (*an-Naml*: 62)

Yet, when your means are exhausted and you turn to Allah, He aids you to overcome the difficulty which causes your woes. We have the best role model in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for when someone vexed him, he would stand and pray. When we say that something 'vexes' us, this means that it is beyond the means at one's disposal; therefore, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would turn to the Lord of all means.

We find some people say, 'I often call upon Allah, but He does not answer me.' We would say to such a person that it must be either that you call upon Him for assistance in a matter which is not distressing or you have not tried to utilise the means at your disposal. When you decline to use the means, you thereby reject Allah's Outstretched Hand, which offers the means to you. I affirm that there will never be a distressed person who uses up all the means at his disposal, but then is not given a relief. When you supplicate for a need, but it is late in coming to you, then you have supplicated without being utterly distressed.

I always like to give this example – and Allah is beyond compare and has no likeness; suppose that a successful merchant sits by his warehouse when the trucks arrive carrying boxes full of his wares, and the workers carry the boxes into the warehouse; then, suddenly, he sees that one of his workers is about to fall under the weight of the box, he is carrying. At this moment, the merchant will automatically rush to aid the worker. So, what about the True Lord *Glorified is He* who created the means for us? If you have used up all your means, Allah will help you, as He says: ‘Is He (not best) who responds to the desperate one when he calls upon Him and removes evil and makes you inheritors of the earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Little do you remember’ (*an-Naml*: 62).

So, intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and the divining of arrows are repugnant acts—Satan’s doing. Divining arrows (*al-azlam*) were a kind of gambling. They would take a male or female camel, slaughter it, and then divide it into twenty-eight portions. They would give a share to a person; two shares to another person; a third man took three shares; a fourth man took four shares; a fifth man took five shares; a sixth man took six shares, and a seventh man took seven shares. They would take seven arrows with different names: the one who drew the one named *al-fadh* would be given a single share; the one who drew the one named *at-taw’am* would be given two shares; the one who drew the one named *ar-raqib* would be given three shares; the one who drew the one named *al-hils* would be given four shares; the one who drew the one named *an-nafir* would be given five shares; the one who drew the one named *al-masbal* would be given six shares, and the one who drew the one named *al-mu’alli* would be given seven shares. There were three more arrows named *al-munih*, *as-safih*, and *al-waghd*, and the ones who drew these three would get nothing, but they would have to pay for the slaughtered animal. This was a defilement—repugnant acts from the works of Satan.

The intelligent mind does not accept this kind of action, but rather, someone else must inspire and incite these kinds of desires. All sins come from two things, either from the soul or from Satan. The sin which comes from the soul is the one which satiates a particular desire so that if the soul is denied this desire, it continues to crave it. The sin which comes from Satan’s incitement is different, for Satan might incite a man to steal, but if he refuses, then Satan knows that this man has immunity against this particular sin, so he

incites him to commit another sin; if he again finds immunity, he moves on to a third sin, and so on. This is because the whispered temptations of Satan aim to make a man sinful whatever the sin may be.

Therefore, if you have a desire to commit a particular sin, it means that the desire is coming from your own soul; and if your temptation moves away from a sin, which was difficult for Satan to tempt you with, to another, this means that the desire comes from Satan, not from your soul. The sane person, who restrains himself from all of these forbidden things, sees intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and the divining the arrows are matters which do not appeal to the soul unless it is under Satan's influence. True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah) and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) indicating that the sane person cannot do these things.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the verse by saying, 'so avoid it that you may be successful.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 90) He *Glorified is He* commands us to avoid the defilement of intoxicants, gambling, stone altars and the divining the arrows; 'to avoid something' means to keep away from it, abstaining from the things which lead to it and closing all the doors which lead to it because if you do not avoid it, then by being close, you might be tempted to indulge. Some people may think that intoxicants were not clearly prohibited, but rather, we were only commanded to avoid them. We say to them that prohibition would be a law which stated that we must not imbibe them; as for avoiding, this is even stronger than prohibition because it commands us not to even be in the same place as them. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement.' (*al-Hajj*: 30)

He told us here to avoid the defilement of intoxicants, gambling, stone altars, and the divining the arrows. The True Lord *Glorified is He* dealt with those customs which were prevalent before Islam in a way which uprooted those who were corrupt; and He did not do away with them all at once because souls were attached and accustomed to them, but rather, He prohibited them in gradual stages. Islam first pronounced a firm judgement on all doctrinal matters and then gradually prohibited those things which were a matter of custom.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that something is 'defilement', this is the judgement of the True Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* which cannot be assailed by falsehood from any direction. We must accept this judgement, even if we do not exactly understand the meaning of 'defilement' or we have not yet ascertained on the empirical and material levels as to whether the prohibited thing is evil or not. It is enough that this is the judgement of Allah *Glorified is He* to whom the believing servant submits himself, accepting all the responsibilities which his Lord gives him because he trusts that his Lord knows what is best for him; as long as the True Lord *Glorified is He* declares that something is defilement, it is indisputably a loathsome evil. This is because some people keep on looking for an excuse to contrive for themselves, saying, 'How can that action, or that thing, be a defilement?' We say that we must submit to Allah's Judgement and obey His Commandments, for He knows what is best for His creatures; the passage of time is always affirming the truth about the things which the True Lord *Glorified is He* called 'defilement' showing us that, indeed, they are evil. So, when He *Glorified is He* says to His creatures, 'Do this, 'we should not ask about the reason for this injunction. Rather, we must obey the True Lord's Commandment, and in our depths, we will find the fruits of this commandment.

When a human gives another a command, he may ask 'Why?', and all humans must offer reasons for whatever they ask others to do. But we do not ask Allah for the reasons behind His orders for us to do things because we believe that He is the All-Wise; time will surely show us that what Allah has said was right. For example, we find that the man, who refrains from drinking alcohol solely because Allah forbade it, is a well-behaved person with pure intentions who does not cause trouble in the community, but the one who drinks alcohol is badly behaved, has impure intentions, and causes trouble in the community. Experience has proved that the one who drinks alcohol is prone to liver diseases and also suffers from confusion in leading his life and even in his speech. We read that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you. And Allah is Knowing of all things.' (*al-Baqara*: 282) Being conscious of Allah, as we know it, means placing a barrier between Allah's Wrath and ourselves; we do this by following all that He commands us to do. When we obey the commands of Allah *Glorified is He* we know about Allah's Wisdom in doing so.

For example, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45) We know how prayer restrains us from defilement and irrational deeds because we submit our souls and our hearts to Allah and do what He commands us. Likewise, we find that the obligatory alms are a source of increase and that the pilgrimage cleanses the soul from arrogance and washes away sins. For every action which the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to do, we find that it exerts an effect on our souls after we do it. But if you only obey the command because of its rational purpose, you distance yourself from the attitude of true faith.

The doctor takes a picture of the liver of the one who drinks alcohol by use of ultrasound and finds that the liver is full of lacerations and has become prone to many serious illnesses; perhaps the liver might become inoperative at times, so the doctor tells the patient to stop drinking alcohol. If the patient stops drinking alcohol in such situation, does he do so for religious reasons or medical ones? He stops for medical reasons; thus, the sinful believer and the disbeliever are alike in this respect. But the believer who refrains from drinking alcohol from the beginning does not do so because of the reason behind the command, but because it is Allah's Command and he obeys it without asking about the reasons. The believer accepts Allah's Commandments without asking Him to explain the practical reason for them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has clarified, as aforementioned, that intoxicants, gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah) and divining arrows are but defilement—Satan's doing—so avoid them that you may be successful. Satan long ago declared his enmity to our father Adam *peace be upon him* as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And (mention) when we said to the angels, "Prostrate before Adam"; so they prostrated, except for Satan. He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 34) Satan was present with the angels, and it was fitting that he prostrated with them because if the command was given to the higher class of beings, the angels, it also applied to the lower class of beings (like Satan). But he disobeyed and said, 'Should I prostrate to one you created from clay?' (*al-Isra'*: 61)

Thus, the enmity between Satan and Adam *peace be upon him* is from old times, so how could we, as sons of Adam, assent to listen to Satan's whispers?

How could we accept his insinuations? How could we accept his temptations? Therefore, we must avoid it all because it is a loathsome evil and the work of Satan; we must avoid it in order to escape from all evil and attain all success. The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ
وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

With intoxicants and gambling, Satan seeks only to incite enmity and hatred among you, and to stop you remembering God and prayer. Will you not give them up? [91] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 91)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not mention stone altars and the divining of the arrows here because the believers no longer believe in such things and have given them up, and such words are addressed to the believers. So, why did the True Lord *Glorified is He* link the ruling about intoxicants and gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah) and divining arrows before? He said this in order to show us how vile these things are; linking intoxicants and gambling, (sacrificing on) stone altars (to other than Allah) and divining arrows allow us to understand that the prohibition of intoxicants and gambling is just as firm as the prohibition of stone altars and the divining of the arrows; since they were believers, they had already forsaken stone altars and the divining of the arrows.

He *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 91), and the word *yurid* (translated as ‘seeks’, but literally meaning ‘wills’) means to intend to do something which is possible, and it is linked to something which is willed; so, does he have the ability to do what he wills or not? If he has the ability to do what he seeks, then this ability comes after the will.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wills something, His omnipotent power causes His will to be manifested instantly; neither His will nor His power is ever held back because everything obeys His will. It is different for human beings and for Satan, though, because a man might will something, but does he have

the power to do it? Sometimes he has the power to do what he wills, and sometimes he does not.

Satan also wills things, but does he have the power to do what he wills? He has this power as long as man obeys him, and this is the nature of Satan's will. He is happy when human beings sin, and he hopes for this and plans for it, but the action only comes into existence if the person agrees to obey Satan.

Hence, if something is willed by someone who has the power to compel and force it to occur, then it occurs instantly; and absolute power belongs to Allah; He ordains whatever He wills; therefore, He says: 'His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, "Be," and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) But when His creatures will, things do not respond to them as they respond to their Creator because the will of the created beings is restricted by his power which is limited even if it is a big one. The will of Satan is to trick man into doing what he hopes him to do, and Satan cannot force man to do anything, but he makes certain actions seem alluring to him. Satan does not have the authority to force man to do something, and he does not have the power to convince or produce arguments. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, "Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you and you responded to me"' (*Ibrahim*: 22).

Thus, Satan will announce that he has no power over humankind, neither to compel them, nor to convince them; all he can do is make things seem alluring, and if someone has a desire, then Satan makes it alluring to him so that he commits sin. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid, nor can you be called to my aid' (*Ibrahim*: 22) Satan will admit that however he cries for aid on the Day of Resurrection, no one will aid him; and likewise those who committed sins and followed him will cry out, but Satan will not help or save them from the suffering which awaits them. To respond to someone's cries means to go to them to stop their crying and aid them. So, the True Lord's words 'Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) explain to us that Satan's will is only a will to make things seem alluring and not a will which is capable of compelling or convincing. When you hear the word

‘cause’ (*yuqi*) here, understand that there are two things which are usually connected, and someone wants to put something between them to break this connection. Therefore, the word *waqi’a* can be used to express the action of someone who tried to cause a split and division between two people who are usually very close.

The words ‘between you’ here indicate separation, and this separation is where the enmity can be sown; why? Because the believers are brothers and because the relationship of the believers is like that of a tightly packed building wherein each part holds up the other. Hence, Satan uses intoxicants and gambling to cause enmity between the believers. We find that this is the case in gatherings where intoxicants are imbibed, for fights often break out between drinkers, in addition to insulting one another. Furthermore, those who gamble take each another’s money. In this way, they go from being united, like a single building, to being divided, and enmity and hatred are sown among them.

What is the difference between enmity and hatred? Enmity means that two close people are divided in such a way that they become enemies; hatred means the heart’s aversion to something it dislikes. It is as if hatred develops in the hearts after enmity has arisen, and as if enmity is the middle point which has placed distance between these two people —after they fell into Satan’s incitements—when, before that, they had been united by purity, affection, love, and spiritual brotherhood.

In such situation, enmity involves the emotions of both parties; if the enmity is one-sided, it does not last long; it lasts long if it involves both parties. Therefore, the battle becomes fierce between two people who bear enmity for each other, and it will be a prolonged and bitter enmity if no third party intervenes to resolve the conflict, opposing the side which is in the wrong and restoring the rights of the other side. When this happens, the side which is in the right will feel that someone is there to support him; thus, the enmity will be curbed and brought to an end. But if there is no one to rebut or restrain the two sides, then enmity will last long. Therefore, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And the family of Pharaoh picked him up (out of the river) so that he would become to them an enemy and a (cause of) grief. Indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.’ (*al-Qasas*: 8)

Did they know from the start that he was their enemy? No, they took him in so that he would give them joy, but Allah spoiled their plans. So the word 'for' in the expression '... For (We had willed) that he become...' (*al-Qasas*: 8) is meant to express the end result and the consequence, not the conscious intent of the action. Allah *Glorified is He* proved by this that Pharaoh was not a god and that his followers were ignorant, lacking in sagacity because if Pharaoh was a god, he would have known that the child whom he planned to raise would one day become his enemy.

Was the enmity here solely directed from Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to Pharaoh? No, it was an enmity between Allah *Glorified is He* and Moses *peace be upon him* on one side, and Pharaoh on the other side. Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(Saying), "Cast him into the chest and cast it into the river, and the river will throw it onto the bank; there will take him an enemy to me and an enemy to him."' (*Ta Ha*: 39)

This enmity only came to an end when Pharaoh drowned. The True Lord *Glorified is He* warns us, 'Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) The Arabic preposition *fi* here means 'through'; it is akin to the use of the same preposition in the Prophet Muhammad's words, 'A woman got into hellfire because of a cat whom she had tied, and thus it could not eat, and she did not let it free so that it could devour the vermin of the earth, until it died.'⁽¹⁾

In our daily lives, we say, 'So-and-so was sent to prison for years for (*fi*) possessing drugs.' That is, he got himself into trouble because of what he did. Allah's words, 'Through intoxicants and gambling,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) indicate that enmity and hatred are the concomitants of intoxicants and gambling. He says: 'Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) To 'remember' something means to keep this thing in the forefront of one's consciousness; every fact which a person remembers is at the forefront of his consciousness, and then it moves to make way for another fact. When a person's mind is occupied by something, this

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

thing is only moved from the forefront to the margins of the consciousness when something else comes to occupy the mind.

Therefore, we say that you should know that the mind understands things from the first time, or the second time, or the third time; no, the mind understands things the first time like a camera, and what is important is that when it takes in the information it is empty of everything else. Therefore, we found that those of our blind fellow students were better at recalling information than those who could see because the one who could see would be in the middle of something and then be distracted by something he saw so that the forefront of his consciousness was muddled. The consciousness of the blind person, on the other hand, would only remember what he heard. So, this is what we understand 'remembrance' to mean. Intoxicants cloud and veil the mind, so how could one remember Allah in such case? The same is true for prayer which is the best form of remembrance—intoxicants veil us from it. The same is true of gambling in which the gambler is taken by the illusionary desire of winning—just like a mirage, and thus chases after it with the hope that he wins; and then, he loses his ability to remember Allah and to pray.

Since the enmity between Satan and man is long established, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that Satan said, 'By Your might, I will surely mislead them all.' (*Sad*: 82) Satan knew how to swear an oath, and he swore by Allah's might that he would beguile His creatures; and had Allah wanted His servants, then Satan could not have taken them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* brings an end to the matter of intoxicants and gambling by saying 'So will you not desist?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) This is a question which means to seek to understand something; this is what we know about the questions which human beings ask. But when Allah directs a question to us, it is actually a command from Him *Glorified and Exalted is He*; in what way? A command can be given in a direct and binding way, and Allah can also give a command in such way that the one being commanded must command his own self; this is a sign that the Supreme Commander trusts the believer who receives this kind of command.

An example to illustrate this – and Allah is beyond any comparison – a father says to one of his sons, 'Your continued negligence of your studies will

make me angry with you, make your classmates despise you and make you fall behind others. So, are you going to stop messing around or not?' He does not say, 'Stop messing around' because the father wants to give his son reasons to control himself so that he can weigh the options in his mind. He will find nothing to say but 'I will stop messing around from now on.'

The way it happens here is the same, since, instead of the ruling coming directly from Allah, it comes from the servant himself. This is the strongest way to impart a ruling because the speaker gives the command in the form of a question so that the one who is asked can think of every possible answer and find only the answer which the questioner wants to hear.

Another example of this was when the Revelation ceased to come to the Noble Prophet for a while, and the people of Quraysh said, 'Muhammad's Lord has forsaken him, hated him, and scorned him!' The Revelation then returned to the Prophet, Allah says: 'Your Lord has not taken leave of you, (O Muhammad), nor has He detested (you).' (*ad-Duha*: 3) The Revelation continued: 'Did He not find you an orphan and give (you) refuge?' (*ad-Duha*: 6)

When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* thought about this, he would surely reply, 'Indeed yes, O Lord, You found me an orphan and gave me shelter.' This is what they call 'involving the commanded in the cause of the command', and it is the strongest form of command.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'So will you not desist?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91), those addressed know what Allah wants, so they say, 'Yes Lord, we will desist.' They were very emphatic in desisting, and 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Even if a drop of it fell into the sea, and the sea dried and herbage grew there, and my tongue was lolling from hunger, I would not go near it.' This is not actually what was commanded, but it is the most extreme way of desisting.

'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'If a drop of it landed on my hand, I would deny myself it.' This was the reaction to the True Lord's words, '...Will you not, then, desist?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) And this was the end of the issue of intoxicants. We know that the prohibition of intoxicants came in stages, and that spiritual responsibilities are only ordained on the tongue of messengers; messengers only come forth when corruption

has overwhelmed both society and the souls of the people at the same time so that no one reproaches himself or prevents others from indulging in corruption. At this point, Allah *Glorified is He* intervenes by sending a messenger; and Allah does not send down all of its laws at once in the beginning, but rather, He uses the medium of the Messenger to call the people to faith in the One God so that they will then accept what He ordains. Faith in Allah's Oneness is the pinnacle of doctrine and can never be mitigated.

But in the case of legal rulings, they change social customs and traditions which are commonly shared by the people, and if Allah wills to change a custom with a ruling, He does so gradually because He *Glorified is He* is mercifully kind to His creatures. For example, in the past, a man did not leave any of his wealth to his parents, but only to his children because he knew that his father would die soon, while his son would live longer; therefore, the son would inherit everything. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* says no, you might die before your father, and so you should leave him something: 'if he leaves wealth (is that he should make) a bequest for the parents.' (*al-Baqara*: 180) He wanted them to stop leaving out the parents in the bequests they would leave. Once this ruling had settled, the True Lord *Glorified is He* chose to appoint a certain part of the legal inheritance to the parents. At first, the commandment was given in a partial way in order to bring an end to the usual custom and established practice, but in a way that they would not be made to end it in too abruptly. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want wealth to be passed around by the rich only and not by any others. Rather, He wants to make wealth circulate amongst all the people; therefore, He made laws for inheritance.

When we examine the laws of inheritance which apply to one thousand acre, we find that over three generations it shrinks and diminishes to acres; this is a change which takes place gradually over generations, not all at once, so that man can arrange the affairs of his life and the lives of his children and can leave his children inheritance and wealth which they can use to aid them in their own work. As for the one who does not own anything, he passes on a skill or a job to his children. In this way, the religion causes the affairs of finances and estates to be dispersed in a way which is not abrupt so that society is not marred by crises of envy or stress. If the person who earns his wealth by hard work and effort sees wealth going to someone who did not

work or strive, he will feel envious. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘(This) worldly life is only amusement and diversion. And if you believe and fear Allah, He will give you your rewards and not ask you for your properties, If He should ask you for them and press you, you would withhold, and He would expose your unwillingness.’ (Muhammad: 36-37) When the moral failing of jealousy emerges in society, all stability, and love comes to an end. So Allah *Glorified is He* deals with customs with the utmost delicacy. The taking of intoxicants, and the gatherings dedicated to it, was an Arab custom; it would have been difficult for them to leave it all at once; therefore, it was prohibited in stages. The sane person who hears the following verse will recognise that Allah had subtle plans for the outright ban of intoxicants. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And from the fruits of the palm trees and grapevines you take intoxicant and good provision. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who reason.’ (*an-Nahl*: 67)

He *Glorified is He* said ‘good provision’, but He did not describe intoxicants as being ‘good’; this implies that taking this provision, fermenting it and producing intoxicants mean to waste what is wholesome. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has said ‘intoxicants’ first to tell us that they would use the first part of the sustenance to make intoxicants. After that, Allah presents the issue as a piece of advice being given from an advisor—and advice is not an obligatory commandment—but only an opinion given by someone wise to someone else; this was the first stage of the subtle plan to prohibit intoxicants. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has said, ‘They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, “In them is great sin and (yet, some) benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.” And they ask you what they should spend. Say, “The excess (beyond needs).” Thus Allah makes clear to you the verses (of revelation) that you might give thought.’ (*al-Baqara*: 219)

So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* made it clear that the evil was more than the benefit. Then, He turned to the matter of prayer; at the time, there was no clear ruling which forbade the imbibing of intoxicants before prayer; and someone actually prayed while drunk and said – and we seek Allah’s refuge from what he said – ‘Say: O ye disbelievers, I worship that which you worship.’ The intoxicants made him utter something which contradicted the very pinnacle of doctrine. Allah says: ‘O you, who have believed, do not

approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying.' (*an-Nisa'*: 43)

We know that the Muslim prays five obligatory prayers every day; for a man not to pray when drunk, it would mean that he must spend the whole day sober, not drinking alcohol until after the night prayer. In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* extended the period of time wherein intoxicants could not be consumed, and this restricted the soul from doing what it was accustomed to doing so that the habituated person could become used to forsaking his habit. After that, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to proclaim His final verdict about intoxicants and revealed His words: 'Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 91) It was this gradual approach which took them away from their customs and habits. By the time the prohibition came, it was almost as if they had proclaimed it themselves. After the True Lord *Glorified is He* issued this specific ruling concerning intoxicants and gambling; it was as if He has said to us: 'As long as you are aware that I have declared these things to be defilement and a work of Satan, then do not help Satan to harm you, and sincerely worship the True Lord Alone.'

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَاحْذَرُوا فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَأَعْلَمُوا
 أَنَّمَا عَلَى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَّغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٩٢﴾

Obey God, obey the Messenger, and always be on your guard: if you pay no heed, bear in mind that the sole duty of Our Messenger is to deliver the message clearly [92]
 (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 92)

After declaring this specific rule, Allah *Glorified is He*, moves to a general rule which is the obedience to Allah and the obedience to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When you examine the way in which Allah commands us to obey Him, you find that He does so in several different ways; Allah says: 'And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 92) So, He repeats the command to pay heed to Allah

and to the Messenger; obedience to Allah is the general rule, and obedience to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* gives the details of this rule. Elsewhere, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, 'Obey Allah and the Messenger.' (Al-'Imran: 32) He does not repeat the command to obey here; there is a command to obey; there is one who is obeyed and there are those who obey, namely those who are addressed. So, He gives only one command to obey here, and the One to be obeyed is Allah; the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is then added to the Divine Name. Elsewhere, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...And obey the Messenger...' (an-Nur: 56).

Hence, we have several different forms of obedience: the first is, '...obey Allah and obey the Messenger...' (an-Nur: 92), the second is, '...obey Allah and the Messenger...' (Al-'Imran: 32) and the third is, '...obey the Messenger.' (an-Nur: 56) In just one other instance, He *the Almighty* says: 'O you, who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.' (an-Nisa': 59)

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* ordered us to obey Allah and obey the Messenger, He repeats the command to obey Allah and then the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, but when He speaks of the people of authority, he does not say 'and obey' because to obey those who have been entrusted with authority is an aspect of the other two forms of obedience: obedience to Allah and obedience to the Messenger because it is never right to obey a creature if this means disobeying the Creator. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* orders us, 'obey Allah and obey the Messenger,' (an-Nisa': 59) obedience to Allah is a general rule and obedience to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* gives the details of this rule.

For example, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And (due) to Allah from the people is a pilgrimage to the House.' (Al-'Imran: 97) We obey Allah *Glorified is He* in the general rule here, and we obey the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in the details of the pilgrimage because these details are not given in the Quran; the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Learn your rites from me'. When the two commands are combined thus, '...obey Allah and the Messenger,' (Al-'Imran: 32), this means that there is a single command which has been issued by Allah; the proclamation and

application of the action are given by the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* since he provides a model, an example and a confirmation of the ruling.

If Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded the general ruling, the Messenger commanded the specifics. He *Glorified is He* says, ‘obey Allah and obey the Messenger...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 92), and if the commandment was given by the Messenger alone, and nothing came directly from Allah, this means it is a command for which Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from’ (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Thus, we find that none of these forms of obedience confuse or contradict the other. Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 92) What is the purpose of this warning? Allah *Glorified is He* is teaching us that Satan will never leave us free to obey Allah and obey the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*; he will try his best to confuse things for us. Whenever Satan sees that the human soul inclines to a particular passion, he tries to tempt him to sin; if a man blocks some of the paths of Satan so that he is unable, for example, to tempt him to steal or drink wine, he will not leave him alone, but rather, he will attempt to spoil his obedience. That is, Satan might come to a man as he performs the ablution and make him forget whether he washed this hand or whether he performed the ablution with enough water or not; or Satan might come to the believer as he prays and make him forget how many *rak’as* (units) he has prayed, or how many *sajdas* (prostrations) he has made. In this way, Satan tries to affect the believer at the times when he is obedient.

The meaning of His words ‘and beware’ is: beware lest Satan tricks you, for he will try to get to you by whatever means he can. He gets to the sinful person by means of sin, but the worst thing that Satan can do to the believers is to come to them when they are trying to obey Allah. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘beware’; and we often find that one of us forgets something, and then when he starts praying, he suddenly remembers that thing; Satan does not leave a man alone when he is in this kind of state—for Satan swore an oath, ‘Satan said, “By Your might, I will surely mislead them all (*Sad*: 82). The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that Satan said, ‘I will surely sit in wait for them on your straight path.’ (*al-A’raf*: 16) He swore that

he would sit in ambush on the straightway, not the crooked way; and this is manifested, for example, when a man gives charity and then announces it, saying, 'I gave more than so-and-so', thus his reward is squandered.

Satan tries to come to us at a time we would not expect, namely when we are being obedient to Allah. I shall tell you this story so that you see just how much Satan can interfere. It happened to Imam Abu Hanifa *may Allah be pleased with him*; a man came to him to ask his legal opinion about a strange matter. The questioner said: 'I lost my money. I buried it in a certain place, but then the rain came and washed away the stone I put down to mark the place where the money was. Imam Abu Hanifa said: 'Go tonight after the evening prayer and stand before your Lord in prayer until dawn, and then tell me what happens.' When the dawn prayer came, the man came joyously to Abu Hanifa and said, 'I found my money!' Abu Hanifa asked him how and he said: 'While I was standing in prayer, I remembered where my money was, how the rain has fallen and how the water had flowed; so I measured the distance and estimated it until I found my money.' The Imam laughed and said, 'By Allah, I knew that Satan would not let you spend all night with your Lord.'

Thus, you can see how Satan comes to a man while he is trying to obey Allah; therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away, then know that upon Our Messenger is only (the responsibility for) clear notification.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 92) That is, 'If you turn away from what I have imparted unto you, know that by turning away and leaving, you do not harm the Messenger; for the Messenger was only commanded to clearly deliver the message. You only harm yourselves by turning away from what I have imparted unto you.' The True Lord *Glorified is He* knew from before eternity that some of His servants would say, 'This commandment was not mentioned in the Quran', and therefore He commanded us to obey the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; thus, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* must be obeyed in his own right, and Allah willed this in order to pre-emptively respond to those who ask about all the details of a ruling. Examples of this are the number of *rak'as* (units) in each prayer; they are not given in the Quran, but we learned the details of them from the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. The True Lord

Glorified is He gave His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* permission to establish laws when He says: 'Whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from' (*al-Hashr*: 7)

He *Glorified is He* knew from before eternity that people would one day claim to follow nothing but the Quran; therefore, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Yet, the time is coming where a man reclining on his couch will say, "Keep to this Quran: what you find in it to be permissible treat as permissible; and what you find prohibited treat as prohibited." But what Allah's Messenger has prohibited is like what Allah has prohibited.' That is, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* only conveys his Lord's Message.

We must beware lest Satan comes to us when we are trying to obey Allah; but why did the True Lord *Glorified is He* say 'and if you turn away', and what is the thing that is turned away from? Allah *Glorified is He* said this to explain that a man has the freedom to choose to obey and the freedom to choose to disobey; if a man turns from obedience to disobedience and turns from faith in what the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* brought from Allah to continued disbelief, he should know that the Messenger has carried out his mission and fulfilled it; the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is required to convey the message, and, indeed, he conveyed it clearly, fully, plainly and in a way which covered all the aspects of life.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed unto us that it is our duty to believe in the One God Allah, Who is All-Powerful and All-Wise, and Who possesses all the attributes of perfection; this is the primary article of doctrine. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed unto us that we must avoid all the old Arab practices of paganism and idol-worship. Once Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has conveyed the message, we are required to have faith and act; action is of two kinds, positive and negative. Positive action is centred on Allah's injunction, 'Do this', if you are not already doing it; as for negative action, it is to abstain from those things which Allah forbade you, and those things which the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade you. So, the first requirement of faith is to believe in the One God and stop worshipping idols and false gods. To request, as we know, means to speak words which express your desire for the one you address to do something which he was not doing before you requested it. Hence, if the True Lord *Glorified is He*

says, 'Do not worship idols, 'this is a request for action which is that we stop worshipping idols. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to pray, fast, give the obligatory alms to the poor, and perform the pilgrimage, these are requests for actions. A request for action is called a 'commandment', and a request for the ceasing of an action is called a 'prohibition.'

When you look at all the responsibilities which Islam enjoins, you will find that they did not come all at once, but rather, they came over a period of twenty-three years. When Islam came, people believed in it, and they had not yet been told to implement any of the rulings which were subsequently revealed during the years in which the message was conveyed. All they were required to observe at that time were a few of these rulings, and they indeed observed them. Some of them only heard of the essential importance of having faith in One God (Allah), and they believed in this and then died, but still they earned paradise. There were others who lived longer and heard new rulings and obeyed them; thus, their submission to Allah was complete.

Complete surrender means that the Muslim obeys all the laws of which he is aware; even if the Muslim is only aware of one single law and obeys it, and then he will attain all that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has promised. An example of this is Mukhayriq *may Allah be pleased with him*, the Jew who embraced Islam and left all his possessions to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the battle of Uhud was near, he said to his people: 'O Jews, by Allah I know that it is your duty to support Muhammad', but they did not answer him, so he took up his sword and his battle array and said, 'If I am slain, then my wealth belongs to Muhammad to use as he pleases.' Then, he went out to the battle and fought until he was martyred; he had not yet implemented any of the laws of Islam. Yet, because he fought, he attained the rank of martyrdom. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about him: 'Mukhayriq⁽¹⁾ is the best of the Jews'⁽²⁾.

(1) Mukhayriq was a rabbi who lived in Medina and fought together with Muhammad in the Battle of Uhud on March 19, 625 (3rd of *Shawwal* in 3rd AH in the Islamic calendar) at the valley located in front of Mount Uhud, in what is now north-western Arabia.

(2) Narrated by Ibn Sa'd in 'Major Classes' and Abu Nu'aym in 'The Signs and Proofs of Prophet hood', Ibn Kathir in the 'The Beginning and the End' and finally Ibn Asakir in 'History of Damascus'

We should always make the distinction between the 'Pillars of Islam' and the other things which are required of the Muslim. We all know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: '(The superstructure of) Islam is raised on five (pillars), testifying the fact that there is no god but Allah, that Muhammad is His slave and messenger, the establishment of prayer, payment of *zakat*, Pilgrimage to the House (*Ka'ba*) and the fast of *Ramadan*.'⁽¹⁾ These are the Pillars of Islam, but what is required from a Muslim differs from one person to another. The Muslim is required to testify once in his life that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. He is required to always offer the prayer, no matter what his state is. Different from this is the obligation of paying obligatory alms to the needy which he might be excused from offering if he does not have enough money. Likewise, he might be excused from fasting if he cannot fast due to terminal illness or being old, in which case he must feed the needy instead. If a person is ill and likely to get better, or on a journey, then he must make up the fasting days he misses once his excuse is no more; the same is true for women at times of menstruation or post-natal discharge. A Muslim might be excused from the pilgrimage if he cannot afford to do it. Thus, we see that the Pillars of Islam differ from one Muslim to another; hence, we can see that those who lived in the early days of Islam and obeyed the few rulings which had been revealed thus far until they died or were martyred thereby fulfilled all that Islam required of them.

When the prohibition of intoxicants and gambling (engagement in games of chance or bets that have uncertain outcomes for financial gains) was revealed, people went to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask him about the fate of their fellow believers who died or were martyred before the law prohibiting intoxicants and gambling was revealed. The very fact that they would ask this question showed that they possessed the alertness of faith, for a man is not truly a believer until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself. At that time, the True Lord *Glorified is He* revealed His noble words:

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعَمُوا إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَءَامَنُوا ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَأَحْسَنُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٩٣﴾

Those who believe and do good deeds will not be blamed for what they may have consumed [in the past] as long as they are mindful of God, believe and do good deeds, then are mindful of God and believe, then are mindful of God and do good deeds: God loves those who do good deeds [93] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 93)

The True Lord revealed this verse to reassure those believers who asked about the fate of their fellow believers who died or were martyred and had drunk alcohol before it was prohibited. 'There is not upon those who believe and do good deeds (any) blame for what they may have consumed (in the past)...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 93). The word *ta'amu* (consumed) does not only refer to food, but it refers to drink too; for, the True Lord says: 'Allah will test you with a river. Anyone who drinks from it will not belong with me, but anyone who refrains from tasting it will belong with me...' (*al-Baqara*: 249). This means that water is also *ta'am* (food) because it is tasted in the mouth. So, the Muslims who asked about their brethren who died or were martyred discovered that their Islam was based only on those rulings which were revealed during their lives, and they did what was required of them by forsaking idol-worship. Some of them might have died before the prayer was made obligatory or before the laws concerning the obligatory alms or fasting were revealed, and so they did not do them. Therefore, their righteous deeds were that they implemented the teachings which were revealed to them. They were conscious of Allah *Glorified is He* and so lived up to all those requirements of faith which the True Lord had asked of them thus far: they believed in the Law-Giving Allah *Glorified is He* and placed a protective shield between themselves and Allah's wrath, by doing all that He has asked of them, whether by commandments or prohibitions.

Faith has a pinnacle which is that man believes in Allah *Glorified is He*, His angels, His Scriptures and His Messengers *peace be upon them*, then, that he believes in the laws which were sent down from Heaven. The scholars have differed over the question of whether faith increases or decreases: some scholars say that it does not, and others say that it does. Those who say that

faith does not increase or decrease see faith as being connected to the pinnacle of faith which is faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. Those who say that faith increases and decreases see faith as being connected to the laws which Allah *Glorified is He* revealed, and they base this on the True Lord's words: 'When a chapter is revealed, some (hypocrites) say, "Have any of you been strengthened in faith by it?" It certainly does strengthen the faith of those who believe and they rejoice.' (*at-Tawba*: 124)

Hence, every verse which reveals a new ruling causes faith to increase. When the law of the obligatory alms was revealed, the Muslims believed in it and implemented it; and some of them did not have enough money, so they did not implement the law even though they believed in it.

A Muslim believes in the law, and he obeys it if he is able to do so, but if he is not able to do so, he does not. Therefore, early Muslims rejoiced in the new rulings which the verses conveyed; thus the disagreement of the scholars on this issue is a matter of perspective. We may observe that the True Lord says: 'There is not upon those who believe and do good deeds (any) blame for what they may have consumed (in the past) as long as they are mindful of Allah, believe and do good deeds, then are mindful of Allah and believe, then are mindful of Allah and persevere in doing good: Allah loves those who persevere in doing good.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 93)

Thence, there are three stages: there were those who were aware of a ruling and were conscious of Allah *Glorified is He* believed and did righteous deeds, then died and passed on to their Lord; therefore, they incurred no sin. Further, there were those who lived to see other rulings, believed in them and obeyed them. And then, there were those who lived to see even more rulings added, and who obeyed them, too. The first stage of faith is linked to righteous deeds, as is the second stage of faith mentioned in the verse; then, the third stage of faith is linked to *ihsan* (doing things with perseverance, proficiency).

Ihsan, as we know, has two aspects. The first is that the believer worships Allah *Glorified is He* as though he could see Him, and that every time a commandment is revealed, the believer performs it well as though he can see Allah *Glorified is He*; for if he cannot see Him, he can sense that He sees him. If the Muslim is aware of all the rulings of Allah which encompass all the

aspects of life, he must adhere to them in a good way. The second aspect of *ihsan* (doing things with perseverance, proficiency) is that the believer does even more of these responsibilities than Allah *Glorified is He* has obliged him to do, meaning that he does supererogatory works. In this way, the believer does not only honour the rulings which have been revealed, but he actually does even more deeds of the same kind. The True Lord says: 'The righteous will be in Gardens with (flowing) springs. Taking what their Lord gives them; surely they were before that, the doers of good.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16) The True Lord explains why this is, saying: '...surely they were before that, the doers of good.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 16) The nature of their *ihsan* (doing things with perseverance, proficiency) was that one of them would not only do that which Allah *Glorified is He* obliged him to do, but he would do even more of the same kind of deed. Allah *Glorified is He* has obliged the Muslim to offer five daily prayers, but a good doer is one who increases and draws nearer to Allah *Glorified is He* by offering extra supererogatory prayers. Allah *Glorified is He* has obliged the Muslim to fast *Ramadan*, but the doer of good is the one who fasts *Ramadan* properly, then fasts on other days of the year, too. Allah *Glorified is He* obliged the Muslim to give 2.5% (one fortieth) of his standing wealth as obligatory alms, and the doer of good gives even more than this. Allah *Glorified is He* obliged the Muslim to perform the pilgrimage once he is able, but the doer of good might do it several times.

Therefore, the good doer is the one who is devoted to performing Allah's obligations, who knows the credit in drawing close to Allah *Glorified is He* and has thus found that Allah has commanded him to do less than He actually deserves from us, and as a doer of good, he increases his performance of those actions which cause him to come nearer to Allah. The True Lord *Glorified is He* then, adds this description of the doers of good: 'They used to sleep but little in the night.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17) Allah *Glorified is He* did not command us to sleep only a little at night. He only commanded us to offer the evening prayer after which we may sleep until we rise to offer the dawn prayer. As for the doer of good who has tasted the sweetness of being alone with Allah, he sleeps only a little at night. The True Lord says of the doers of good: 'And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 18)

Allah *Glorified is He* did not command the believer to pray for forgiveness in the hours before dawn, but the doer of good does so. The True Lord, then, adds: 'And from their properties was (given) the right of the (needy) petitioner and the deprived.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19) In this verse, He does not call it a 'known right' because the known right is the obligatory alms. So, these three stages are what make the believer reach the status of *ihsan*. Therefore, we find that in the final stage of the verse which we are examining, the True Lord speaks about *ihsan* (doing things with perseverance, proficiency): '...then are mindful of Allah and persevere in doing good: Allah loves those who persevere in doing good.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 93) The word *Ahsanu* describes believers who offer extra deeds of the kind that Allah has obliged him to do. When the responsibilities of Islam were still being revealed, every new ruling which came was accepted by the believers with faith and action. As for those who lived to receive all of the responsibilities during the twenty-three years since the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, had started receiving revelations until he passed away; all of these responsibilities were equal to them, and when they wanted to reach the status of *ihsan* (doing things with perseverance, proficiency), they had to do more than that which they were obliged to do.

The True Lord, then, says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَرِمَاحُكُمْ
لِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَخَافُهُ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

You who believe, God is sure to test you with game within reach of your hands and spears, to find out who fears Him even though they cannot see Him: from now on, anyone who transgresses will have a painful punishment [94] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 94)

This leads to a new ruling; after the True Lord speaks about what He has made lawful in a previous verse: '...Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1), and after He mentions what He has made unlawful unto us, namely carrion, blood and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than Allah's has been invoked, and the animal that has been strangled, or beaten to death, or killed by a fall, or gored to death, or

savaged by a beast of prey, save that which is slaughtered while it is still alive, and all that is slaughtered as a devotion to idols, all that is shared out by use of divining arrows and also intoxicants and gambling. Here, He mentions special kinds of things that are prohibited. In order for us to understand this, we must first be aware that there are some things which are forbidden at all times and in all places, such as intoxicants, games of chance, adultery and other firmly prohibited things such as idol-worship, divining the future, or the consumption of carrion, blood and pork. There are also things which are only forbidden at specific times or in specific places; and every action must have a time and a place.

We are commanded to pray at the appointed times in any place which is clean and suitable for prayer. Likewise, fasting has its appointed time; *Hajj* (the major pilgrimage) has both an appointed time and an appointed place, whilst *‘Umra* (the minor pilgrimage) has an appointed place only because one may perform it at almost any time. Allah *Glorified is He* speaks here about a prohibition which refers to a specific place and a specific time; for hunting is only forbidden when a person is *hurum* (in a state of consecration).

We know that the word *hurum* (in a state of consecration) is the plural of the word *haram* (forbidden), and hunting becomes forbidden when a person reaches the place where *ihram* (the consecration) begins, such as the place called Rabigh, where the consecration begins for those coming from Egypt. When you get to this place and begin the rites of *Hajj* (the major pilgrimage) or *‘Umra* (the minor pilgrimage), the first thing you do is to enter the state of consecration. From the moment you enter consecration, even if you do so in your own country or in your own house before setting out, hunting becomes unlawful to you. The word *haram* also applies to the area of the Sanctuary of the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca), even if a person is not on the pilgrimage. It is forbidden to hunt in the Sacred Mosque, and the limits of the Sanctuary have been set out by the Divine Law; to hunt therein is forbidden for both the pilgrim and the non-pilgrim.

We know that the True Lord made the entire earth a purified place and a mosque for the community of Muhammad, which means that we can pray in any place, read to gain knowledge, build a factory or farm. Therefore, any

piece of land could be a *masjid* (mosque) because it is a place for *sujud* (prostration). The word 'mosque' in its technical sense means a place which is devoted solely to prayer. As for *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* (the Sacred Mosque) its centre is the *Ka'ba*, and the believers circumambulate it; the walls of *Al-Haram* (the Sanctuary) are around the *Ka'ba*. So, the Sacred Mosque lies within the Sanctuary which begins at the following points: At-Tan'im, Al-Ju'rana, Al-Hudaybiyya, Al-Jahfa, and others besides them. These are the boundaries of the Sanctuary. When a person arrives at a pilgrimage station such as Rabigh (in Egypt), he may not hunt from then on because he is now within the Sanctuary and hunting is forbidden unto him even if he is not performing the major or minor pilgrimage.

The pilgrimage, as we know, is a journey which Allah *Glorified is He* commands the Muslim to perform once in his lifetime; the Muslim who is surrounded by the favours of Allah where he lives, sets out to the pilgrimage and leaves behind all the favours which distinguish him and becomes equal with all of Allah's creatures. The first thing which distinguishes a man from his peers is his clothes. Therefore, the pilgrims take off their regular clothes and wear an identical costume which makes them all equal in appearance. The Muslim leaves behind all the favours because he is going to the Giver of all favours and blessings; the Most Granter.

After that, the True Lord wants to give us a faith-based disciplinary lesson which applies to the whole of existence. Allah *Glorified is He* makes all this completely clear at the pilgrimage. All are equal, wearing clothes which are virtually identical, and all are dishevelled and dusty from travel and all say, '*labbayka Allahuma labbayk*' (At Your service, Lord, at Your service). In this way, the state of consecration eliminates all the inequalities among people.

Then, we consider the species which are lower than we are, namely animals; and the True Lord teaches us to behave respectfully towards them by forbidding hunting. He teaches us to respect crops which are below animals, by forbidding the Muslims from cutting down trees which grow in the Sanctuary. Thus, all distinctions are put aside, and a sense of worshipful reverence pervades throughout all.

During the pilgrimage, all matters of rank and title are dropped as soon as the pilgrims approach the *Ka'ba*, where a security guard might see a minister weeping, and all experience a sense of equality. The True Lord says: '...And whoever enters it is secure...' (*Al-'Imran*: 97). Animals are secure as are plants, and this is what the True Lord ordains for everything that is inside the Sanctuary because this trains man to leave aside all favours and blessings and turn to the Giver of blessings. Then, he enters the Mosque and circumambulates the *Ka'ba*. We see that man – the master of the universe – takes a completely different position towards all those beings which serve him so that both animals and plants are given their dignity. Even inanimate objects are also given their dignity, for the seven circuits of the *Ka'ba* begin at the Black Stone.

At the pilgrimage, man puts aside all his pride and becomes equal to all people; and he also puts aside his pride towards those species which are lower than him and refrain from hunting animals and cutting plants which both nourish him. The True Lord also extinguishes man's pride towards inanimate objects which are the lowliest of beings, for the True Lord commands him to greet the Black Stone or to kiss it, and if the place is too crowded to allow him to reach it, he should at least gesture towards it. If someone is unable to greet the Black Stone or kiss it, he might feel as though he has not really made the pilgrimage; and this is because he is so attached to the rituals and is eager to perform them with the utmost care.

The reason for all this is so that Allah *Glorified is He* instils a sense of worshipful reverence in all; and we always find people who ask: 'Why should we kiss the Stone, when Allah *Glorified is He* forbade us from paganism and idolatry?' We say that the nature of the Stone has no value here, but rather, it is the Lord of man, animals, plants, and inanimate objects who commands us to do this—and this kind of obedience is confirmed by the fact that we throw pebbles at another stone which symbolizes Satan. When he carries out these sacred rituals, the servant goes from following his own will to following the will of his Lord, so he kisses one stone and honours it and pelts another stone. In this way, a sense of worshipful reverence pervades all the people and is passed down to animals, plants, and inanimate objects.

Prophet Muhammad's Companion, 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* taught us that when he said to the Black Stone: 'I know that you are but a

stone and that you cannot cause benefit or harm; were it not that I saw the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* kiss you, I would not have kissed you.'

It is as though 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* was teaching us this so that no one would say that kissing the Stone is a pagan ritual; for paganism means to worship a stone by your own will, whilst we honour the Black Stone by Allah's will.

'O you who believe, Allah is sure to test you with game within reach of your hands and spears, that Allah may make evident those who fear Him even though they cannot see Him: from now on, anyone who transgresses will have a painful punishment.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 94) What is the difference between what the hands reach and what the spears reach? What the hands reach is the little chicks and things which are easy to catch, and what the spears reach are those things which must be hunted with effort, by the skilful use and aiming of spears. The True Lord says: 'Allah is sure to test you' (*al-Ma'ida*: 94) because there is a difference between a person being tempted to sin and thus sinning, and a person reaching a place where he is not tempted to sin, but where a sin might present itself to him; and if the sin indeed does present itself to him, he must not commit it.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* tests us at those times when we are not tempted to sin, and He wants to see how we will act if the sin actually comes to us, and whether we will do it or not. If faith is strong, no one will approach sin; so, Allah *Glorified is He* will try you by means of the game which is forbidden to you by placing it within your reach. This happened at Hudaybiyya where the game placed itself between the hands of the believers, yet they did not approach it; this was a test. We know that a trial is not a bad thing in itself, but what can be bad is its outcome because a trial is a test which one person might pass, whilst another might fail. It is as though the True Lord tested the believers by making the game appear before them in droves in order to strengthen the faith in their hearts so that they would not be keen to commit sin and so that they would gain immunity from it; this was so '...that Allah may make evident those who fear Him even though they cannot see Him...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 94).

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Most Knowing of everything even before it happens. There are different kinds of knowledge. Allah's knowledge is eternal, having neither beginning nor end, and it never errs. But this knowledge cannot be an argument against people because the argument against people must be based on what they actually do; that is why trials occur. Let me give an example – and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond compare. A father might look at one of his sons and say, 'He plays all the year round, and it is best that we do not let him take the exam because he will only fail.' So, the son does not take the exam, but this son is so impudent that he says, 'If I had taken the exam, I would have passed it.' If his father had actually permitted him to take the exam and he had failed it, this failure would have been an argument against him.

So, the True Lord's knowledge is not an argument which binds us, but the practical manifestation of this knowledge is what binds us. These kinds of trials based on forbidden things occurred often. An example of this is the trial which the True Lord sent to the Jews by forbidding all hunting and fishing on the Sabbath; the fish came in great numbers on this day, as if tempting them to fish; on the other days, no fish came. So they devised a way to disobey the commandment by making nets to catch the fish which would remain alive and trapped until Sunday when they could take them. Yet, this ruse of theirs only proved their foolishness because the act of catching the fish was completed when the intention was made; the work was done and the preparations were made to catch them. The trial given in Islam was by means of the game which was within man's hands, so '... that Allah may make evident those who fear Him even though they cannot see Him: from now on, anyone who transgresses will have a painful punishment.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 94)

We saw in a former verse that the True Lord says: '...These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, transgress them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229). Thus, if something is enjoined, then we must do it; and if it is prohibited, then we must not come near it, lest we fall into it and then provide an argument against our own selves—because the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, said: 'That which is lawful is plain, and that which is unlawful is plain; between them are matters that are not clear, about which not many people know. Thus, he who guards against the unclear matters, he clears himself with regard to his religion and his honour, but he who falls

into the unclear matters, he falls into that which is unlawful. Like the shepherd who pastures around a sanctuary, all but grazing therein. Every king has a sanctuary. And beware! Allah's sanctuary is His prohibitions.⁽¹⁾ The True Lord then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَقْتُلُوا الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهُ مِنْكُمْ مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ
يَحْكُمُ بِهِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِنْكُمْ هَدْيًا بَالِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ كَفَّرَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسْكِينٍ أَوْ عَدْلٌ ذَلِكَ صِيَامًا
لِيَذُوقَ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهُ عَفَا اللَّهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْقِمِ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾

You, who believe, do not kill game while you are in the state of consecration [for pilgrimage]. If some- one does so intentionally the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the Ka'ba, equivalent – as judged by two just men among you – to the one he has killed; alternatively, he may atone by feeding the needy or by fasting an equivalent number of days, so that he may taste the full gravity of his deed. God forgives what is past, but if anyone re-offends, God will exact the penalty from him: God is mighty and capable of exacting the penalty [95] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 95)

That is, do not kill game when you have entered consecration for either the major or the minor pilgrimages, or for both of them; and even if you are not on pilgrimage, then you are forbidden from hunting, whilst you are within the bounds of the Sanctuary. Allah has therefore made a sanctuary of time and a sanctuary of place; it is a place where people can go to escape being humiliated by others who have delusions of grandeur. In the past, they would fight wars against each other, so the True Lord made four months sacred, wherein no fighting was allowed; that gave a breather those who were tired of fighting, and gave a way out for those who were fearful of losing their dignity. It gave all a chance to taste the sweetness of peace and security which might cause them to prefer to continue to live in peace and security thereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* also made the Sanctuary a place of security, wherein no one was allowed to harm another. All of this was to preserve people's dignity,

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and Ibn Majah on the authority of An-Nu' man ibn Al-Bashir

lest it might be harmed before others. For example, if two parties are in conflict, and each one desires to make peace with the other, if any neutral person intermediates, he will be successful because both sides want peace and both sides want to end the war, but their vainglorious delusions of grandeur make each of them too proud to be the first to ask the other for peace.

The True Lord willed that these four sacred months give people an opportunity for truce and reconciliation. Thus, people headed for *Al-Bayt Al-Haram* (the Sacred Mosque), where they could relinquish their hatred and spend time away from fighting, so that things could be resolved in an atmosphere of tranquillity, balance and calm. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'O you, who believe, do not kill game while you are in the state of consecration (for pilgrimage). If some— one does so intentionally the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the *Ka'ba*, equivalent— as judged by two people of probity among you— to the one he has killed; alternatively, he may atone by feeding the needy or by fasting an equivalent number of days so that he may taste the full gravity of his deed. Allah forgives what is past, but if anyone re-offends, Allah will exact the penalty from him: Allah is mighty, and the Lord of Retribution.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 95)

A creature is not considered to be 'game' unless it is something that can be eaten; as for hunted animals that cannot be eaten such as lions or the like, some of the scholars say that it is not forbidden to kill them. But we say that everything which is hunted should be considered 'game' whether it can be eaten or not so that we may teach ourselves, our bodies and our limbs how to have good conduct, whilst we are in a state of consecration. The meaning of *hurum* is either in the consecrated state of the pilgrim or presence in the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary's boundaries are well known; the one who is inside it is not allowed to hunt anything from the moment he passes the appointed stations for the beginning of the major or minor pilgrimages.

Therefore, hunting is prohibited for everyone who enters the Blessed Sanctuary of Mecca, whether they are pilgrims or not; and for those who intend to make the major or minor pilgrimage, the prohibition against hunting is even broader because it begins from the moment they enter consecration, whether it is major, minor or both. But what is the ruling if a person breaks

this law and hunts? ‘... If someone does so intentionally....’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 95) Yet, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* added the case of accidental killing of animals to that of intentional killing; this is in order to let every Muslim know that he must pay close attention to what he does when he is in a state of consecration or when he is inside the Sanctuary.

Suppose you want to scratch your head with your fingernails whilst you are in a state of consecration, some of your hair might fall out, and if you are sure this has happened, you must make an offering (sacrificial animals) to the *Ka’ba*, fast or feed the needy. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants you to be fully aware, when you are on the pilgrimage that every move you make will be recorded and judged; therefore, you must have the utmost spiritual vigilance, and even the least error for which must be made amends. Therefore, those who kill game must make amends for indulging in something Allah *Glorified is He* forbade, and the True Lord specified what amends must be made when He says, ‘...the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the *Ka’ba*, equivalent....’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 95) The scholars have made much discussion of the ‘equivalence’ meant here; does it mean equivalent value or equivalent form? Equivalent value means that the value of the animal must be ascertained, and then one must purchase any kind of cattle with this value and slaughter it. Equivalent form means that one must find a similar animal to the one killed, as close to its form as one can find. The proof of this is that when a Muslim killed a hyena, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded him to slaughter a sheep. Companions, including ‘Ali, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* commanded a man⁽¹⁾ who killed an ostrich to make amends for it by offering a male or female camel because they resemble ostriches in their height. When a man killed a male gazelle, he made amends by offering a ram; when someone killed a female gazelle, he was ordered to make amends by offering a goat. When someone killed a jerboa (a rodent somewhat larger than a mouse), he was ordered to make amends by offering a baby goat; that is, a young goat which has just begun to eat and do without its mother’s milk.

(1) The story of the Muslim man who killed an ostrich in the Haram

Here, the equivalence is of form, and Abu Hanifa said that equivalence of value can be used if no equivalent form of animal can be found. So, the person who hunts to feed himself must pay the price of this error by feeding other needy people; and if equivalence is based on value, then the value is determined by people of insight, specifically two people of probity: ‘...the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the *Ka’ba*, equivalent— as judged by two people of probity among you...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 95). This means people who do not shy away from the truth and who observe the measure strictly and with justice.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to be fair-minded so that we can be people of probity. That is, when a person deals with two rivals, he devotes half his attention to one rival and the other half to the other without capriciously inclining towards either one of them and without turning his face to one of them more than to the other. If someone asks how we get hold of these two people of probity, we tell him to look at how fair they are with themselves, look to see if their behaviour is upright or not, see whether they are wasteful or temperate in the way they eat or the way they deal with their anger, or any other aspect of their behaviour. If a person deals with himself in an honest way, he will deal with others in an honest way. Moreover, the person chosen should also have experience in these matters. People must be aware of these things because we see that there is a wave of hypocrisy running through the youth and overtaking some societies in a way that we hear voices saying, ‘The youth must take control.’

We say to those who advance such ideas: Take a moment to examine these notions carefully because a young person must go about his work while he is still young, and we must observe him and see if he succeeds in his work; if he proves to be trustworthy in his actions, and treats himself justly and if he does not harm himself, and if this is the case, then, we nominate him to serve his people since he has proved that he can be trusted to treat himself fairly. It is not right for us to experimentally place our community in the hands of someone who does not have any previous experience to call on. It is not right for us to give authority in any sphere to those whom they call ‘wunderkinds’. Those who wish to experiment should experiment on themselves and their

possessions not on communities and people. A young person must begin his life with serious activity for his own sake so that he can derive immediate benefits from it, and he must not cheat. If he succeeds in doing so, then we may allow him to devote some or all of his time to serving his people once he has proved to us the following: he has sufficient mental maturity, he has adequate experience, he has lost the desire for personal ambition and small pleasures and he has attained the ability to devote all his attention to arbitrating between people.

If the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands us to choose people of probity to make decisions about the slaughter of rams, then what about the decisions concerning the life of people and their interests? So, we are required to identify people of probity by watching how people behave towards themselves and towards their families. When we find that they can be trusted to deal with themselves fairly, we can trust them with the affairs of others through public service so that the community does not fail since communities only fail because of the poor decisions they make when choosing leaders for various positions of authority.

We may observe here the precision of the concepts which the Noble Quran puts forth because we are faced with the issue of a ram or other animal which must be decided by two persons of probity: ‘...the penalty is an offering of a domestic animal brought to the *Ka’ba*, equivalent— as judged by two people of probity among you— to the one he has killed...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 95). All that the persons of probity decree must be taken to the *Ka’ba* and there to be eaten by those who gather in the Sacred Mosque to worship the Most Merciful. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to secure the nourishment of those who live in a valley where no crops grew, even by means of the errors of those who disobeyed Allah’s ban of hunting animals.

But what is to be done if the erring person does not have the ability to make an offering and bring it to the *Ka’ba*? The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not leave these kinds of matters unexplained. Thus, He set an alternative expiation by feeding the needy whose number is again determined by two persons of probity. The person who is unable to feed the needy must fast a number of days equal to the number of poor people whom he would have fed

if he were able. 'Alternatively, he may atone by feeding the needy or by fasting an equivalent number of days so that he may taste the full gravity of his deed' (*al-Ma'ida*: 95). The word *wabal* (gravity) means weight and consequence. Why this gravity? Because when a person spends his money on an animal equal to that which he killed, it will be difficult for him to give up his wealth; and if he feeds needy people, he will have to buy food with money which is also difficult for him to give up; likewise, fasting will exhaust him. This kind of expiation makes a person taste the full gravity of what he has done; in doing so, the True Lord wants to make sure that this awareness was not a mere formality, and that the offence was not a mere formality. He *the Exalted* wants to link benefit to good deeds and harm to bad deeds so that the affairs of the world would be set straight. We have a clear example of this in the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn: 'And they ask you, (O Muhammad), about Dhul-Qarnayn. Say, "I will recite to you about him a report. (83) Indeed we established him upon the earth, and we gave him to everything a way (84)' (*al-Kahf*: 83-84).

The True Lord established Dhu Al-Qarnayn's power securely on earth and gave him the means to achieve anything; yet, he did not simply rely on what he had been given and was not idle or lazy, but rather, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us: 'With these he followed a road' (*al-Kahf*: 85).

Dhu Al-Qarnayn⁽¹⁾ made the most of the security which Allah *Glorified is He* had given him on earth; he made the most of the means which Allah gave him; he derived from them energy and a sense of responsibility to carry on executing his mission, 'Until when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it (as if) setting in a spring of dark mud, and he found near it a people. Allah said, "O Dhul-Qarnayn, either you punish (them) or else adopt among them (a way of) goodness."' (*al-Kahf*: 86) He reached the place where, in his eyes, it appeared that the sun set because when a person stands in an empty place at sunset, he can see the sun setting before his eyes as though it is falling behind the horizon although the truth is that this is the range of vision. The assignment was given to Dhu Al-Qarnayn: either punish the people or adopt among them (a way of) goodness; and he had to judge the deeds of each of

(1) The story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn

them and requite them accordingly. He did not do this capriciously because the Allah *Glorified is He* had established his power on earth. Therefore, the True Lord says: ‘He answered, “We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord, He will punish them (even more) severely....”’ (*al-Kahf*: 87)

When any man – even an opportunist – sees that those who do bad deeds are afflicted by woes and loss, he will abstain from them, even if he does not believe in the Last Day. As for those who believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and the Last Day, how will they be treated? The True Lord says: ‘while those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards: we shall command them to do what is easy for them.’ (*al-Kahf*: 88)

They will attain honour and encouragement, which should only be attained by those who adhere to the truth not by hypocrites or licentious people; this is the constitution of all those who are firmly established on earth and how Allah’s Commandments and Prohibitions are observed. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* enjoins upon us the prohibition of hunting in the Sacred Mosque, or for those in the consecrated state, and ordained a punishment for those who err in this, He is just with us because there can be no punishment without a crime and no crime without a law. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Allah forgives what is past, but if anyone re-offends, Allah will exact the penalty from him: Allah is mighty, and the Lord of Retribution.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 95) So, He forgives all that is past, but all who again violate Allah’s prohibition in this regard will be punished for it by the True Lord Who will not accept any offering, feeding of the needy or fasting from them—because repeating a sin means to persist in it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* will inflict his retribution on them, for He is *the Almighty* Who cannot be overcome.

After speaking about hunting on land and its ruling, the True Lord wants to clarify that such ruling does not apply to all game. He has forbidden us the game of the land if we are pilgrims or within the Sanctuary, and He then says:

أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهُ، مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ
صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

**It is permitted for you to catch and eat seafood – an enjoyment
for you and the traveller – but hunting game is forbidden while
you are in the state of consecration [for pilgrimage].**

Be mindful of God to whom you will be gathered [96]

(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 96)

This is a precise statement which makes clear that all sea game and seafood are lawful, whilst the land game is forbidden for the pilgrim in consecration and for all those present in the Sanctuary whether pilgrims or not. That is, it is not a case of fixed allowance or fixed prohibition; rather, it is a matter of leaving the will of the self and embracing the will of Allah *Glorified is He*. *Sayd al-bahr* (sea game) is that which we catch by artifice and eat fresh. *Ta'aam al-bahr* (seafood) means what we prepare to be food by salting. So, the True Lord says: '...an enjoyment for you and the traveller...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 96). Therefore, the True Lord adds 'its food' to 'sea game' by the word 'and'. Something cannot be added to itself; rather, when we add one thing to another, this means they are different.

So, a resident person in a town eats fresh fish, and the traveller takes fish and dries and salts it so he can take it with him to eat on his journey. This is what Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did with his fish. But there are some things which are fished from the sea but not eaten such as pearls, and the animals we take from the sea for their bones and teeth and so on. So, what about them? Allah has allowed us to enjoy everything which we take from the sea; and here this permission is given in the form of the Arabic rhetorical device known as *laff wa nashr* (involution and evolution) such as when the True Lord says: 'And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and (by day) seek from His bounty and (that) perhaps you will be grateful....' (*al-Qasas*: 73)

We all know that night is for rest and day is for toil, and that night and day follow each other; so the rest here refers to night, and the seeking from his bounty through toil refers to day. Therefore, the statement is a form of

‘involution and evolution.’ I have mentioned this before with how the Arab poet did this when he said:

My heart, my eye, my tongue, and my Creator

Content, weeping, thankful, and forgiving

The heart is content, the eye weeps, the tongue gives thanks and the Creator is forgiving; but he unfolded each predicate after having gathered the four subjects together. That is, he gathered all the subjects together and then listed all their predicates afterwards. In our daily life, when we travel we buy gifts for our children; then, we organize them according to the sequence in which the children entered our lives. That is, we gather all the gifts together, and then we distribute them afterwards.

After declaring sea game lawful, the True Lord *Glorified is He* declares hunting on land unlawful for those who are pilgrims. This is a further affirmation of the unlawfulness of hunting on land when one is in consecration for the pilgrimage or presence in the Sanctuary.

The True Lord ends the verse by saying: ‘...Be mindful of Allah to whom you will be gathered.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 96) That is, place a shield between yourselves and Allah’s punishment because you could not endure the suffering of hell. As we said before, the True Lord has attributes of beauty which bring ease and benefit such as Abundance of Provision, Forgiveness and Mercy; and He also has attributes of power, such as Compeller, Severe in punishment and so on. Each one of Allah’s attributes has its purpose. Therefore, when a man sins, he has to take into consideration Allah’s attributes of Majesty, and one of the hosts of the attributes of Majesty is hell.

So, beware of imagining that you can flee from Allah *Glorified is He* for the sphere of freedom which is given to every man has two boundaries: birth and death. No one can choose how he is born or how he dies. So, beware, O man, of becoming a prisoner of delusion because all your free will is hemmed in by two boundaries, and governed by two unavoidable facts: one is that He created you in the beginning, and the other is that you shall return to Him in the end.

The True Lord then says:

جَعَلَ اللَّهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيَمًا لِلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ
وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْفَلَاحِذَ ذَلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٧﴾

God has made the *Ka'ba* – the Sacred House – a means of support for people, and the Sacred Months, the animals for sacrifice and their garlands: all this. Know that God has knowledge of all that is in the heavens and earth and that He is fully aware of all things [97] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 97)

Here, the verb 'has made' means 'made clear' and 'explained'. He says that the *Ka'ba* is inviolable and has a sanctity which decrees that the believer must be secure inside it; or *ja'ala* (has made) means to make attributes for things which already exist in material form such as when the True Lord says: '...He has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds, so that you might have cause to be grateful' (*an-Nahl*: 78), so *Ja'ala* means 'has endowed'. That is, He specified that a certain group of cells in man's body would form an eye, another group would form a nose and a third group would form a tongue. Here, the True Lord says: 'Allah has made the *Ka'ba*— the Sacred House— a means of support for people....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 97) We know that all abstract concepts are derived from concrete ones.

The word *ka'b* means something which rises from a flat surface; for example, the Arabic word for ankle is *ka'b* because of how it is raised from the foot; and when a young girl reaches physical maturity and develops breasts she is called *ka'ab* or *ka'ib*, meaning that her breasts have risen. The *Ka'ba* stands out; it is elevated, and this elevation is one of the signs of the Sacred House; it is an area of land, but its height is what determines its volume.

For example, when we want to measure an area of a land, we measure the length and breadth, and then multiply one by the other to work out the surface area. But if there is also height, this means we are dealing not with an area but with volume or size. The True Lord says: 'And (mention) when Abraham was raising the foundations of the House and (with him) Ishmael...' (*al-Baqara*: 127).

That is, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* wanted to give the Sacred House height and volume, and this building indicates that a volume

was being made for an area of land. So, the House became the *Ka'ba* after it was given height. The word for 'Temple' here is *bayt* which literally means 'house' or a dwelling place. When a person keeps moving to several places all day and wants to rest, he goes to his house.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* made the *Ka'ba* a house for people where they can rest from the toil of their lives and their woes; for it is the house of their Lord by their Lord's own choosing, not by their choosing. Every mosque is a house of Allah, but only by Allah's creatures' choice; as for the *Ka'ba*, it is the House of Allah *Glorified is He* by His choosing, and it is the focal point for all the houses of Allah *Glorified is He* which were chosen by His creatures.

'*Ja'al Allahu-l Ka'bata-l Baita-l Haraama qiyaama-l linnaasi*' (Allah has made the *Ka'ba*— the Sacred House— a mean of support for people...)' (*al-Ma'ida*: 97). The Arabic words *Al Baita-l Haraama*, 'the Sacred House, 'imply that there are many sacred laws of inviolability pertaining to it. Now, the word *qiyaama-l*, literally, means, in Arabic, 'to stand', and 'to stand 'can also mean' to be in charge of something', and to be in charge of something means to give it everything it needs to live and exist.

Thus, we understand that He wanted the *Ka'ba* to be the Inviolable House in order to preserve for man the essentials of life such as food, drink, the preservation of the species and the avoidance of harm; beyond those, his dominion, leadership, nobility, and stability. Faith gives man a more elevated life because life is something which believers and nonbelievers share, and it begins with the presence of the spirit in the body which makes the body move and have sensation; the believer is the one who elevates his life, allowing it to enjoy the benefits of faith, and keeps it from harm. By doing so, he attains leadership, and his worldly life is connected to his Afterlife in a way that his life never ends.

The True Lord made the *Ka'ba*, the Sacred House, the means for all mankind that is, a way to put their lives in order, whether in this world or in the Hereafter—in the material life which ends in death, and the next life which begins in the Hereafter. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about this: 'Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24).

Thus, we see that faith in Allah *Glorified is He* is a way to connect the two lives: the material life of this world and the life of the Hereafter. With this, the True Lord wants to ward off harm and bring the believers benefit, honour, and power. We know that the Inviolable House was the first temple ever set up for mankind: 'The first House (of worship) to be established for people was the one at Mecca. It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people.' (*Al-'Imran*: 96)

We also know that it was Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who raised the foundations of the Sacred House; as for the temple itself, it had already been established before that. As long as the True Lord says, '...established for people...' (*Al-'Imran*: 96), this means that Allah *Glorified is He* did not deny the people who lived before Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* from having a temple as 'people' means all human beings, from Adam *peace be upon him* until the end of time. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the Friend of the Most Merciful, built the third dimension—height—by raising the foundations of the Inviolable House. The True Lord says: 'We showed Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of the House...' (*al-Hajj*: 26). That is, the True Lord showed the site of the Temple to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. We know that Ibrahim's son Ismael (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* helped his father to raise the foundations of the Sacred House, and we know that he first came to this place with his mother⁽¹⁾ when he was still a baby. After the foundations had been raised, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made this supplication to his Lord, 'Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). Ibrahim (Abraham) knew where the Sacred House was, and that it was in a valley bereft of arable land, without water or crops. Allah *Glorified is He* uses this description to tell us that there is no life without crops, and that crops need water. With this, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had responded to Allah's call by coming to a place which contained none of the blessings which life needs, but there was the Giver of all blessings. Therefore,⁽²⁾ we see that when Hajar *may Allah be pleased with her* heard Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*

(1) Hajar *may Allah be pleased with her*

(2) The story of Hajar pacing back and forth

tell her to go to that place with her son, she called to him, 'O Ibrahim, with whom will you leave us?' He replied, 'With Allah', and she said, 'I am content with Allah.' Then, Hajar let him go where he pleased, for she knew that Allah *Glorified is He* would not abandon her or her son because she had said, 'I am content with Allah'.

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, told us her story, and how she rushed between As-Safa and Al-Marwah, and that she trusted that the Supreme Creator would not abandon her or her son, but He would provide for them, and so she rushed between As-Safa and Al-Marwah in the hope that she would see a bird which would indicate the presence of water; she would return to Al-Marwah in the hopes of seeing a passing caravan. She utilised the means at her disposal, whilst also knowing that she was in the presence of Allah. She rushed back and forth seven times, although she was a female of advanced age all because of keenness to find water for her child to drink.

Running, as we know, is a tiring activity; and had Allah *Glorified is He* given her water at As-Safa or Al-Marwah, her words 'Allah will not abandon us' would not have been confirmed; but the True Lord gave her water at the very feet of her baby. By doing this, He alerted and guided us to two things: firstly, a person must strive as hard as he can; secondly, it is not striving alone which brings results, but rather, all results are given by Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* used the running between As-Safa and Al-Marwah to teach us the practical lesson that we must utilise the means, but not forget the Creator of all means because people fall into grave error when they become infatuated with material means."No! (But) indeed, man transgresses (6) because he sees himself self-sufficient (7)" (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7)

The means must never isolate you from the Creator of all means, and neither must you say, 'I shall remain with the Creator of means until the means come to me'; rather, you must always utilise the means and always remember their Creator. Therefore, we say, 'Bodies work, but hearts trust in Allah *Glorified is He*.' This is the importance of how the True Lord gave water to Hajar *may Allah be pleased with her* at the very feet of her son; thus, the prayer of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was answered after he had called unto

Allah, 'Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they may keep up the prayer. Make people's hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce, so that they may be thankful.' (*Ibrahim*: 37)

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* prayed for fruitful sustenance because the valley was bereft of arable land; therefore, the True Lord made people's hearts incline towards the *Ka'ba* and the Sacred House. He says, '...Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary where every kind of produce is brought, as a provision from Us?' (*al-Qasas*: 57)

The word 'established' tells us that the people would not bring these fruits to the Sacred House which Allah *Glorified is He* made as a source of life to all who dwelled within it, of their own free will, but rather, they would be compelled to bring them. There are people who own large farms and fruitful orchards in Ta'if and other cities. When someone wants to buy their produce they say to him, 'It is reserved for Mecca, so if you wish to buy it you must go to Mecca.'

The True Lord answered the prayer of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, 'Make people's hearts turn to them...' (*Ibrahim*: 37), and here, the word *tahwi* (turn) literally means 'to fall from a great height.' It is as though the yearning for the *Ka'ba* makes a person throw himself at it; therefore, we find that some people are besotted with the pilgrimage, and their spirits yearn for it.

There is a difference between *yahwa* which means 'to love to go somewhere', and *yahwi* which means 'to reach a place by momentum.' If a person falls from a high place, he cannot say, 'I will stop here' when he reaches a particular spot halfway down—he is falling, he does not have the power to stop himself from moving. Therefore, the True Lord says: 'Make people's hearts turn to them...' (*Ibrahim*: 37).

This shows that it is not the body which inclines here, but the heart, and hearts are in the Hand of Allah *Glorified is He* and He causes them to incline. The *Ka'ba* is the Sacred House, and it is a means of support for man's life; Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...And whoever enters it is secure...' (*Al-'Imran*: 97).

So, the one who enters the *Ka'ba* is secure (safe) even if he is a murderer. A man could find the killer of his father in the *Ka'ba*, but he would not harm

him. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave them all the beneficial constituents of life, and protected them against any harm.

And as for supremacy and honour, we know that Quraysh were the chiefs of the Arabs, and their men were custodians and servants of the House of Allah, and everyone would come to them; so no one would harm their caravans on their way to the Levant or Yemen. If anyone assaulted the caravans of Quraysh, its members could exact vengeance upon them when they came to them. And this was the pinnacle of supremacy. So, the constituents of life consist in benefits which are brought, and harm which is averted – and this was attained by the security which was afforded to all who entered it. And there was also the position of supremacy which Quraysh enjoyed over all the Arabs. And Allah *Glorified is He* gave an example to Quraysh of how He protected the *Ka'ba* when Abraha came to destroy it: 'Have you not considered, (O Muhammad), how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1)

And Allah *Glorified is He* thwarted the plans of the Army of the Elephant because had they destroyed the *Ka'ba*, the supremacy of Quraysh would have ended; and therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'And He made them like eaten straw.' (*al-Fil*: 5) 'For the protection of Quraysh; their protection during their trading caravans in the winter and the summer.' (*Quraysh*: 1-2)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* made the Army of the Elephant like eaten straw, i.e. which cattle have eaten and expelled as manure. Allah *Glorified is He* did this so that Quraysh would be assured and confident that the *Ka'ba* would never be harmed, and that their winter and summer journeys were protected because of how all the tribes needed to perform the pilgrimage. Allah *Glorified is He* then said: 'Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, (saving them) from hunger and made them safe, (saving them) from fear. (*Quraysh*: 3-4)

That is, He bestowed upon them the blessing of food and protected them from the harm of fear, and preserved their supremacy and the prestige of serving the *Ka'ba* which Allah made as a source of support and security for mankind; for He *Glorified is He* expiates the sins of those who go on pilgrimage to the House, and their sins fall away and leave them as pure as they were the day their mothers bore them; and this fortifies their lives in the Hereafter, as well.

So Allah has made the Inviolable House a symbol of support for all aspects of life; and as we know, the Sacred House is a place. And the True Lord *Glorified is He* also has assigned the sacred months symbols of support for life. As we know, the sacred months are times. There are four sacred months, one of which stands alone, namely *Rajab* – which is why it is known as ‘*Rajab the Solitary*’ – and the other three of which are connected and follow each other, namely *Dhul Qa'da*, *Dhul Hijja* and *Muharram*. And the meaning of ‘the sacred month’ is any one of the four sacred months.

We know that every action requires a doer, and the doer needs time in which to do the action, and a place to do it, and a motive for doing it, and the power to do it. Therefore, let us all remember that the True Lord *Glorified is He* said, ‘Never say of anything, “Indeed, I will do that tomorrow,” except (when adding), “If Allah wills.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 23-24) So, do not say, ‘I shall do this tomorrow’ without following it by saying *insha'allah* (if Allah wills). This does not prevent us from planning for our futures, for as long as we defer to Allah’s will we have the right to plan for our lives, and say, ‘If Allah wills’. For the components of an action are a subject, an object, a time, a place, a cause and the power to do the action; no one possesses any of these components. For as a man, you do not have the power to ensure that you will be alive tomorrow, nor that the object of your action will exist tomorrow, and you do not possess the time, or the place, or the cause because it might change; and you do not possess the power to do the action because this power might be taken from you before you do it.

So, you do not possess any of the components of the action, and therefore you must not be so bold as to say, ‘I shall do this tomorrow.’ Rather, you must defer it to the One Who possesses all these components, and say, ‘If Allah wills’; and by doing this, you will not be lying.

In this verse, we find that there are two components: place and time. The place is the Sacred House, and the time is the sacred month. The thing in which an action occurs is called in Arabic the *maf'ul fihi* (an object wherein action is done), and it can be either a place or a time. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to affirm to us those things which are a source of security to mankind, both in space and in time. And had Allah *Glorified is He* not done that for time by means of the sacred months, and for space by means of the Sacred House,

then the wars of the Arab tribes would never have stopped. Therefore, He intended form legislating the sacred months to give an opportunity for reflection on the causes of the war, and to give all the Arabs a break from fighting. At that time, every Arab considered his preparations for war as having the same level of importance as his food and drink, and they were all taught riding, fighting, spear throwing, and sword fighting.

And when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to spread the call throughout earth, many of his Companions had no experience of warfare because almost everyone was already prepared to fight. It is as if Allah wanted Islam to bring an end to tribal animosities and cycles of violence, and also for Islam to benefit from the battle experience which every Arab had. And Islam also benefitted from the fact that the Arabs were generally a nomadic people who lived in the saddle, travelling and pitching their tents wherever they slept; for people only become attached to homelands when they build houses there, and when someone builds a house for himself somewhere, he grows to love what he has built.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* had prepared them to go out and spread Allah's word throughout the earth without being sad to leave one place for another; rather, each one of them would go somewhere and settle there to establish an Islamic presence, and they were all good examples for the communities to whom they went. One of them might go to the Levant and settle there, and he would not miss Arabia; and the same was true for those who went to Egypt, and everywhere else.

So, by defining the sacred months and the Sacred House, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted Arabs to have a respite from fighting instead of allowing war to destroy their civilisation; and the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted this to be a symbol of security and preservation for mankind.

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* made 'the sacrificial animals and garlanding' inviolable. The sacrificial animals were the animals which were offered to the Sanctuary for the people there to eat because the Sanctuary existed in a place where there was no arable land. 'The sacrificial animal' (*hady*) is an animal which someone offers and places around its neck a garland of leaves or the like; and when people saw the garland, they knew that this animal had been

offered to the Sanctuary, so no one would go near it, even its owner, even if he was sorely hungry. And this was a symbol of security for the people.

And the verse continues, 'that is so you may know that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth and that Allah knows of all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 97). This refers to everything that has gone before, and that is so you may know that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. This means that Allah *Glorified is He* arranges for them all the things which protect their lives from all of life's vicissitudes. He arranged for them the preservation of their lives, and He protected them from hunger, and He gave them security, and He persevered for them their supremacy; and He did all this by His arrangement, and He is the All-Wise. He arranged everything from pre-eternity, and everything happened just as He had arranged it, in the best and most beneficial way; and if He *Glorified is He* did all of this, it is because He is the All Knowing and the All-Wise.


All of this happened according to His knowledge and His wisdom. We believe that there are other things unknown to us which He also did with this absolute wisdom and absolute knowledge. 'That is so you may know that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth and that Allah knows of all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 97) He arranged people's lives in Arabia and around the Sacred House even though they worshipped idols before the message was sent to them; yet He guided them with the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. Therefore, He then says, 'Know that Allah is severe in penalty and that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful' (*al-Ma'ida*: 98); for He *Glorified is He* made the House secure and safe, and this was a sacred law, not a natural law.

The difference between a natural law and a sacred law is that the natural law will inevitably occur because it requires no human interference, but the sacred law, on the other hand, is a commandment which people must obey. So if they obey the commandment, Allah has revealed to them, they will make the House secure; and if they sin, they will make it insecure.

Recently, when a young man named Juhayman⁽¹⁾ attacked the Sanctuary, people wondered, 'How could anyone attack the Sanctuary, when Allah wanted

(1) The story of Jahyman's attacking the sacred house in recent time

it to be secure?’ Our reply is that when Allah ordained that the House be a secure Sanctuary, this was a commandment which the believer must obey, and if they do not obey it, then they will not be secure therein. To illustrate the difference between natural laws and sacred laws, consider that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...good women are for good men...’ (*an-Nur*: 26). In life, we find that a corrupt man might marry a good woman, and that a good man might marry a corrupt woman; and this confirms for us that the True Lord’s words ‘...good women are for good men...’ (*an-Nur*: 26) is a sacred commandment that a good man should marry a good woman like him, as we must obey this if we truly believe in Allah’s way of guidance, but if we reject this guidance, then we will allow good men to marry bad women, and bad men to marry good women, and this will throw the family structure out of balance, and societal life will become hellish. In order to preserve the balance of society, we must make sure that good men marry good women, and we must leave the corrupt men and women to each other so that our lives will not be ruined. And Allah *Glorified is He* alerts us to the essential importance of obeying His commandments of Sacred Law by saying:


 أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

**Know too that God is severe in punishment yet most
forgiving and merciful [98] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 98)**

That is, be fully aware of Allah’s laws, and obey His will; and those who disobey Allah should be aware that He *Glorified is He* is severe in retribution, while those who obey Allah should know that He *Glorified is He* is forgiving and merciful. And He *Glorified is He* contrasts one attribute of majesty with two attributes of beauty: the attribute ‘...severe in penalty...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 98), is contrasted with the two attributes: ‘...Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 98) This is because not all people are good, and not all people are evil, and therefore, He refers to the good people with the forgiveness and grace which they merit, and to the evil people with the severe penalty they merit; and His forgiveness and merciful grace dominate His wrath and retribution which we can see by how He contrasts one single attribute of majesty, ‘...severe in penalty...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 98), with two attributes of beauty, ‘...Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 98) And the True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

﴿٩٩﴾ مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ

The Messenger's duty is only to deliver the message: God knows what you reveal and what you conceal [99] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 99)

The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by the True Lord *Glorified is He* to us. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the first and absolute doer whose deeds cannot be challenged by any other doer; and the first object of the message is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the second object of it is us. In Arabic grammar, there is also what is called the *maf'ul ma'ah* (object of accompaniment), the *maf'ul lah* (object of reason), the *maf'ul fih* (object of content), the *maf'ul bih* (through object) and the *maf'ul ilayhi* (indirect object); an example of an indirect object is found when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'By Allah, We did certainly send (messengers) to nations before you, but Satan made their deeds attractive to them. And he is the disbelievers' ally today (as well), and they will have a painful punishment.' (*an-Nahl*: 63). There is also the *maf'ul minh* (object of membership), such as when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And Moses chose from his people seventy men for our appointment...' (*al-A'raf*: 155).

The words 'his people' here is the 'within object' (in Arabic, the words 'out of' are not used because they are implied by this grammatical function which does not exist in English) because he chose seventy members of his people who had not worshipped the calf to pray for forgiveness for those who had worshipped it, and to ask Allah to give them relief from their trials.

The mission of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to deliver the message: 'Not upon the Messenger is (responsibility) except (for) notification.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 99) As for implementing the message, this is the role of those who believe in the message of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; if they do it, they will enter paradise, but if they do not, they will be punished. And the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted the message that His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* delivered to be accompanied by the good example of His own conduct. So, the Messenger delivers and then implements what he delivers before our eyes, so that we can follow him.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* said, 'There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah, an excellent example...' (*al-Ahzab*: 21). This nullifies any ascription of divinity to a human being; for if any messenger was a God, the people would have said, 'How can we follow this messenger, whereas his attributes and characteristic are different from those of humans?' The Messenger cannot be a God because he is the role model and example for those to whom he is sent: he prays, fasts, gives charity, makes pilgrimages, and he commands those to whom he is sent to follow his example. If he was a God, then those to whom he was sent – human beings – would not be able to do what he did, because – being a god – his nature would be different from theirs, and therefore, they would not be able to imitate him and follow him. The example cannot be made unless the Messenger is the same race as those to whom he is sent; that is, he must be of the human race, and be subject to all human vicissitudes. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said, "Has Allah sent a human messenger?"' (*al-Isra*': 94) That is, the people ignorantly wondered what kept Allah *Glorified is He* from sending them a messenger who was not human, and they wondered why He sent them a messenger from their own human race. Allah *Glorified is He* Himself gives the response saying: 'If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, He would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel (as a) messenger.' (*al-Isra*': 95) In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* conveys unto His messenger the importance of telling the people that the messenger sent to them must be of the human race because the angels do not walk about on earth as their natural abode, and if an angel was sent as a messenger the people would have said, 'We cannot follow what the angels have brought, because they cannot be role models for us since they are not from the human race'. Moreover, the angels are invisible beings, so how could Allah send invisible beings to men as messengers? Even if this were to happen, the True Lord *Glorified is He* would inevitably clothe the angel in human form, as He says in another verse, 'If He had made him an angel, He would have made him appear as a man, and He would have covered them with that in which they cover themselves.' (*al-An'am*: 9) They asked Allah to send them an angel, but if Allah had answered them and sent an angel as a messenger, the angel would have come in a human form, and they would

have persisted in their disbelief and refused to believe; and then they would deserve nothing but Allah's punishment, so He would have destroyed them. The mission of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is to deliver the message and be a role model for us. The verse continues, 'Allah knows whatever you reveal and whatever you conceal.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 99)

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* warns us not to accept faith superficially without truly believing in it; for humans might be fooled by superficial things, but Allah can see us with His infinite self-sustaining Power, and He is not taken by slumber or sleep. And these words are a challenge to the hypocrites that Allah *Glorified is He* will judge them; and if a man conceals unbelief in his heart and displays superficial faith, he will be punished by Allah. In addition, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers who follow him must act according to appearances and leave the essence of the matter to Allah.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade us ascribing unbelief to anyone who claims to have faith, even if he is a hypocrite. He *peace and blessings be upon him* told us that he was a human being, and he knew that human beings have limited powers; and therefore, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Verily, I am only a human and the claimants bring to me their disputes. Some of them are more eloquent than others. I judge per what I hear from them. So, he whom I, by my judgment, (give the undue share) out of the right of a Muslim, I in fact give him a portion of (hell) fire.'⁽¹⁾ So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* warned us not to imagine that he had super-human powers; and when a Companion killed a man who had claimed to have faith, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Why did you not cut open his belly and find out what was in his heart?' So, we must follow outward appearances, and consign knowledge of secret truths to Allah. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'He knows whatever you reveal and whatever you conceal.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 99) We know that the act of hypocrisy gives the hypocrite the outward rights of a Muslim for as long as he lives in this temporal life; but his life in the Hereafter is long, and he will be requited therein for the unbelief he concealed. And to conceal

(1) *Muslim*

is not the same as to suppress; to conceal an action means that it is actually done, but the one who does it conceals it from others; as for what is suppressed, this is what exists in the thoughts alone. And a person might be able to suppress something for a while, but as time passes, he will be unable to keep it suppressed, as the Arab poet said:

If a man has a trait, no matter how much

he hides it from the people, it will be known anyway.

And it is said, 'The secret almost shouts, here I am!'

Since the True Lord *Glorified is He* knows all that men do openly and all that they conceal, and He is severe in penalty as well as forgiving and merciful, and He rewards good deeds tenfold and punishes bad deeds as they merit, then what are we to do? The answer comes in the form of a command from Allah *Glorified is He* to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell us:

قُلْ لَا يَسْتَوِي الْخَيْرُ وَالْطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَيْرِ
فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَتَأُولَى الْأَلْبَنَى لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Say [Prophet], 'Bad cannot be likened to good, though you may be dazzled by how abundant the bad is. Be mindful of God, people of understanding, so that you may prosper' [100]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 100)

Therefore, bad things are never equal to good things, and this is shown by the way when one of us goes to buy something, he inspects the wares and chooses the good ones and leaves the bad ones. This is a natural phenomenon which is just like the lack of equality between those who are blind and those who can see, and between darkness and light. And the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds us of concrete concepts to explain abstract concepts to us, and thus He warns us not to be fooled by the quantities and sizes of things; for a little of something good is far more beneficial and better than a lot of something bad. And one might see the goodness of a good thing in this worldly life, but of course its goodness in the Hereafter is far greater than one can imagine, because the Hereafter lasts forever, while the life of this world is limited.

When many people attend any kind of division, each of them desires to take the biggest share for himself because people are deluded by quantity but this greed spoils everything that the greedy person takes. For example, the person who desires to take more wheat than he deserves, it will spoil his life with this bad thing that he has taken. It is like mixing pure water with filthy water so that all the water becomes filthy. So we should not judge things by their quantity and size, but rather, by their quality and kind, and by how long their goodness will last.

The example which I never tire of repeating is that of the pupil who works hard for twenty years, and finally graduates and becomes a person of good standing. As for the pupil who spends twenty years playing and fooling around, he ends up with a failed and painful future. So we must all judge benefit according to its endurance, and not be deluded by a large amount of a bad thing.

These examples are repeated in our daily lives, and we must place them before our eyes so we can keep Allah in mind and not go willingly to our own ruin as so many people do. Some people are not content with the division Allah ordained for their inheritance, and so they give everything to their male relatives and nothing to their female relatives, or they reduce the female relatives' share. We say to those who do this, 'You do not know what you are doing, and if your son knew that Allah's hand influences things, he would say to you, "Have mercy on me and do not harm me"!' The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...your parents or your children, you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit...' (*an-Nisa'*: 11).

Therefore, a man must know that Allah's distribution is the most just one; and beware of over giving of a son or a relative more than what Allah has allotted him because this is the very essence of injustice. If the one who leaves this inheritance does not come to realise this before he dies, then we say to the one who takes the inheritance, 'Beware, and do not take more than what Allah's Law gives you, and return all that you took beyond your right; do this with the chivalry of faith. And do not think that this unjust increase will protect your children, for this increase will only sever their family ties and plant the seeds of hatred and enmity'.

But if you decide to arrange this matter in the way Allah's Law ordains, you will find that provision will come to you from all directions, as long as you respect Allah's Right by adhering to the rules He has willed so that families are united and divine justice is fulfilled. Therefore, no one must dare to challenge Allah's division, and I say to all those who read these words and still want to challenge Allah's division; 'Repent to Allah, and do not spoil your spiritual standing.' No father should imagine that he can guarantee the success of his children in the future; for how often we have seen people leave their families rich, yet they have fallen into penury and destitution; and we have seen people leave their families poor, yet Allah showered them with His provision. And He *Glorified is He* says, 'Let those executors and guardians fear injustice as if they themselves had left weak offspring behind and feared for them. So, let them fear Allah and speak words of appropriate justice.' (*an-Nisa*': 9)

So, the believer must beware of the plenty if it contains bad things; and we may learn much from the story that happened to Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur when he assumed the Caliphate and the people went to congratulate him for becoming the Commander of the Faithful, and he was visited by Muqatil ibn Sulaiman who was a man of wise counsel. Abu Ja'far said to himself, 'He has come to spoil our day! I will speak to him first before he speaks to me.' So, he said to him, 'Counsel us, Muqatil!' Muqatil replied, 'Shall I counsel you about something I have seen, or something I have heard?' This is because hearing is more extensive than seeing, since seeing is limited to what the eye perceives, while hearing has many forms because a person can also hear the experiences of others. Abu Ja'far replied, 'Speak to me of what you have seen.' He replied, 'O Commander of the Faithful, 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al- 'Aziz died and left behind eleven children, and he left eighteen *dinars*, of which five were used to buy his burial shroud and four to buy his grave, and the rest was shared amongst his children. Hisham ibn 'Abdul Malik died, and the inheritance of one of his four wives was eighty thousand *dinars*, in addition to some estates and palaces; and the total share of the four wives was three hundred and twenty thousand *dinars*, and this was only the value of the money he left. By Allah, O Commander of the Faithful, I saw with my own eye these two things in a single day. One of 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz's sons led one hundred cavalries in Allah's Cause, and one of the sons of Hisham ibn 'Abd Al-Malik begged in the street.'

So we should all be aware that none of us entered the world rich, and we must all have good etiquette with Allah and respect His Rights, and we must not interfere with Allah's ordained division.' Say, "Not equal are the evil and the good, although the abundance of evil might impress you." So, fear Allah, O you of understanding, that you may be successful!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 100)

The Muslim, then, must utilise all his mental faculties in order to distinguish the bad from the good, and he must reject all that is bad because if we examine the matter with our intelligence we will conclude that Allah's law is the true and just law.

Allah says, '...so that you may be successful!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 100) The word for successful in Arabic is *falah* which, as we know, is derived from a concrete concept, namely 'to farm (*falaha*) the earth.' A man takes a grain of wheat and plants it, and it gives him seven ears which each contains a hundred grains. The True Lord *Glorified is He* calls all the deeds of the Hereafter (*falah*) because the word has a beautiful origin. For if the earth, which is one of Allah's creations along with all the constituents essential for farming and for life which it contains, gives us seven ears in return for one grain, each ear containing one hundred grains, then how much will the Creator of the earth give us? So, fear Allah, O Muslim, and do not interfere with Allah's division, and keep in mind the wise advice given in the traditional saying, 'The worst of you is the one who leaves his dependants with good, and goes to meet Allah with evil'. And the sons who are tested with this should consider the matter with spiritual high-mindedness; for when a father loves one of his sons and gives him a share of more inheritance than he is due, this is the most foolish kind of love; and the son should respect the emotion of love and forgive the father for this and have mercy on him by returning his share and giving everyone their proper rights, so that his father is not tormented in hell for interfering with Allah's division for the benefit of his son.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْأَلُوا عَنَ أَشْيَاءَ إِن بُدِّلَ لَكُم مَّسْئُومٌ وَإِن تَسْأَلُوا
عَنهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْءَانُ بُدِّلَ لَكُم عَفَا ٱللَّهُ وَعَنَهَا ٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ ٱلْحَلِيمُ ﴿١٠١﴾

**You who believe, do not ask about matters which, if made known to you, might make things difficult for you – if you ask about them while the Quran is being revealed, they will be made known to you – for God has kept silent about them: God is most forgiving and forbearing [101]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 101)**

This is a prohibition against asking questions, and the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Leave me as I have left you (Do not ask me the minor things that I have avoided to tell you). For those who came before you were doomed because of their questions and differences with their prophets. If I commanded you to do something, and then do as much of it as you can, and if I forbid you from doing something, then refrain from it.’⁽¹⁾

We know that the children of Israel made things difficult for themselves when they kept procrastinating about slaughtering the cow and asking about its colour; they made things difficult for themselves that Allah made things difficult for them. And when the required cow was finally found, it was owned by an orphan boy, and this orphan’s father was a righteous man who owned a cow which he took to a place full of verdure and pasture and said, ‘O Allah, I ask You to look after it for my son until he grows up.’ When they bargained with the orphan for the cow, he sold it to them for gold which would fill its hide.

Some people were excessive in their questioning of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such as ‘Abdullah ibn Hudhayfa ibn Qays As-Sahmi who asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Who is my father?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Your father is Hudhayfa.’ But if it had been the case that this questioner’s father was actually someone else than what was thought, would this not have disgraced his mother? And his mother said to him, ‘I never saw a worse son than you! Did

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you hope that your mother had been tempted to indulge in what the people of pagan ignorance indulged in, that you might expose her to the people?’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to make the people decrease their questioning about things which might cause them difficulty and woe and offend them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* accepted the questions the believers addressed to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning Sacred Law such as their questions about intoxicants, new moons, menstruation, the sacred months and so on; as for other questions, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said about them that He has pardoned that which is past; and Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.

This is because some people were wont to ask questions as though they were testing the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and therefore the commandment was issued that the believers should not intentionally ask about things which Allah *Glorified is He* had hidden from them so that their honour would not be tarnished.’ But if you ask about them while the Quran is being revealed, they will be shown to you’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 101). Therefore, if the Quran revealed the answer, that would be well; and if no answer came, no one had the right to say, ‘The Prophet does not know the answer.’ Or, this refers to questions about the things they had invented which they claimed proved that someone was truly a prophet, of which the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘And they say, “We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring. Or (until) you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force (and abundance). Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring Allah and the angels before (us). Or you have a house of gold or you ascend into the sky. And (even then), we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read. “Say, “Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger”” (*al-Isra'*: 90-93).

These words betrayed their impure intention because the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* does not bring signs, but rather, signs come to him to convey the laws he is obliged to convey; for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* does not choose the signs he brings, but rather, the True Lord *Glorified is He* sends the appropriate signs to him. And the True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

**Before you, some people asked about things, then ignored
(The answers] [102] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 102)**

The fact that the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not send down these signs was a mercy to those who asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for them; for people asked for a she-camel and then they restricted it, so Allah annihilated them; and the people of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* asked for a laden table and it was sent down to them, then the True Lord *Glorified is He* warned them of what would happen if they did not believe after that. And the unchanging way of Allah with His creatures is that if they ask for a sign and then fail to believe in it, the True Lord *Glorified is He* destroys them or punishes them. And He *Glorified is He* gave the followers of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a guarantee that He would not punish them, while he is among them, and He would not punish them, while they seek forgiveness. 'But Allah would not punish them while you, (O Muhammad), are among them, and Allah would not punish them while they seek forgiveness.' (*al-Anfal*: 33)

So, He did not answer the questions they had asked because Allah *Glorified is He* absolved them; and the word for absolution is (*`afw*) which, as we know, is derived from the word (*`affa*) that means to wipe away tracks so they are no longer visible; and Allah's absolution is an aspect of His forgiveness and mercy.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا جَعَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا سَائِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ وَكَثُرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**God did not institute the dedication of such things as *bahira*, *sa' ib*,
wasila, or *ham* to idols; but the disbelievers invent lies about God.
Most of them do not use reason [103] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 103)**

This verse comes in the chapter where Allah declares cattle to be lawful, apart from those exceptions which are unlawful. He is the One Who created

man, and created the nourishment which sustains man's life and the means of procreation which sustain his species; and since the True Lord *Glorified is He* made man His vicegerent on earth, He prepared for him all these constituents of life before He created Adam *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* prepared for His creatures the earth, sky, air, water and all the nutrients He stored and made on the earth which will last until the Day of Resurrection.

We should be aware of the difference between *khalaqa* (creating) and *ja'ala* (making) which could also be translated as ordaining or laying down. They denote different things. To create is to bring something into existence out of nothing, whilst to make is to direct a creation of Allah to its purpose in life. Allah's creatures cannot create anything, for only Allah *Glorified is He* can create and bring things into existence. Our role as created beings is to recognise everything's purpose in life which Allah intended for it; that is, we should leave making to Allah and not interfere with it. For example, this means that the Creator *Glorified is He* created pigs to eat waste and protect man from many illnesses and harms; and therefore, man must recognise that the pig has this purpose, and not turn it to another purpose by eating it; for to turn one of God's creatures into a purpose other than its own, is something which harms man whom Allah intended to be the vicegerent of the universe.

And Allah *Glorified is He* told the people that He permitted some things and forbade others, and man must yield to what Allah has permitted by taking it, and yield to what Allah has forbidden by abstaining from it. The Creator *Glorified is He* is the One who creates and the one who makes; and He says that He has made the *Ka'ba*, the Sacred House, maintenance for the people. He created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness and the light. Further, the True Lord *Glorified is He* forbids us from ascribing partners to Him, whilst it is He Who created us and those before them, and made for us the earth a bed (spread out) and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for us.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Ever-Present, and He is Indivisibly One and Unique, so it is not right to attribute rivals to Him since this is futile. And Allah *Glorified is He* affirms that corruption on earth occurs when people take Allah's creatures and presume to make them into a different state than that in which Allah created them.

In their daily lives, men are keen to use things for their proper purposes. For example, you buy a block of cheese from the cheese-maker and a block of soap from the soap-maker, and you take the cheese and the soap home and tell your family that the cheese is for eating and the soap is for washing, and everyone follows these instructions. Were someone to use the soap for eating and the cheese for washing, the health of the family would be damaged. In the same way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has given us children from our own loins; so how can we take children who came from the loins of others and make them our own? This is a misapplication of *ja' l* (making).

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘...and He has not made your adopted sons your truesons...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 4). Your adopted son is really from the loins of another man, and your wife is not really his mother, so how can you make him your son and allow him to sit in the lap of a woman who is not his mother and grow up accustomed to this, and allow him to look at women who are not his unmarriageable kin as though this is perfectly lawful for him? This will cause him to lose the power to distinguish between the lawful and the unlawful; and therefore adoption is a form of corruption.

All the corruption in the world begins when we make one of Allah’s Creatures do something which Allah did not mean for it to do. The True Lord *Glorified is He* informs us that He created man and created for him what nourishes him and what preserves his species; we must follow the commands of the True Lord *Glorified is He* by taking what is lawful and staying clear of what is unlawful. And if someone says, ‘Why did Allah forbid some of the things He created?’, we say that He created these things for a different purpose than that for which man wants to use them, and an example of this is the prohibition of eating pork.

If one of us sees how animals live in the forest, he will be amazed, for the waste excreted by some animals is food for other animals, and the poison of a snake can be used for protection and medicine. We know that people take the venom of snakes and extract from it cures for certain diseases, and to kill certain germs.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* explains, ‘Say, “Have you seen what Allah has sent down to you of provision of which you have made (some) lawful and (some) unlawful?” Say, “Has Allah permitted you (to do so), or do you invent (something) about Allah?”’ (*Yunus*: 59) How can we then make ourselves

lawgivers by permitting the unlawful and forbidding the lawful? God who created all things did not give us leave to do this. We must accept that everything was created for a purpose, and that we do not have the right to direct it to any other purpose than its own. And directing things to purposes for which they were not made has had harmful consequences; an example of this is how we use pesticides on fields which not only killed what we felt to be harmful but killed what was beneficial, too. Therefore, man should be very careful, and should not see the lawful and the unlawful as being equal; and he should be very careful not to transgress against Allah's creations by altering their purpose.

The verse under discussion mentions several kinds of cattle by name as follows: *bahirah*, *sa'ibah*, *wasilah* and *hami*. The *bahira* was the she-camel whose ear was clipped as a sign that she was inviolable so that no one could harm her, turn her away from a pasture or from water, drink her milk, ride her or shear her wool; they did this because they said she gave birth to five litters, the last of which contained a male. The *sa'iba* was a she-camel which a man vowed to set free when he recovered from illness or returned from a journey, so he would not tie her up, and she would eat and drink what she liked and slept where she liked, and no one would ever harm her. The name *sa'iba* is derived from the verb *saba*, which means 'to flow' as water flows, and we know that the chief attribute of water is that it flows, and when rain falls onto a mountaintop it first fills the valley and then rises. This is how water flows as long as man does not intervene in any way by making dams, pumps, and water distribution networks. And the *wasila* was the she-camel which was born alongside a twin brother; when a she-camel bore its young, the owners of the camel would check the sex of the offspring, and if it was male they would eat it, whilst if it was female they would keep it for breeding, since a single stud is enough to breed with ten females. And if in a single litter a she-camel bore a male and a female, they would not slaughter either of them and would say, 'She came alongside *wasalat* (its brother)', and therefore made it inviolable to us.

In our Egyptian countryside, we find that the children hope that the offspring of a buffalo or cow will be male so that they can eat its meat and drink as much milk of the mother as they please. This is because children look to their immediate benefit. The adults, on the other hand, always hope that an

animal will bear female offspring because females can be used to produce more stock. And the *hami* was the stud which was not allowed to be ridden and which they would leave to roam where he pleased after he had been bred with ten generations of females, or had sired ten litters of offspring. And one of the conditions of this process was to make sure that the stud's grandson – the son of his son – was fertile. Those, the *bahira*, the *sa`iba*, the *wasila* and the *hami*, were concoctions of the people of disbelief who invented lies about Allah; for the True Lord *Glorified is He* created these cattle so that people could enjoy eating them, drinking their milk, and employing them however they wished.

The meaning of 'inventing a lie' is to concoct a falsehood and then claim it in order to conceal something which is true; to lie is to cover over a truth which was previously established. And the established truth ever since Allah created man is that these cattle are all subdued to serve man. Allah *Glorified is He* conveyed His guidance to Adam *peace be upon him* and each generation was supposed to convey this guidance to the generation which followed it, but the passage of time and heedlessness caused people to forget certain laws. And therefore, Allah sent messengers to remind the people of His guidance and to uproot disbelief from their consciousness. So the disbelievers are people who have covered up Allah Guidance and His Message, and in doing this they attribute their own lying inventions to Allah.

An example of this is the story of how the idols were brought into the *Ka'ba*. A man named `Amr ibn Luhayy travelled to the Levant and found idols and statues there, so he brought a statue named Hubal to Mecca, and he was the first person ever to bring an idol to Mecca. And just as `Amr ibn Luhayy did that, other people made laws and rules which were not from Allah such as the *bahira*, the *sa`iba*, the *wasila* and the *hami*, and in doing so they attributed their own lying inventions to Allah's Guidance, and altered His Guidance. And even if no guidance had yet reached them from Allah, was it not nevertheless essential for them to consider these innovations and errors from a standpoint of logic and reason?! The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not prevent reason from deducing sound universal truths, but the mind might strive and toil through long experiences before arriving at a given truth. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to protect people from the woes of difficult experiences, and so He sent down His way of guidance to declare

what is lawful and what is unlawful. And He *Glorified is He* clarifies that He sent down Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with guidance and the religion of truth to prevail over all false religions.

Someone might say, 'So why are there other religions in the world, such as Judaism and Christianity? And why are there atheists, so long as Allah decreed that there would be no other religion than Islam?' We say, the True Lord *Glorified is He* declares that the religion will prevail even if the idolaters hate it, and this means that there must be disbelievers, idolaters and followers of other religions over which Islam will prevail; and Allah will cause it to triumph by means of arguments and proofs, and by the testimony of the disbelievers, atheists and idolaters themselves because life's affairs will give them grief in every aspect of their lives and they will not find any solutions to these problems except by resorting to the teachings of Islam – not because it is Islam, but because the teachings and laws of Islam will offer solutions to their problems. Resorting to things which agree with Islam – even though they do not believe in Islam – is a strong testimony that Islam is the religion of natural disposition, and the religion of reason, and that everyone will come to need it whether they like it or not; and those who do not accept it as a religion, will find that they need to accept it as a system.

And the True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the noble verse by declaring, '...and most people do not understand.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 103) This is because Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to alert us to the fact that if they had applied reason to the matter, they would never have made the *bahira*, *sa'iba*, *wasila* and *hami* forbidden to themselves. We might ask, 'Did you make these things forbidden as a way of honouring them, or as a way of abstaining from them ascetically'? If it was a matter of asceticism this means that they took them away from the purpose for which Allah created them because He created them so we could eat their meat and benefit from them. And if it was meant to honour them, then is it an honour for a man to leave an animal which has served him without any protection from wolves, and without feeding it himself, and allowing it to eat from the land of others? This is disloyal to the animals which have served one, and this kind of behaviour does not preserve the life of this animal but rather exposes it to danger. Therefore, the sound mind rejects both this asceticism and this honouring. And if 'Amr ibn Luhayy or anyone else brought ideas and

traditions which Allah did not make, then we must give thanks to the True Lord *Glorified is He* for bringing Islam to amend these things.

And the one who examines the verses of the Quran closely finds that they represent a secure program for man's life on earth, as though they are a computer which programs man's motions on earth with a precision beyond that of any computer made by man. There is a divine 'computer' which guides man so that he neither strays nor is led astray; for Allah corrects man's behaviour if he strays far from the straight path. And no one should say, 'I will only follow what my forefathers did', for the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا
وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ أَبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

**when it is said to them, 'Come to what God has sent down,
and to the Messenger,' they say, 'What we inherited from our
forefathers is good enough for us,' even though their
forefathers knew nothing and were not guided [104]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 104)**

Rather a man must be aware that the first change made to Allah's way of guidance was the work of one of those of his forefathers who were overcome by heedlessness. And for a person to say, 'I will only follow what my forefathers did' is contradictory since clearly the first person who changed Allah's way of guidance did not say the same because he did not follow his father's example; and moreover, it is possible that the forefathers were not aware of the changes they made to Allah's Way of guidance, and were not guided to the truth. And elsewhere in the Quran Allah *Glorified is He* asserts the same fact of their adhering to the way of their forefathers in denunciation of Divine Guidance.

In the verse under discussion Allah does not say, 'follow', but rather 'come', which in Arabic is *ta'alow* derived from the word *'uluw* (height); it is as though they lowered themselves and went downwards when they said that it would suffice for them to follow that which their forefathers believed; for by saying this they rejected and denied everything which came to them in any way other than imitation of their forefathers, and therefore they barred and blocked themselves from the straight path.

As for the verse (170) in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, it indicates that it is possible that they could have added, ‘and we shall also follow what the religion teaches’; and therefore, the condemnation is stronger for those who said that it is enough for them to follow their forefathers, as in verse (104) of the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*. This shows us that the response from Allah in each of the two verses was appropriate for their positions. Why? Because the one who does not use his reason might learn from someone else who had engaged in thought and deliberation; if he does not use his own reason, he might still be able to learn from someone else. As for the person who knows nothing, he has nothing but ignorance, for he has not attained knowledge by his own accord, nor has he learned from anyone else. And the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the word ‘why’ as a way of censuring the practice of following forefathers instead of Allah’s religion. And we may also observe that the True Lord *Glorified is He* refers to guidance in both verses because guidance comes from Allah; as for reason and knowledge, they are two human faculties. Afterwards, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ
إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

You who believe, you are responsible for your own souls; if anyone else goes astray it will not harm you so long as you follow the guidance; you will all return to God, and He will make you realize what you have done [105] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 105)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* said before: ‘and when it is said to them, “Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger,” they say, “Sufficient for us is that upon which we found our fathers.” Even though their fathers knew nothing, nor were they guided.’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) These two verses indicate that there are two groups: One group which is astray, and another group which is guided; and a battle is raging between these two groups. Will this battle then last a long time? Indeed this battle will last for a long time because the people who are astray do not like to see the believer loving for his brother what he loves for himself, and they also benefit from the corruption in the world.

The believer loves obedience, and he tries to make his fellow believer love obedience too, and if he sees him doing something wrong, he tells him to

stop and encourages him to do what is right. When good comes from a person, it benefits others, and the benefit it brings the one who does it might be delayed until the Hereafter. The believer's goodness, integrity, and honesty benefit society and harm those who are astray. And if all of society is corrupt, then the believer suffers from the corruption of this society. So it is in the interest of the believer to do good for others, so that goodness will spread and in turn benefit the believer as it moves through society. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, '...upon you is the responsibility for yourselves...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 105), that is, 'Take care of yourselves', as though the believers are a single unit. This expresses the essential importance of the spreading of mutual spiritual norms; and an example of this can be found in the instructions Allah gives for the management of the possessions of those who are weak of judgement. The True Lord *Glorified is He* directs us not to entrust the weak-minded with our property.

This is because the person who is not of sound mind, does not have the right to manage his wealth until he becomes sane; for this wealth belongs to all the Muslims, and they must manage it so that all the Muslims can benefit from it. And the first way this management is done is by advice; and if the person of weak judgement does not heed this advice, then whoever is closest to him must have him declared legally incompetent. This is because any evil caused by the incompetent person's management of his wealth, will harm society, and therefore the wealth must be considered as belonging to the people, and they must manage it until the incompetent person regains his sanity, whereupon he will be allowed to do what he wants with his wealth. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not say, 'Hand over to them your possessions' because the person of sound mind can now be trusted with his possessions; therefore, as soon as the weak-minded person becomes sane, his possessions are returned to him. And in the same way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* states that upon us is the responsibility for ourselves, as mentioned in the verse, i.e. 'O believers, each one of you is responsible for himself and for the rest of the believers, and part of the responsibility of guidance is to rectify those who are corrupt; and no believer should say, "And what about me?"' And the verse further provides that those who go astray will do us no harm if we are guided, as in the verse. As long as you try to rectify corruption, you have done what you are responsible for doing.

As Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Whoever observes an objectionable evil deed; he should change it with his hand, if he can. If he cannot, then he should change it with his tongue (by speaking out). If he cannot, then he should change it within his heart (by hating it and feeling that it is wrong) – and that is the weakest degree of faith.'⁽¹⁾

How can the person change the evil within his heart? The believer should cut off those evildoers who went astray from Allah's right path. Changing evil within one's heart means that the believer should make the outward behaviour corresponding to the heart's feelings, so that the evildoer feels that others disapprove of him. If all believers cut off the strayed person even if they do not physically restrain him, he will surely be deterred. The believer should not greet the deviant person with a warm welcome or praise because he might trivialise evil when he is hypocritically favoured by others to win affection. As Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Whenever you come across people who speak with scorn about Our revelations, turn away from them until they move on to another topic...' (*al-An'am*: 68).

When all people turn their back on those who contravene the right path, this will hurt them. The root of all evil is the respect of society to evildoers; thus, this encourages them to increasingly sink into evil and do escalating irreparable harm. In villages, the person having a gun gains respect and favours. This matter leads him to be tyrannical with his weapon. If the people were to turn their backs on him, he would not be held in awe by the community and would be obliged to behave properly once again. However, what is the basis upon which is founded the principle of changing evil within the person's heart, i.e. discouraging and cutting off evildoers?

On being asked about this verse, '...It is (but) for your own souls that you are responsible...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 105), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Rather, enjoin upon one another the good, and stay away from (and prohibit) the evil, until you see that avarice obeyed, lust followed, the worldly desires preferred and that everyone is amazed with his opinion. Then you should be worried about yourself and do not bother yourself of the

(1) Muslim, Ahmad, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi, An-Nisa'i and Ibn Majah

common folk. Ahead of you are the days in which patience is like holding onto a burning ember, for the reward of righteous deeds during that time is like the reward of fifty men doing the same deeds.'⁽¹⁾ When you do not show love, mercy, or kindness towards the evildoer deviating from Allah's right path, you are, in this manner, bound to positivity.

When a believer asked the scholars, 'How should a man resist evil?' They answered, 'In a confrontation, the person who escapes from two people is guilty of fleeing, but the one who flees from three is not guilty'. In other words, if a man, in a battle, is faced by two enemies and runs off, he is guilty of desertion; but if he flees from three, he is considered to be reasonably protecting himself. The scholars derived this ruling from the promise that Allah makes to succour the believers if their enemies are double in number. He *the Almighty* says: 'But Allah has lightened your burden for now, knowing that there is weakness in you— a hundred steadfast of you will defeat two hundred and a thousand steadfast of you will defeat two thousand, by Allah's permission: Allah is with the steadfast.' (*al-Anfal*: 66)

Therefore, this is the admissible ratio of one to two; if the believer flees from two enemies in a battle, he thereby does not deserve Allah's promise of succour. Accordingly, he is considered a deserter who incurs Allah's wrath, and is condemned to the hell-fire. As per the previous verse, Allah *Glorified is He* promises the persevering faithful warrior facing two unbelievers with victory, whereas if the believer flees from facing three enemies, he will justifiably evade risks by saving his life. Islam does not ask people to throw themselves to suicide. Those who want to face the evils of this world should not cast themselves into destruction or fight an enemy who will surely defeat them due to superior strength in terms of numbers. Moreover, they should follow the tradition of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whose followers will continue in safety as long as they adhere to Allah's path.

As aforementioned, the concept of changing evil within one's heart means cutting off those who are deviant, echoed Allah's saying: 'You who believe, you are responsible for your own souls; if anyone else goes astray it will not harm you so long as you follow the guidance...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 105). The verse

(1) *Abu Dawud and At-Tirmidhi*

implies that everyone should look after and protect himself; the matter which represents a sort of guidance that is to know how to settle the issue with faithful belief. It should be taken into consideration the numbers of both the guided and the misguided; if they are equal, the former should confront the latter to resolve disputed matters. Correspondingly, if the number of the misguided people is as twice as the number of believers, the believers should still confront the, whereas, if the number of the misguided people is more than twice that of the believers, the believers are excused for protecting themselves by refusing to be engaged in confrontation, but rather they should cut off all sins and evildoers.

It is well known that every individual wants to enhance his stature amongst society. If he perceives that prestige and high standing are given to the righteous and the honest, he will endeavour to be alike. However, if he realises that good positions in society are granted to liars and deviants, he will endeavour to be the same. Therefore, the believers should only honour and highly regard the followers of the right path. Imam Ahmad Allah *rest his soul* narrated that Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah *be pleased with him* stood and praised and glorified Allah and then said, ‘O people, although you recite this verse, “You who believe, you are responsible for your own souls; if anyone else goes astray it will not harm you so long as you follow the guidance...”’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 105); however, you inappropriately grasp its meaning. I heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, “If people see an evil deed but do not change it, then Allah will soon send His punishment upon them all.”

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* reassures the believers that if they encounter any harm in their lives, they should recognise that this life is not the end, but there will be the Hereafter wherein we shall be granted the eternal bliss for being on Allah’s path, whereas those who opposed His way will be tormented in the hell-fire. Allah *the Almighty* mentions this because the believer cannot be sure of his attitude in many situations; he might fight in a battle with a pure intention, but then he may go astray. Therefore, he will encounter penalty commensurate to his deviation.

Those who follow Allah’s path should always keep this concept in the forefront of their consciousness. At the Battle of Uhud, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave the best example when he commanded the

archers not to leave their positions even if they saw that the believers were victorious and that the enemies were routing. Nevertheless, the archers disremembered his command and went after the spoils as soon as they saw that the believers were winning. Accordingly, Allah denied them victory because they disobeyed the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, the believers have been taught to duly obey Allah and His Messenger at all times.

But for Allah's saying: '... You will all return to Allah, and He will make you realise what you have done (in life)' (*al-Ma'ida*: 105), those who did not encounter Allah's victory during their lifetimes because they fought in the early battles and were martyred, they would not have known their eternal recompense. They primarily recognised that they would return to Allah and that He will reward and honour them in the Hereafter. As Allah *the Almighty* directs and manages the worldly life of the believer, He also directs his life in the Hereafter by rewarding him with eternal bliss in the paradise. Therefore, Allah says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا شَهَدَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ حِينَ الْوَصِيَّةِ اثْنَانِ ذَوَا
عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ آخَرَانِ مِّنْ غَيْرِكُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ مَصِيبَةُ
الْمَوْتِ تَحْسِبُونَهُمَا مِنْ بَعْدِ الصَّلَاةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ إِنْ أَرْتَبْتُمْ لَا نَشْتَرِي بِهِ ثَمَنًا
وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَادَةَ اللَّهِ إِنَّا إِذًا لَّمِنَ الْآثِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

You who believe, when death approaches any of you, let two just men from among you act as witnesses to the making of a bequest, or two men from another people if you are journeying in the land when death approaches. Keep the two witnesses back after prayer, if you have any doubts, and make them both swear by God, 'We will not sell our testimony for any price, even if a close relative is involved. We will not hide God's testimony, for then we should be doing wrong' [106]
(The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 106)

Allah *the Exalted* notifies the believer to the fact that he should not only wait for the immediate recompense in this worldly life; but rather, he should also prepare himself for what awaits him in the Hereafter. In the agony of death, the believer should not disregard making bequests if he owes anyone or

vice versa. Likewise, if a man travels abroad, he should also make bequests to reserve the rights of his heirs and to pay off any debts to discharge his obligation. He should appeal for two Muslims to act as witnesses to his bequest; however, if he is accompanied on his travels by non-Muslims, he should also appeal for them to act as witnesses to his bequest. Allah *the Almighty* has not given the believers any excuse in this concern, but the bequest should be testified by two witnesses. The verb 'witness' as a word means that something is testified to as taking place at present. As Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...So any one of you who is present to witness that month, should fast...' (*al-Baqara*: 185). This means that if the month comes and the Muslim witnesses that it has begun, he should fast.' To witness' can also mean that someone takes the stand to eyewitness an event such as when Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Flog the adulteress and the adulterer one hundred stripes. Do not let compassion for them keep you from carrying out Allah's law—if you believe in Allah and the Last Day—and ensure that a group of believers witnesses their chastisement.' (*an-Nur*: 2) The verse indicates that a group of believers should witness the flogging.

Moreover, 'to witness' can also mean 'to reach judgement' as per Allah's saying: 'But he said, "She tried to seduce me." A member of her household reached a judgment (saying), "If his shirt is torn at the front, then it is she who is telling the truth and he who is lying, but if it is torn at the back, then she is lying and he is telling the truth."' (*Yusuf*: 26-27) Hence, 'to witness' has many meanings; yet, the root meaning is 'to testify at present'.

It is known that 'bequest' means that the benefactor gives or bequeaths something good and important to someone else. The 'bequest' is granted to others who are not lawful heirs; that is, those who are assigned no lawful share of the inheritance, but to whom the benefactor might have cause to leave something of his. Nevertheless, the witness hearing the bequest should absolve himself of suspicion by telling the heirs what he has heard; for the bequest is the choice of the benefactor. It is probably that neither the witness nor the receiver of the bequest knows the reason behind it; only the benefactor does. Therefore, Allah mentions bequests before debts in His saying, '...After payment of any bequests or debts, with no harm done to anyone...' (*an-Nisa*: 12). Bequests are mentioned first even though debts must be settled before bequests are fulfilled because the debt is an obligatory right while the bequest

is a donation. Allah decrees this because debts will always be sought by those to whom they are owed, whilst the receiver of the bequest might not have any right to claim, as being a gift, or his right to the bequest might not be confirmed by a written will or testimony. Therefore, Allah mentions bequests at first to draw the attention to the importance of bequests. Similarly, the benefactor may owe the receiver of the bequest educational, ethical, moral, or social favour; therefore, Allah stipulates on the benefactor to pay him back with gratitude for his good deeds influenced him in his life. This matter might not be an issue of concern to the heirs; but rather, they might object to it; however, the benefactor is the one who knows the merits of the bequest.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wills to confirm the validity of bequests even if it is difficult to be confirmed; accordingly, He commanded the benefactor to make his bequest whether he is amongst his family or during his travels on feeling that death is close to him. In such case, he may call upon any two Muslims, if found, or even any two non-Muslim witnesses and declare the bequest to them. There is a story behind this: There was a Muslim man named Badil ibn Abu Maryam, the freed slave of Al-'As ibn Wa'il As-Sahmi who was travelling in the company of non-Muslims. He felt the pangs of death, so he wrote a note and placed it with his belongings, as a precautionary measure. Then, he called for two non-Muslims in his company named Tamim Ad-Dari and 'Adi ibn Bada' and asked them, just before his death, to deliver the belongings to his family. But the two men opened his pack and found a valuable jug lined with silver and gold, so they sold it for one thousand dirhams shared between them. They handled the rest of the belongings to the deceased man's family who found the note, upon which was written all the details of the belongings, including the valuable jug. The family asked the two men about the jug, but they denied all knowledge of it and denied that they had seen the deceased selling it. After a while, the family found the jug on sale and acknowledged that it had been purchased from the two men who were present at the death of its original owner. So, the deceased family went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and complained that the bequest had been betrayed. In a little while, Allah's verse under discussion was then revealed, where He *the Almighty* sets His Commandment to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that these two betrayers should be

summoned after having offered the prayers of their religion, and swear an oath by Allah to tell the truth. The family of the deceased was told to bring forth the paper and the Messenger unveiled the truth. Later, Tamim Ad-Dari embraced Islam and retold the true story, and paid the five-hundred-*dirham* share of the selling price and brought the share of 'Adi, presenting then the whole price of the jug to the family of the deceased. Allah *Glorified is He* sets His Commandment to take hold of them after the prayer because as the person prays even if he is from another religion, as his soul is usually ready to say the truth after his stand before Allah. Moreover, Allah says: 'You who believe, let two just men...act as witnesses...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 106) because the testimonies differ from a person to another; thus, Allah obligates the testimonies sworn should be given by two separated individual witnesses.

The testimony requires the separation of the two points of view, and the person who determines this separation is the one who interviews the two persons of probity, whether Muslims or non-Muslims. This questioning should take place after the performance of prayer to verify truthfulness. If their testimonies clarify the bequest, it is effected, whereas if there is any doubt about their testimonies, then the two witnesses must swear that they will not sell the covenants of Allah for any price, fearing that they are counted among the evildoers. Afterwards, Allah says:

فَإِنْ عُرِيَ عَلَىٰ أَنَّهُمَا اسْتَحَقَّ إِثْمًا فَتَاخَرَانِ يَقُومَانِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ الَّذِينَ
 اسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِاللَّهِ لَشَهِدُنَا أَحَقُّ مِنْ
 شَهِدَتِيهِمَا وَمَا أَعْتَدَيْنَا إِنَّا إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

**If it is discovered that these two are guilty [of perjury],
 two of those whose rights have been usurped have a
 better right to bear witness in their place. Let them
 swear by God, 'Our testimony is truer than theirs. We
 have said nothing but the truth, for that would make us
 wrongdoers' [107] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 107)**

If it comes to light that the witnesses have forged the bequest of the deceased, or that they have dishonestly concealed some details; thus, two close relatives of the deceased may be summoned to swear by Allah that the two witnesses

have lied, and that their accusation of lying is completely true. Additionally, they should swear that if it comes to light that their testimony is false, they deserve the punishment meted out to all evildoers. In this manner, Allah *the Exalted* gives ample means to enable people to establish justice by seeking out the truth as best as they can. Allah's saying, 'If it is discovered that' means 'if it incidentally comes to light without having been looked for'. If there is evidence that comes to light that the two witnesses who attended the death of the benefactor, are obviously lying, then two witnesses from the family of the deceased should be instead summoned to seek the truth.

In the event that reasoned the revelation of this verse, `Amr ibn Al-`As and Al-Muttalib ibn Wada`ah As-Sahmi *Allah be pleased with them* swore by Allah that the other two witnesses lied and that their own testimony was true and was not an unjust attack on the ones who gave the first testimony. The aim is to make sure that testimonies are given properly, as Allah *the Almighty* says afterwards:

ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَادَةِ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهَا أَوْ يَخَافُوا أَنْ تُرَدَّ أَيْمَانُهُمْ بَعْدَ
 أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۖ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ وَأَسْمِعُوا ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

that will make it more likely they will give true and proper testimony, or fear that their oaths might be refuted by others afterwards. Be mindful of God and listen; God does not guide those who break His laws [108] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 108)

The first two witnesses, who testified the bequest of the deceased person at the time of his death, give their testimony after praying and after swearing that they say the truth. They should be careful to tell the truth for fear that their lies may be exposed later. As previously mentioned, the word 'giving testimony' or 'be a witness' can be used to refer to anything at which someone is present or attending; such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(O Muhammad,) proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass; to be a witness for attaining benefits....' (*al-Hajj*: 27-28) The verse indicates that when the people hear the call for the pilgrimage, they will come from every direction and by every means of transport, the matter which may be difficult. However,

they will strive to witness attaining benefits. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him...' (*Al-'Imran*: 18). Allah's witness is a proclamation, whereas the angels' witness is recognition of His deity. Thus, the witness testifies attending an account at present.

If the witness, who is taking the stand in the courtroom, is interrogated by the prosecutor, the plaintiff's lawyer, or the defendant's lawyer, he would recount everything he has seen. As long as the witness is telling the truth, he is not afraid of which party examines him. No matter how many questions are asked and how many different approaches are used by the parties interrogating the witness, but as long as the event really happened, his testimony will be identically unchanged. The truthful witness is recounting an actual unchanged event; whereas, the dishonest witness will keep on making mistakes, getting confused and changing his testimony. Therefore, the skilful prosecutor stirs up the witness's memory for the most exact and meticulous details. As previously mentioned, the word 'witness' implies the notion of presence and attendance; but if the one who bears witness is the one who gives the verdict as well, then his testimony is a judgement in itself. This is the case when Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Allah bears witness...' (*Al-'Imran*: 18).

The story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* unfolds how Allah *Glorified is He* detained the step of brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) when they took his younger brother with them to Egypt, and how Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* arranged things so that he could keep his younger brother with him. As the story progressed, the stepbrothers of Yusuf (Joseph) discorded, as they were afraid of any harm might afflict their father on knowing the news that their younger brother is detained in Egypt. The Quran conveys that the elder stepbrother said: 'So go back to your father and say, "Your son stole. We can only tell you what we bear witness to. How could we guard against the unforeseen? Ask in the town where we have been; ask the people of the caravan we travelled with: we are telling the truth"' (*Yusuf*: 81-82).

The stepbrothers of Yusuf (Joseph) had firstly lied when they did their evil deed with him, but they told the truth the second time when the younger brother of Yusuf (Joseph) was detained. Thus, they told their father to ask either the people in the town where they were, or their companions in the caravan about

the authenticity of their story. They were told that the cup used by the King for measurement had been found in their younger brother's pack. Therefore, their testimony this time was authentic and reflected what they had been told

In view of that, the testimony is the authentication that settles the dispute. For that reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* instructed that a man should not give a testimony on something unless he saw it with his own eyes as clear as the sun, 'Give witness in a similar case (which is as clear as the sun), or leave it'.⁽¹⁾ Allah says: 'O People of the Book, why do you deny Allah's revelations when you bear witness they are true?' (*Al- 'Imran*: 70).

Testimony has two requirements; the first is the presence of the witness as the incident occurs and the second is the authenticity in transmission of information. Therefore, Allah decrees that the testimony of two women, in certain rulings, is equal to that of one man. Someone might ask, 'How does Islam make the testimony of an ignorant or illiterate man equal to that of two women even if they are well-educated?' To answer this question, people should know that bearing witness is not an intellectual endeavour, but it is an issue of authenticity in transmission of information; the matter which has nothing to do with education. Testimony requires that the witness is present and rushes to the event, yet the woman cannot rush to the event due to her feminine features. Thus, she should be defended, protected from any danger that may harm her; accordingly, she should not mix with men or rush into any scene that may be full of men. If an incident takes place and a woman is present right there, she would not naturally get in on the act to ask about all the details, whereas, the man who witnesses the event will strive to find out all that has gone on. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* does not decree that the testimony should be taken from two women because they are less trustworthy or less educated than men are; but rather because bearing witness is a matter of being present at and involved in an event to accurately transmit information about the incident.

(1) *It is narrated by Ad-Daylami and At-Tabarani on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. An-Najm said that Ar-Rafi'i related that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was asked about giving witness, he said, 'Do you see the sun?' The questioner replied, 'yes'. The Prophet said, 'Give witness in a similar case (which is as clear as the sun), or leave it.'*

Some people like to make a fuss about these issues and use them as a means of attacking those preachers who call to Allah's path. Yet, they should recognise that there is a difference between being at odds with someone who calls to Allah's right path and going so far to declare his enmity against Allah Himself as this does not merely reject the rule of the preacher, but it rejects the rule of Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* sets His decree that the two witnesses should first offer the prayer and then be held back for a while, and summoned to give testimony. If the family of the deceased rejects their testimony about the bequest, then two of the family of the deceased should be summoned to testify about the bequest. All these measures are necessary so that the testimony can be authentically and properly given.

Allah *the Almighty* ends this noble verse by saying, '...Be mindful of Allah and listen; Allah does not guide those who break His laws.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 108) This is directed to all believers in particular and all mankind in general because Allah only guides those people who are willing to follow His way of guidance, whereas He will not help disbelievers or evildoers to follow the right path.

It is noticeable that Allah *the Exalted* first recounts the events of the story and ends up with the ruling afterwards. When the ruling is given in an event upholding it, the person will be convinced with and cling to it more. Similarly, it is like the cup of water which is presented to a thirsty person, he drinks with desire and longing. The same as the medicine prescribed to a sick person during his worst throes of sickness, he accepts to swallow it longingly no matter how bitter it tastes. This is the reason that some rulings of the Quran followed the events which called for them so that the believer would be eager to apply them. Allah then says:

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللَّهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أُجِبْتُمْ قَالُوا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّمُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿١٠٩﴾

On the Day when God assembles all the messengers and asks, 'What response did you receive?' they will say, 'We do not have that knowledge: You alone know things that cannot be seen' [109] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 109)

Allah *Glorified is He* draws the attention to the importance of getting ready for the Day of Resurrection when Allah gathers all the messengers to ask

them, ‘...What response did you receive?’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 109) That is, ‘how did the people respond to the way of guidance to which you called?’ Thus, people should obey the responsibilities ordained by Allah in every aspect of their lives. This question implies an admonition to those who disobey the messengers; as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘What will they do when We bring a witness from each community, with you (Muhammad) as a witness against these people?’ (*an-Nisa*: 41)

It is known that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will come, on the Day of Resurrection, as a witness for his followers and for all those messengers who preceded him. An example of this from our daily life, surely to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection, is the scene of a family waiting for the son outside the examination hall to ask him, ‘What answers did you give?’ The family here asks the son to describe how well he did in the exam in general; but if he is asked what responses did he give, this means that that he is requested to give the details of every answer. Allah’s question to His messengers: ‘...What response did you receive?’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 109), superficially seems to be an interrogation to the messengers; but it is a question for those who disobeyed. This is an admonition for all disbelievers in the Divine Messages because the mission of the messengers is to deliver Allah’s Message.

How will the messengers answer Allah on that Day? Their answer will precisely encapsulate all articles of faith, ‘...We do not have that knowledge. You alone know things that cannot be seen (that are beyond the reach of a created being’s perception).’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 109) However, how did the messengers say, ‘We have no knowledge’, even though they witnessed that some people indeed had faith, while others did not? The messengers only had knowledge of apparent matters such as people’s words and conduct, but Allah *the All-Knower* Who knows best what hearts and souls conceal, reckons people per their intentions and conduct. Moreover, the messengers might have contemporarily known about the persons who believed in their teachings, but they did not know about who turned to be believers or disbelievers after their times. The answer which the messengers delivered expresses the utmost respect to Allah; they all know that Allah’s knowledge is perfect and encompasses everything. Subsequently, Allah says:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَلَدَتِكَ إِذْ أَيَّدْتُكَ بِرُوحِ الْقُدُسِ
تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَإِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرَةَ
وَإِنْجِيلَ وَإِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ بِإِذْنِي فَتَنفُخُ فِيهَا فَتَكُونُ طَيْرًا بِإِذْنِي وَتَبْرِئُ
الْأَكْمَهَ وَالْأَبْرَصَ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَىٰ بِإِذْنِي وَإِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ
عَنْكَ إِذْ جِئْتَهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْهُمْ إِن هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

Then God will say, ‘Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour to you and to your mother: how I strengthened you with the holy spirit, so that you spoke to people in your infancy and as a grown man; how I taught you the Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel; how, by My leave, you fashioned the shape of a bird out of clay, breathed into it, and it became, by My leave, a bird; how, by My leave, you healed the blind person and the leper; how, by My leave, you brought the dead back to life; how I restrained the Children of Israel from [harming] you when you brought them clear signs, and those of them who disbelieved said, “This is clearly nothing but sorcery” [110] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 110)

Allah *the Almighty* asks all messengers a general question; whereas, He asks `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* a specific question about a particular event. Allah *Glorified is He* intends to show us the politeness of the messengers with Him, and, on the other hand, the rebuked impoliteness of the disbelievers in rejecting His way of guidance. The specific question asked by Allah *the Almighty* to `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is attributable to the fact that some followers believed in his divinity or partial divinity; the matter which is an affront to the absolute transcendence of Allah *the Exalted*. The utmost aberration done by previous nations was that some of which disbelieved in the messengers and others gave the lie to the messengers, but none of them ever assumed the divinity of the messenger. No one claimed this aberration except a certain sect of the Jews who alleged that `Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* is the son of Allah; however, this sect had been vanished, and no Jew any longer claims this. Conclusively, Allah *the Almighty* declares that associating partners with Him is the utmost unforgivable sin.

Allah *Glorified is He* asks `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* this question after firstly reminding him of some blessings bestowed upon him and his mother

Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her*. Allah *the Exalted* lists several blessings conferred upon `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* namely; the support of Allah to him with the holy inspiration of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* his miracle of speaking in the cradle to acquit Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* of the charges laid against her chastity. Moreover, Allah has taught `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* the Scripture, wisdom, the Torah and Gospel. Also, He bestows upon him the ability to make a clay bird and to blow into it to become a living being by His leave. As well as, He gives him the ability to restore the sight of the blind, to cure the leper and to bring the dead back to life again by His leave. Furthermore, Allah *the Exalted* protected `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from the conspiracies of the Jews who wanted to crucify and kill him even though he had brought them these miracles. Some of them believed, but still many others disbelieved, alleging that these miracles were only deceptive sorcery.

In considering a mere single miracle, the Might of Allah *the Exalted* is obviously clear. The discourse of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, while he was a baby in the cradle is a miracle in itself. It is known that the cradle is a comfortable bed prepared for a new born that does not have the strength to protect itself from any un-comfortableness. Thus, the baby possesses sensations, but does not have the power to react to those sensations.

For example, the newborn cannot remove a pebble from under it, so the family makes a cradle and places the baby inside. It is merely a spirit within a tiny body with no strength at all, except having enough power to preserve its life by clinging to the breast of its mother. If a baby could speak in a cradle, then it possesses a will by which it could control its whole body to the extent that allowed it to speak; a matter which is impossible to take place. The only way that the baby can communicate is to cry, if a tiny insect, a gnat, or mosquito bites it, the baby will only be able to cry.

However, `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* spoke in the cradle because Allah *the Almighty* gave him the power to do so. Allah made the baby speak as an adult. This contrasts the cradle wherein he sleeps. If he miraculously spoke in the cradle to absolve his virgin mother, he would further go on to speak as a grown man to convey the Message of Allah. `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* spoke in the cradle what Allah *Glorified is He* tells us in the Quran:’ (But) he said: “I am a

servant of Allah. He has granted me the Scripture, made me a prophet, and made me blessed wherever I may be. He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as I live, and to cherish my mother. He did not make me domineering or graceless. Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me the day I die and the day I am raised to life again.”⁶ (*Maryam*: 30-33) The discourse of Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in his cradle aims to verify that his mother is virtuous and upright because as they offended her chastity, since nothing she could have said would have availed. Defending her chastity, Allah *the Almighty* reveals to her through Jibril (Gabriel) or 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* to convey unto the people, ‘...I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today.’ (*Maryam*: 26) As Allah *Glorified is He* makes 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* a fatherless child born to a virgin woman outside the norms of creation, therefore, He has breached the norms of nature by the speaking of the new born child in his cradle to be a significant miracle.

Afterwards, Allah mentions that He *the Exalted* has taught him the Scripture and the Torah, and has revealed unto him the Gospel and has inspired him with wisdom: ‘...How I have taught you the Scripture and wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 110). ‘Wisdom’ means the perfect and exact speech per the inspiration of Allah – in Islam, this corresponds to Hadith (the sayings) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The precision of the Quranic discourse prevents any misapprehension that may arise that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was directly involved in any matter related to creation to prevent confusion in faith principles. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...How, by My leave, you fashioned the biomimicry of a bird out of clay, breathed into it, and it became, by My leave, a bird...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 110). Hence, 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* did not create the bird, he only shaped a biomimicry of a bird out of clay because genuine real living beings are only created by Allah *the Exalted*.

This imitation is obvious in the statues carved by the sculptures from rocks, or in the clay mould having the shape of camels or birds; but they cannot breathe spirits into them. A man might make an inanimate object such as a cup of smelted sand, but it is impossible to have male and female cups

being created and can then reproduce to give cup offspring! It is noticeable that when a man creates something, it always remains as it is; it does not reproduce, grow, or have sensations. Allah, the Supreme Creator, creates from nothing; whereas, man can only make things from existing matters originally created by Allah, buried either inside the earth or on its surface. Yet, Allah was not unkind to people; but rather, He let them allege that they have created something, but they must be aware that He *the Almighty* is the best of all creators.

The power of man, as a contingent being, differs from the power of the Lord, the Eternal, and the Omnipotent. When Allah decrees something with His Omnipotent Power, He can ascribe to one of His creatures to carry it out; yet, man cannot ascribe to another man something identical to what he makes.

An example to clarify this issue is that an infant cannot pick up a chair, yet a strong young man can easily pick the chair up for him. This young man does not provide the child with power or transfer it to him; but rather, he supplies him with the consequence of his power, and the child remains as weak as he was before. However, Allah *the Exalted* supplies whomever He wills to do whatever He wills; due to His awesome might, He may provide powerless people with some of His power to make them powerful. Therefore, Allah supplies 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* by His leave with His power to give life to the bird by blowing into the clay to be turned to a living being. Earlier, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did this when he requested from Allah *the Exalted* '...My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead...' (*al-Baqara*: 260). Hence, Allah asked him, '...Do you not believe, then?' (*al-Baqara*: 260). He replied, '...‘Yes’, said Abraham, ‘but just to put my heart at rest...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260).

This verse unveils a certain point of view because Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* indeed had faith, which means that his heart is at peace with a certain doctrine. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not ask Allah, ‘Do you raise the dead to life?’ He first acknowledged that Allah *the Almighty* has the power to raise the dead, but he wanted to be more certain by knowing the method of doing this. Asking about the method of doing something has nothing to do with faith, but it rather requires a practical application. Accordingly, Allah commanded him to take four birds, train them to come back to him so

that he could become well acquainted with them, then to cut them up into pieces, place each piece on a hilltop and then call them back. When Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* called the pieces, they recollected to be the same four birds as they had been before and came back to him.

In the same way, Allah sets His will that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* makes a clay bird and then blows into it to become a living being by Allah's leave. Allah provides `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* with the power of healing a man born blind. Some people might allege that, in modern times, corneal transplants have been developed, and some of those who were born blind have been allowed to see. This ophthalmological progress is based on scientific experimentation, whereas, the power that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was endowed to heal a man born blind represented a breaching of the laws of nature, and intended to be a miracle. Similarly, Allah *the Exalted* provides `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* with the power to cure the leper; i.e. the person whose skin has become paper-white due to this illness. Furthermore, Allah saved him from the conspiracies of the children of Israel as they wanted to harm and kill him. Witnessing all these miracles, some people believed, while others disbelieved and accused `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* of being a sorcerer. This represented a blatant lie against him, for he is a prophet sent with obvious miracles.

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* enumerates the blessings granted to `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* not to draw his attention to these blessings, for he knows them well; but rather, they represent a reproach to those who witness these miracles and yet still did not have faith in Allah afterwards. Allah *Glorified is He* has provided and supported `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* with all these blessings to strengthen the message. `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is primarily merited such blessings because he is elected, chosen and aided by Allah. It is observable that the miracles and blessings provided by Allah to `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* are of two kinds; those targeting to convince people who possess sound minds, hearts and consciences, and those targeting to convince materialistic people who do not believe in the dominion of Allah over the unseen realm. The first kind represents the knowledge that Allah *the Almighty* provides him with; i.e. the Scripture, wisdom, the Torah and Gospel.

The second kind represents the materially and tangibly witnessed miracles that could not be the work of a human being. Examples on this kind are numerous, such as the biomimicry of a bird shaped out of clay and turned into a living being, the dead brought back to life, the healed blind and the cured leprosy. As these miracles breached natural and material laws; therefore, Allah finishes each phrase speaking about one of them by saying, 'by My leave'. This means that such miracles would not have happened but for Allah's permission. Whereas, Allah *the Exalted* does not say 'by My leave' in other miracles because it is clear and obvious in other cases that they are done by Allah's leave, but He specifically adds this phrase to such miracles to clarify to everyone who dignifies and raises 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to a level higher than that of a prophet, that he is a mere messenger aided by Allah. Moreover, this phrase draws the attention of the followers of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* not to be misled by these signs or consider them as distinctions for him alone; but rather, they are nothing but miraculous signs to verify Allah's Message.

All such miracles breached the materialistic laws of nature; accordingly, Allah repeats that these were done by His leave. This shows that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* did not have absolute use of Allah's power; but rather, it was exclusively limited to those miracles for which Allah gave permission.

Every time natural law is breached by prophets, pious respected holy people or anyone whom Allah provides with illumination is only meant to honour them. Allah does not supply anyone with the power to have absolute knowledge of the unseen; but rather, He sometimes gifts some of His creatures with partial knowledge of certain secrets. Certainly, Allah has the complete ownership over the unseen, 'He has the keys to the unseen, no one knows them but Him...' (*al-An'am*: 59).

There is no person who has full knowledge of the unseen due to his own power; but rather, Allah teaches him the elements of His unseen knowledge. There are certain impermanent occasions when Allah manifests His grace to authenticate a matter, and then the venerated person goes back to live within the natural laws of Allah's universe. The natural laws of the universe are the conditions and rules which Allah has established in His universe to serve the

believer, the disbeliever, the righteous, and the sinful. Examples on such laws governing the universe are; the rising and the setting of the sun, the movement of rain-bearing clouds and the availability of the cultivable agrarian plots on earth. Natural laws are breached by Allah's leave to provide Messengers, Prophets and pious venerated men with miracles. These signs from Allah are meant to authenticate the conveyable message of the messenger. This authentication granted by Allah is conditioned by two stipulations. The first is that the authenticated people should have reached a high level of skill in the field wherein the miracle takes place; for example, Allah breaches the natural laws for the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* which was originally a tree-branch, and orders him to cast it down, whereupon it turned into a slithering snake. What has been done to the staff was not an act of sorcery, but Allah *the Almighty* transformed it from one being into another at the time when people excelled in sorcery. It is noticeable that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* felt at peace and attracted to his Lord's company, so he elongated his speech to Him, using a lot of words to enumerate the uses of the staff to make this intimacy last longer, 'It is my staff,' he said, 'I lean on it, restrain my sheep with it...' (*Ta Ha*: 18). Afterwards, he consciously transferred to the style of paying due attention to reverence and respect, so he summarised his words, saying, '...I also have other uses for it.' (*Ta Ha*: 18) Subsequently, the command came to cast down the staff, '...Throw it down, Musa (Moses)!' (*Ta Ha*: 19) Upon this, the staff breached the governing natural laws known by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and was no longer an object used for leaning upon or restraining sheep, but transformed from its wooden state into the animal state and became a snake, 'He threw it down and— lo and behold! — it became a fast-moving snake.' (*Ta Ha*: 20)

Therefore, it was appropriate that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was astonished and stricken with fear; however, when he knew the secret of his staff, he became no longer terrified, but challenged the sorcerers brought forth by the Pharaoh on the day of the festival. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* acknowledged that he was not a sorcerer like them, but that he had a miracle granted by Allah which would also astonish the sorcerers. The sorcerers recognised that their magic was only an illusion, on the contrary to the miracle brought by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* where Allah *the Almighty* transforms

things. Therefore, the sorcerers came forth on the day of the festival in obedience to the Pharaoh's command. The Quran alludes that the forced labour system was then applied; thus, the sorcerers asked for a reward if they win over Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* 'The sorcerers came to Pharaoh and said, "Shall we be rewarded if we win?"' (*al-A'raf*: 113)

Despite the different talents of the sorcerers and their skill in miscellaneous forms of sorcery, they all admitted the truth and fell prostrate to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* on casting down his staff. The Quran quoted their saying, '...'We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron).'" (*ash-Shu'ara*: 47-48) Thus, they realised that what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did was not a result of human power; but rather, out of a supernatural power. This was one of the miracles that Allah provides His messengers with to authenticate their messages. Likewise, the people of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* excelled in medicine, but none of them could dare to claim that they could cure the blind and leprous with a single word, or to return the dead back to life. Allah *Glorified is He* makes miracles easy for His messengers; in Islam, the Night Journey of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Mecca to Jerusalem took place in the blink of an eye. In modern times, the technological and technical progress has led to inventing rockets traversing quickly a distance such as that between Mecca and Jerusalem; however, such progress has been achieved after painstaking experiments. Conversely, when Allah has ordained this, He only said a mere word and the miracle instantaneously occurred. It should be highlighted that the miracle is not a previously planned-for innovation; but rather, a divinely determined supernatural event. The miracle is a disruption of a natural cosmic law which is determined by Allah *the Almighty* rather than a result of any innovation, invention, or discovery.

Allah *the Almighty* consoles 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* by mentioning these miracles, but the disbelievers of his people alleged that they were only works of deceptive sorcery, '...Those of them who disbelieved said, "This is clearly nothing but sorcery."'" (*al-Ma'ida*: 110) It is known that Allah *the Exalted* created the human being and made faith to be his natural disposition; thus, the more man becomes heedless, the more the faith is lost. This heedlessness led to the state of hardened encrusted hearts (not accepting guidance) due to

recurrent committed sins: 'No indeed! Their hearts are encrusted with what they have done.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 14) It was narrated that Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrated to us two Hadiths (Prophetic sayings). I have seen one (become reality), and I am waiting for the other. He told us, "Trustworthiness descended in the innermost (root) of the hearts of people. Then the Quran was revealed and they learnt from the Quran and they learnt from the *Sunnah*." Then he *peace and blessings be upon him* told us about the removal of trustworthiness. He said, "Man would have a wink of sleep and trustworthiness would be taken away from his heart leaving the impression of a faint mark. He would again sleep and trustworthiness would be taken away from his heart leaving an impression of a blister, as if you rolled down an ember on your feet, it causes pain, and you see it swollen, while it contains nothing." He *peace and blessings be upon him* then took up a pebble and rolled it down over his foot and said, "The people would enter into transactions amongst one another and hardly a person would be left who would return things entrusted to him." And there would be a scarcity of honest people till it would be said, "In such and such tribe there is a trustworthy man." And they would also talk about how prudent a person he is, how broad-minded and intelligent he is, whereas in his heart there would not be faith even to the weight of a mustard seed. I have passed through a time in which I did not care with whom amongst you I entered a transaction, for if he were a Muslim his faith would compel him to discharge his obligations to me and if he was a Christian or a Jew, the ruler would compel him to discharge his obligations to me. But today I would not enter into a transaction with you except for so-and-so.'⁽¹⁾

There is another Hadith narrated by Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* about the end of trust and the coming of tribulations and ordeals, in which he said, 'We were sitting in the company of 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* and he said, "Who amongst you has heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* talking about turmoil?" Some people said, "It is we who heard it." Upon this he remarked, "Perhaps by turmoil you presume the unrest of man regarding his household or neighbour", they replied, "Yes". 'Umar observed

(1) *Al-Bukhari, Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad*

and said, "Such (an unrest) would be done away with by prayer, fasting, and charity. But who amongst you has heard from the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* describing that turmoil which would come like the wave of the ocean?" The people hushed into silence, and I replied, "It is I." He ('Umar) said, "Ye, well, your father was also very pious. Hudhayfa said," I heard Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, Temptations will be presented to men's hearts as reed mat is woven stick by stick, and any heart which is impregnated by them will have a black mark put into it, but any heart which rejects them will have a white mark put in it. The result is that there will become two types of hearts; one white like a white stone which will not be harmed by any turmoil or temptation so long as the heavens and the earth endure; and the other black and dust-coloured like a vessel which is upset, not recognizing what is good or rejecting what is abominable, but being impregnated with passion." Hudhayfa said, "I narrated to him ('Umar), "There is between you and that (turmoil) a closed door, but there is likelihood of its being broken.'" Umar said, "Would it be broken? You have been rendered fatherless. Had it been opened; it would have been perhaps closed also."⁽¹⁾

This is how Prophet Muhammad spoke about the ending of trustworthiness and the lack of spiritual immunity in the human soul. Allah *Glorified is He* wants His servants to have spiritual immunity constantly; therefore, Allah sent messengers to develop this immunity and to help the society restrain every individual's tendency towards causing temptation.

When corruption spread on earth, we find that Allah sent a messenger to restore the self-reproaching soul and to revive society's ability to harmonise the conduct of people in the light of Allah's religion. Therefore, we find that those who resisted the messengers benefited from corruption and its effects. As Allah's religion gives support to the oppressed, it incurs the wrath of the tyrannical oppressors causing them to attack and resist the messengers and the teachings they conveyed from Allah. The religious teachings would end this corruption which brought benefits and yields to tyrannical and deluded people that they considered tremendous.

(1) *Muslim*

The leaders of Quraysh opposed Prophet Muhammad's *da'wah* (call to Allah) because he called for equality among people, and they knew that declaring that there is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah meant that they would lose their power to terrify people and the tribes. If the testimony of faith had been merely a matter of saying the words without any change, they would have said it, but this testimony changed life politically, economically and socially. In addition, no one would oppress any other person, as all people are equal. Therefore, the leaders of Quraysh resisted the Islamic *da'wah* (call to Allah). Hence, we see that whenever a messenger came, he was opposed and resisted by corrupt and tyrannical people who uphold corruption and tyranny on earth, just as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And thus We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils from mankind and jinn...' (*al-An'am*: 112). The evidence on this point is Allah's will to start the call to faith during the pre-Islamic era amidst the leaders of all the Arabs, Quraysh whom no one would dare to challenge. However, Muhammad's *da'wah* (call to Allah) did not gain victory when he was in Mecca, the centre of power. If victory had been gained in the first stage of the *da'wah* (call to Allah) while Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was still living among his people in Mecca, some people would have said that he gained it by means of people who were accustomed to mastery and desired to rule the whole world, not just the Arabian Peninsula. In addition, Quraysh helped Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only to keep hold of this power and to extend their influence on other people. However, Allah caused the victory of the *da'wah* (call to Allah) to be achieved in Medina. The earlier Islamic *da'wah* (call to Allah) was first received by the masters, then it was advocated by the weak and the downtrodden people who could not protect themselves, then they emigrated and Allah made them strong enough to face the powerful people.

We find that everyone who calls to Allah wants to preserve the goodness of prophetic teachings so that hearts do not become corroded; yet, this approach angers the tyrants and deviants who wish to rule the world with their ideas. If the one who calls to Allah does not have any enemies, this means that his share of the prophetic legacy is slight; while if he has many enemies, this means that he has inherited a large share of the prophetic legacy.

When those who disbelieved in `Isa (Jesus) realised the greatness of miracles that occurred to him, they said, ‘...This is not but obvious magic!’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 110) This means that the miracles of `Isa (Jesus) angered and enraged them and filled them with woe. The saying mentioned in the previous verse was said by people who hated Allah’s guidance, so disbelief of the disbelievers is a blessing by which Allah supports the one who calls to Him because this motivates him and encourages him to defend Allah’s religion. Accordingly, objection to and resistance of faith highlights the believer’s strong belief in the creed in which he believes. Then Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says:

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

and how I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My messengers – they said, “We believe and bear witness that we devote ourselves [to God]” [111] (The Quran, *al-Ma’ida*: 111)

The word *hawari* (literally, a person in white clothes) and the intended meaning is a disciple of Prophet `Isa (Jesus) is derived from a concrete concept, as it also literally means plain white flour. In addition, it refers to everything that is extremely pure, and in this verse, it means a sincere person who loves of the religion that enjoins goodness. Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse, ‘And how I inspired...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 111). The word *awha*’ which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means to inspire and notify discretely, i.e. Allah inspired them to believe in the message which Prophet `Isa (Jesus) conveyed from Allah in the way He inspired Prophet Musa’s mother to cast her son into the river so that it would bring him safely to shore. However, this inspiration differs from the revelation received by Allah’s messengers, as this revelation is Jibril (Gabriel) who conveyed to the messengers Allah’s Law. As for the inspiration received by the mother of Musa (Moses) and the disciples, it was a spiritual notion proven to be true by the person who received it. When the spiritual notion is not contradicted by reality and finds no objection in the human soul, this is a form of inspiration. An example of this case is when a person expects his friend to arrive from a journey or expects a certain kind of food he likes and then finds it on the table.

Inspiration that Allah gives to His living beings does not contradict with the soul or the real world, otherwise, it is not received from Allah, as devils from mankind, and jinn inspire to one another decorative speech in delusion.

Allah inspired the disciples to believe in the message of `Isa (Jesus); therefore, as soon as `Isa (Jesus) came with the message and they heard that he was a messenger from Allah, they declared their belief in him and became his devoted disciples. The Arabic word *idh* refers to the time of remembering the incident in which the disciples said that they believed in `Isa (Jesus) as a prophet sent by Allah and called him to bear witness that they surrendered themselves to Allah. Then Allah says:

إِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّونَ يَٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيعُ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يُنَزِّلَ
عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ ۖ قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِن كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

When the disciples said, ‘Jesus, son of Mary, can your Lord send down a feast to us from heaven?’ he said, ‘Beware of God if you are true believers’ [112] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 112)

It seems that `Isa (Jesus) told them to fear Allah and not to ask Him for this sign because if they declared faith, they should not ask Allah to show them any sign to prove the truthfulness of His messenger. In addition, they should be satisfied with the signs, which Allah gave `Isa (Jesus) to prove that his message was truly from Him. They also must abide by the instructions of the message that they claimed to believe.

Scholars scrutinised the meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘*hal yastati` rabbuka*’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 112), as its apparent meaning is ‘can your Lord’, and wondered how the disciples could say this although they testified to `Isa (Jesus) that they surrendered to Allah. The scholars also said that if someone wishes to handle language, he must be aware of the words etymologies, different uses, and characteristics. The Arabic word *yastati`* in this context means *yuti`* (obey), just as the word *istajaba* means *ajab* (respond). Therefore, they meant to ask, ‘Will your Lord respond to us by sending down a feast from Heaven?’ So, *yastati`* (obey) corresponds to *yastajib* (respond) in this verse. Allah *Glorified is He* can do all things, and all creatures obey Him and yield to

His decree; in addition, He does not request, rather, He commands, as He says, 'His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, 'Be, and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82)

When Allah *Glorified is He* says to a thing 'Be', He knows that it will obey Him, and He will not command it to obey unless it is prepared to respond and come into existence as soon as it hears Allah say, 'Be'. An example on this meaning is when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'When the sky has split (open, and has responded to its Lord and was obligated (to do so).' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2) It waits to hear Allah's Command which it responds to and obeys. Everything in this universe obeys its Creator.

The meaning of *yastati* in this verse may mean 'will He do' in which case the purpose is expressed by the means leading to it because ability is how an action is carried out. It was said that the meaning is, 'Could you ask your Lord to do this without having any impediment?' Al-Kasa'i and others read the verse as, '*hal tastati rabbaka*' with the word '*rabbaka*' in the accusative case, meaning 'Can you ask your Lord' omitting '*su'al*' (ask) and putting the word '*rabbaka*' (Lord) in the accusative case. Az-Zamakhshari said, Allah does not describe them as having sincere faith, but He says that they claim to do, as their saying, "...can your Lord..." (*al-Ma'ida*: 112), is not supposed to be uttered by any true believers who glorify their Lord.'

The disciples said, as the Quran tells us:

قَالُوا نُرِيدُ أَنْ نَأْكُلَ مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ أَنْ قَدْ
صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُونَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿١١٣﴾

They said, 'We wish to eat from it; to have our hearts reassured; to know that you have told us the truth; and to be witnesses of it' [113] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 113)

It seems that they wanted to imitate Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he asked Allah how He resurrects the dead to reassure his heart. Their faith was based on certain knowledge, but they now wanted to have certainty, so they asked for the feast, which afterwards became a plain reality. Accordingly, we have known that there is a difference between a

person believing on his own and bearing witness to his faith before others, as the person who bears witness to faith before others needs deeper certainty.

Allah informs us about what the saying of `Isa (Jesus), which was different from what they said about this feast. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّنَا أَنْزِلْ عَلَيْنَا مَائِدَةً مِنَ السَّمَاءِ تَكُونُ لَنَا
عِيدًا لَأَوَّلِنَا وَآخِرِنَا وَآيَةً مِنْكَ وَارْزُقْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

Jesus, son of Mary, said, ‘Lord, send down to us a feast from heaven so that we can have a festival –the first and last of us– and a sign from You. Provide for us: You are the best provider’ [114] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 114)

Allah’s saying, ‘...a feast from heaven...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 114) means that Allah has given many feasts on earth, and certainly the whole world is like a table laden with many bounties which man can attain if he works and strives hard. When a person works and strives to harvest crops from the land and grazes livestock, he may bring his spouse an abundance of flour, rice, honey, sugar and oil which may provide for the family for a whole year and his wife may slaughter a fowl and cook it along with bread and vegetables.

Therefore, the whole world is considered a banqueting table prepared by Allah, from which every person can take per how much he works. The word *ma'idah*, which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, means a table spread with food. If it contains no food, it is called *khawan* in Arabic. The root of the word *ma'idah* is made up of the letters *mim*, *alif* and *dal*. The verb *yamid* (shake due to the abundance of food on it) is derived from it. It also refers to the food which it serves, for the word *ma'id* means ‘the person who is given something’. The saying of `Isa (Jesus) is full of worthy values, as he asked Allah to grant them a feast fit for a festival that delights the first and last of them, and to be considered a sign from Him. `Isa (Jesus) also asked the All-Provider to provide for them and he gratefully acknowledged that Allah is the best of providers.

When we compare the saying of `Isa (Jesus) to that of the disciples, we notice the difference between the faith of the person who delivers Allah’s

message and that of the people who received this message from `Isa (Jesus). The faith of `Isa (Jesus) was strong and mature, while the faith of the disciples was incomplete. The strength of `Isa's (Jesus's) faith came from the fact that he received the message directly from Allah, while this is not the case with the disciples although they believed in the message they received from Allah by means of their messenger. Therefore, the messenger's faith is stronger and greater than that of the believers. Therefore, `Isa (Jesus) corrected their request when he supplicated to his Lord.

`Isa (Jesus) is a chosen and elected messenger. Therefore, he adjusts matters appropriately, saying, '*allahumma rabbana*' (O our Lord). The Arabic word *allahumma* (O Allah) is derived from '*ya Allah*', but due to the frequent use of the vocative '*ya*', it is dropped and a letter *mim* is added at the end of the word, forming the word *allahumma*. This word prepares the human soul for silent supplication to Allah in reverence and confidence that He will answer it. This way of supplication comes from the servant's love for his Lord, as he does not place any vocative particle between himself and his Lord's Name.

We can observe that `Isa (Jesus) began his supplication to Allah by mentioning the attribute of divinity *allahumma*, as he was a prophet who knew well the manifestations of Allah's attributes, which are manifestations of worship from the worshipped deity to the worshipping person. As for the manifestations of the word *rabb* (Lord), they are manifestations of sustenance from the Lord to His servants. The difference between Allah's divine bestowal to the living beings and His lordly bestowal is that the divine bestowal is an obligation enjoined by the Worshipped Deity to the worshipping person who obeys all the commands of the Worshipped Deity and avoids all that He forbids. However, the lordly bestowal means that Lord undertakes to sustain bodies, minds, talents and hearts, and He is the Lord of both the believer and the disbeliever, as He sustains the disbelievers even though they deny His divinity; He provides them with the material things on which their lives depend.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says about these disbelievers: 'And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" they would

surely say, "Allah." Say, "All praise is due to Allah"; but most of them do not know.' (*Luqman*: 25)

Allah tells His prophet to ask the disbelievers who created the heavens and the earth, and they found no answer other than to say that Allah is the Creator, an answer which is given instinctively. There are many examples on this point in our daily life – to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection – when children ask who made something, the answers revert to Allah Who bestows in people all bounties. If a child asks his mother, 'What are we going to eat?' And the mother tells him that they are going to eat okra. The child asks 'From where?', and the mother says, 'Your father bought it from the vender.' Then the child asks, 'Where did the vender get it from?' And the mother says, 'From the wholesaler.' The child asks, 'Where did the wholesaler get it from?' The mother replies, 'From the farmer who ploughed the earth and planted the okra seeds.' The child asks, 'And who created the earth and made the plants grow?' The mother replies, 'Allah, our Lord, who created everything.'

In her conversation with the child, the mother has reached the answer clarifying our Lord's bestowal which is gained by both the believer and disbeliever. However, the believer gains the divine bestowal in the form of his religious responsibilities, in addition to lordly bestowal. The divine bestowal gives the believers an additional grace which will never run out, as it grants them a time in which they will never die and will never leave the blessings. By adhering to religion, the believer attains the brightness of certainty and interest in doing righteous deeds in accordance with Allah's religion.

'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), said, supplicating to Allah, '...send down to us a feast from heaven....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 114) He invoked Allah's divinity first, acknowledging that worship is owed to Allah, and abiding by the obligations He ordains. Then He invoked Allah as Lord, Who sends down religious obligations to them and undertakes their sustenance, to send down to them a feast from Heaven. His invocation dealt with the spiritual values first then the material ones, but the disciples gave precedence to material needs, as they asked for a feast full of different types of food, '...We wish to eat from it, to have our hearts reassured, to know that you have told us the truth and to be witnesses of it.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 113) Due to the

spirituality of `Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), represented in him being selected as a messenger, he gave precedence to spiritual values over food, saying, ‘...Lord, send down to us a feast from heaven so that we can have a festival – the first and last of us – and a sign from You. Provide for us; You are the best provider.’ (*al-Ma`ida*: 114)

Actually, food represents part of provision, but provision is not only represented in food, as it includes everything one needs and benefits from, as food, drink, clothes, knowledge and forbearance are different types of provision. Therefore, `Isa (Jesus) used a general word which included both food and other things.

Allah answers the supplication of `Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary), saying:

قَالَ اللَّهُ إِنِّي مُنَزِّلُهَا عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنِّي أُعَذِّبُهُ
عَذَابًا لَا أُعَذِّبُهُ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١١٥﴾

God said, ‘I will send it down to you, but anyone who disbelieves after this will be punished with a punishment that I will not inflict on anyone else in the world’ [115] (The Quran, *al-Ma`ida*: 115)

When Allah uses the Arabic word *inny* (I), He uses what is called in Arabic *nun al-ifrad* (singular pronoun). We know that there are two ways in which Allah *Glorified is He* refers to Himself. When He speaks about His Oneness, He uses the singular pronoun, saying, ‘*innany ana* Allah (Verily, I am Allah)’ (*Ta Ha*: 14).

When Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about how His Infinite Power encompasses all the attributes of Perfection which are required to bring things into existence, He uses *nun al-ta`zhim* (plural pronoun), ‘Indeed, it is We who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian...’ (*al-Hijr*: 9).

Allah *Glorified is He* wants here to impart the notion of His Oneness; therefore, He says, ‘...I will send it down to you...’ (*al-Ma`ida*: 115). This means that the feast would come down from Heaven, an action which could not be done by anyone but Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then Allah says: but anyone who disbelieves after this will be punished with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds.” (*al-Ma'ida*: 115) He selects His messengers then sends them, and no servant should say that such-and-such messenger is superior to any other because Allah knows His messengers best: ‘...Allah is most knowing of where He places His message....’ (*al-An'am*: 124) And we must follow the messengers. The Noble Quran informs us that some of the people of the pre-Islamic era tried to express their wonder at the Quran which was revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from (one of) the two cities?” 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*: 31-32)

The people of the pre-Islamic era wondered why the Quran was not revealed to a great man from Mecca or Ta'if with the intention of mocking Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* gave the final word to rebut this, as no one has the right to choose a messenger from among the people of power or prestige because the messenger is elected by Allah.

Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* gives each messenger the preparation he requires for his mission and the station of a prophet and messenger is the highest rank in both this life and the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* Who arranges the life affairs of His creatures, has divided talents among His servants out of His Mercy so that they support and aid one another and need the work done by each other. When Allah sent a messenger, He chose a sign appropriate for him and for the time when he was sent. Whenever a people asked for a sign and Allah gave it to them then they disbelieved, Allah inflicted on them painful torment. When the followers of a messenger ask him for specific signs, this implies that they attempt to evade adhering to Allah's religion. In addition, they insist on disbelieving in the messenger although they ask him for signs; therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them. And We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her. And We send not the signs except as a warning.’ (*al-Isra'*: 59)

Likewise, the people of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked him to bring them signs apart from the verses of the Quran even though the verses of the Quran can convince anyone who has a sensible mind and a sensitive heart. Allah's clear and constant method of dealing with those who ask for signs then disbelieve is to inflict grievous suffering on them. An example of this is the people of Thamud who asked for a she-camel to prove the veracity of the message of Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him* then disbelieved after the miracle occurred, so Allah punished them severely.

Some of the people around Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went too far in requesting strange signs: 'And they say, "We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring. Or (until) you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force (and abundance). Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring Allah and the angels before us. Or you have a house of gold or you ascend into the sky. And (even then), we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"' (*al-Isra'*: 90-93)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was merciful with his family and kinsfolk, so he did not ask Allah for any signs other than the ones which Allah sent to him. Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* supplicated Allah in a polite manner appropriate for messengers to send a feast down. The scholars differ concerning whether Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* sent this feast down or not. Some of them stayed with Allah's saying, 'Allah said, "I will send it down to you..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 115), while others say that Allah *Glorified is He* set a condition for sending down the feast inflicting torment on them if they did not believe thereafter, so they retracted their request for the feast. Those who agree that the feast was sent down disagree regarding its description. Some of them say that the feast consisted of a grilled fish that had neither scales nor lateral line. Other scholars said that the feast consisted of five loaves of bread, on each of which there was something known to them; the first had honey, the second had olives, the third had butter, the fourth had cheese and the fifth had dried meat.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَحْيَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلَهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ
قَالَ سُبْحَنَكَ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أَقُولَ مَا لَيْسَ لِي بِحَقٍّ إِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهُ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهُ تَعْلَمُ مَا
فِي نَفْسِي وَلَا أَعْلَمُ مَا فِي نَفْسِكَ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَْلَمُ الْغُيُوبِ ﴿١١٦﴾

When God says, ‘Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, “Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God”?’ he will say, ‘May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say – if I had said such a thing You would have known it: You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen [116] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 116)

We know that this is the dialogue which will take place between Allah *Glorified is He* and ‘Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary), on the day when Allah will gather all the messengers:’ (Be warned of) the Day when Allah will assemble the messengers and say, “What was the response you received?” They will say, “We have no knowledge. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.” (*al-Ma'ida*: 109)

Someone may ask why Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* speaks about this dialogue in the past tense, although it will take place in the future. ‘And (beware the Day) when Allah will say, “O ‘Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary), did you say to the people, “Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?”’” (*al-Ma'ida*: 116)

We know that every event has a certain time and place, and the time of this event will be on the Day of Judgement and the place will be on the plain of which all creatures will be gathered. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of all times and places, so He can speak about any event in any tense He likes, as He created the past, the present and the future, and everyone and everything He created is under His control. Allah is Eternal beyond the measure of time, and Self-Subsistent. However, the matter differs for them regarding time, since all our actions take place within one of three times. The past tense which means that the event ended before the time of speaking such as ‘Zayd met me’ means that the action is finished and completed. The second tense is the present which means that the action is still underway and happening now such as ‘Zayd is meeting me’ which means that the action is taking place now. This means that

the eye is seeing Zayd right now; and the eye is the best witness. The third tense is the future which means that an action will happen, such as 'Zayd will meet me'. In this case, a person cannot be completely sure that he will do the action, nor can he be sure that nothing will happen to the person he wants to meet preventing the meeting, and nor can he be sure that the reason for the meeting will continue to exist. Therefore, when the future is concerned, one cannot be certain of anything because he does not possess the necessary means to ensure that the action will occur, but only Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* possesses them. Accordingly, the Quran teaches us to be honest when we speak of the future, saying, 'And never say of anything, "Indeed, I will do that tomorrow" Except (when adding), "If Allah wills..." (al-Kahf: 23-24).

Man must consider his limited power and always remember the infinite power Allah has over him. This does not mean that Allah forbids us from planning for the future, rather, He orders us to plan and consider all the possibilities, and to say, 'If Allah wills' because by doing this, we defer to the will of the One Who has dominion over all things.

Some of the orientalist who oppose Islam have tried to arouse the Muslims 'suspicions regarding their religion, asking why certain verbs in the verses of the Quran are not placed in the tenses which reflect their temporal occurrence, such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah's Judgement is coming, so do not ask to bring it on sooner. Exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him.' (*an-Nahl*: 1)

They say that this statement is about the Day of Resurrection, so why does Allah refer to it using the past tense (in the Arabic text of the verse), especially when He says afterwards, '...so do not ask to bring it on sooner...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). Asking to bring something on sooner means that it has not happened yet. Therefore, they say that it seems that there is a contradiction in this verse. We say in response that this saying has been said by Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* not man whose actions are subject to certain tenses; the One speaking is the Master of all times and places. When Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'ata `amr Allah' (Allah's Judgement is coming...) (*an-Nahl*: 1), this means that Allah's judgement is bound to come without any doubt because there is no power which can prevent it from coming. Allah's actions are free from the

restraints of time and place. For example, in Allah's saying, '*kana Allah ghafuran rahima*' (And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful) (*an-Nisa*: 100), Allah uses the past tense, but this does not mean that the time of Allah's forgiveness and grace has elapsed, rather, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful in all times even before the existence of any person; therefore, He will remain Forgiving and Merciful after the creation of those who deserve forgiveness and mercy. Allah is Extermely Exalted to be subject to events or to be changed by them because time is created by Allah. Therefore, when Allah is concerned, we should not ask about the time or the place. Allah uses the past tense when referring to some events that have not occurred to affirm that they will happen because when Allah informs us that something will happen, it will inevitably take place.

Whenever Allah speaks about Prophet 'Isa, (Jesus) *peace be upon him* He emphasises that he is the son of Maryam (Mary). In this verse, Allah asks 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* saying, '...did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?"' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) We know that questions are always asked for one of two reasons: there are questions which one asks to learn something he does not know such as if he says, 'Did so-and-so meet you yesterday?' and there are questions which one does not ask to learn something, but rather to make the one he questions affirm something. For example – and the utmost example belongs to Allah – the pupil asks his teacher questions to learn from him so that the teacher gives him new information. The teacher also asks the pupil questions to induce the correct answer from him and to affirm that he is right so that the pupil retains the information. Allah's question to 'Isa (Jesus) is of the latter kind; this may be proof against those who say that 'Isa (Jesus) is a god or the son of Allah. Some of the orientalisists tried to raise doubts about the Quran by saying it contains contradictions – we seek refuge with Allah – and they support their opinion by quoting Allah's saying, 'And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned.' (*as-Saffat*: 24) In this verse, Allah affirms that everyone will be asked about his deeds and his beliefs. But in another verse in the Noble Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Then on that Day none will be asked about his sin among men or jinn.' (*ar-Rahman*: 39)

Does this mean that they will not be asked? No, they indeed will be asked so that they will acknowledge what they have done, not for Allah to know what they have done, as He knows all things. Those orientalists do not know that in Arabic a question may have one of two purposes: For the questioner to attain knowledge or for the one questioned to acknowledge a certain matter. When Allah asks the people on the Day of Resurrection, He intends to make them acknowledge and confess what they have done, as confession is the strongest evidence. Allah will not ask them to gain knowledge, as He is All Knowing. Every person must not trespass his limits regarding Allah, an action which was followed by `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary). Therefore, the question which Allah poses in this verse to `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is meant as a rebuke and an admonition for those who fabricated lies and sayings which `Isa (Jesus) never told them.

`Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* never asked them to take him and his mother as gods beside Allah because `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) only conveyed what his Lord revealed to him. Therefore, `Isa's response will refute his followers, '...He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right...."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) The saying, '...Exalted are You...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) means that Allah is so Exalted as to resemble any of the created beings. Man should know that Allah's existence differs from his existence, as Allah's existence is intrinsic, while man is created by Allah Who has given everything to him. Therefore, Allah is Free of need and dispenses with all creatures in a manner unparalleled by man, and the source of man's richness and bounties is Allah. In addition, man's attributes do not resemble Allah's Attributes, as He has absolute Omnipotence; therefore, man must understand everything related to Allah in the light of the fact that He is Extremely Exalted and there is nothing like unto Him.

This is the nature of the exaltation which `Isa (Jesus) proclaims for his Lord and Creator. '...It was not for me to say that to which I have no right...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) as he knows that no messenger chosen by Allah has the right to call himself a deity and adds an undisputable fact, '...If I had said it, You would have known it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) because everyone agrees that Allah knows all the words and deeds of His servants as in: 'He knows the

most furtive of glances, and of all that hearts conceal.' (*Ghafir*: 19) Everyone knows that Allah is so highly Exalted to receive new information which he has not known before, and that He knows the secrets of the heart. Therefore, 'Isa (Jesus) says, '...You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) affirming that Allah Who knows everything, knows that claiming that he and his mother are deities never crossed his mind; therefore, three different ideas are given in this verse. The first idea is found in His saying, '...Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) in which 'Isa (Jesus) declares his Lord's exaltation. The second idea is found in 'Isa's (Jesus's) words, '...If I had said it, You would have known it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116). The third idea is, '...You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116). Therefore, Isa (Jesus) did not say the fabricated saying which his followers said. A person may ask, 'What is within the self'? It is the matters which are kept secret because sometimes the Arabic word *nafs* means the entire self, comprising both soul and body; when it is used to refer to Allah's Self, we regard it so highly Exalted to be divided into parts, and we know that His Self must be understood in the light of His Exaltation. For example, Allah says, '...He has decreed upon Himself mercy...' (*al-An'am*: 54).

When the word *nafs* (self) is used in connection with Allah, we should understand that it is so highly Exalted to be like that of human beings. In addition, Allah's Face is not like a human face, as we must understand it in the light of '...There is nothing like unto Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11). The same is true of Allah's Hand and all His Attributes. We also know that Allah has Names, some of which He has taught us while He has taught some of His servants other Names and has not taught some of them to any of His servants. There are certain attributes which are applied to Allah simply for the sake of rhetoric, such as Allah's saying: 'Indeed, the hypocrites (think to) deceive Allah, but it is Allah Who causes them to be deceived...' (*an-Nisa*: 142). We can never say that Allah is a deceiver, but this attribute is used here in a rhetorical sense because it corresponds with the words, '...seek to deceive Allah...' (*an-Nisa*: 142). Therefore, we cannot derive a Name of Allah from it; rather, it is only used to respond to what was done by the enemies of Allah.

`Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* ends his statement saying, '...it is You who is All Knowing of the unseen.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) The word *`allam* (All Knowing) is a hyperbolic adjective which implies the frequency of an action. Allah *Glorified is He* knows the hidden secrets of everyone and everything in His creation. The Quran tells us the response of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* which comprehensively denies the claims of those who said such fabrications.

The Quran continues to inform us about what `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said to refute the claims made by some of his followers, saying:

مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ إِلَّا مَا أَمَرْتَنِي بِهِ أَنْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبَّكُمْ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا
دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتُ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَنْتَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾

I told them only what You commanded me to: “Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.” I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul, You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things [117] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 117)

While speaking to his Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He*, `Isa (Jesus) presents the teachings which he brought to all people and fully conveyed; he informed them that he was the servant and messenger of Allah. Since Allah has full knowledge of all things, even that which one keeps secret within himself, this affirms that none of these thoughts ever crossed `Isa's (Jesus's) mind, as he announced that he only conveyed what Allah commanded him to convey.

'I said not to them except what You commanded me; to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 117) The witness is the one who sees something without influencing it in any way. `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them* says, '...but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 117). We have already tackled how Allah took `Isa's (Jesus's) soul and raised him to Himself. However, I will add some more thoughts about this now because I view that anyone who

reads or receives these thoughts has the right to find a sufficient summary that enables him to dispense of referring to what was said previously. Therefore, these notions can be connected in the reader's mind.

The way in which 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was born caused a lot of clamour, as did the way in which he died. Allah caused those who intended to kill 'Isa (Jesus) to think that they actually killed him. When they wanted to kill him, he entered through a small door set into a larger one, which was the way the doors of houses were designed. There was a main door for bringing large things into the house, another smaller door set into the main door which was large enough for people to enter, and an opening in the ceiling of this house. When a man named Titianus entered the house in search of 'Isa (Jesus), 'Isa (Jesus) looked up and found himself being raised upward. The people felt Titianus delayed; when he came out they said, 'If this is Titianus, then where is 'Isa (Jesus)? If this is 'Isa (Jesus), then where is Titianus?'

They became confused when Allah made Titianus resemble 'Isa (Jesus), or when those people went to get 'Isa (Jesus), he was accompanied by his disciples to whom he said, 'Which of you will accept to resemble me and will be admitted to paradise?' Each of the disciples knew that they did not have a message to convey as 'Isa (Jesus) did, and so what could any of them wish for himself more than paradise? Judas Iscariot came forward and the appearance of the Messiah was cast onto him, then the Jews killed him. Perhaps the people who wanted to kill 'Isa (Jesus) knew that he had been raised up and feared that the story of how he was raised up would spread among the people and they would believe in him, so they got someone else and killed him. Another probable suggestion is that the one they killed was one of those who betrayed 'Isa (Jesus), then he felt remorse at what he had done, so he sacrificed his own life for the messenger.

As we know, when Allah takes someone's soul, this means that He takes it as a whole without allowing his body to be destroyed by an act of killing. As Muslims, we know that Allah raised Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during the Night Journey and Ascension up to the heavens, then he returned afterwards to complete his message. Therefore, we can easily believe that Allah raised up 'Isa (Jesus) and took his soul, i.e. He took him as a whole

without causing his body to be destroyed, and he will return to pray behind a person who believes in Allah and Muhammad, His Messenger.

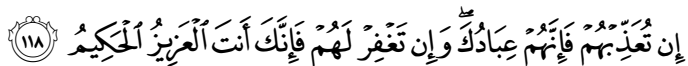
In Islam, the raising up of a person can be accepted and believed, as Allah raised up His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during the Ascension Journey. He conversed with Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*, Adam *peace be upon him* and other prophets. During this journey, Allah made the prayer obligatory for Muslims. Therefore, we completely accept and believe that a person may be raised wholly to the heavens; as for the question of whether he spends a long or short time up there, this does not contradict the principle.

As for the notion that Jesus's descent back to earth will be tied to the coming of the Last Hour, the texts of the Noble Quran regarding this matter suggest it without definite declaration. In addition, this matter is mentioned in the *Sunnah*, but it is not among the well-established and known Islamic principles, so we cannot say that those who refuse to understand it are regarded disbelievers. Allah is merciful with mankind. Therefore, if something is difficult for the mind to understand and does not add any new religious ruling, Allah presents it in a form which cannot cause any temptation. Believing that 'Isa (Jesus) was raised up will not add or disprove any ruling. Therefore, Allah has tackled the event of the Night Journey with a decisive and clear Quranic text, while the Ascension Journey is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran as it is only alluded to when Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And he certainly saw him in another descent. At the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary. Near it is the Garden of Refuge.' (*an-Najm*: 13-15)

The Night Journey took place on earth, whereas the Ascension Journey took place in the heavens. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could prove the Night Journey as it took place on earth, as he described Jerusalem for his people when he returned. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram* to *Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa*, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing...' (*al-Isra*': 1). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* described the caravans which he saw on the way back.

As for the raising up of `Isa (Jesus), it is alluded to in the Quran without a clear statement about the way it took place. Those who see that it was the work of Allah's Omnipotent Power believe it; as for those who find it hard to believe, this does not take them out of the fist of Islam and faith. When we reflect on literal meaning of the word *tawaffaitany* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, we will find that it means 'cause to die'. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Say, "The angel of death will take you who has been entrusted with you. Then to your Lord you will be returned..."' (*as-Sajda*: 11) Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* also says, 'Allah takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die (He takes) during their sleep. Then He keeps those for which He has decreed death and releases the others for a specified term...' (*az-Zumar*: 42). In this verse Allah calls sleep *wafah* and *mawt* (literally death), which involve releasing and withholding. Death in some aspects involves the absence of sensation, and the person who sleeps is absent from sensation; this means that *wafah* may refer to sleep. The same word means repaying a debt in full. As for the matter of the murder of `Isa (Jesus), Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He*, gave the final word on the matter, '...and they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but (another) was made to resemble him to them....' (*an-Nisa*': 157)

We also know that death is different from killing, as Allah says, '...So if he was to die or be killed...' (*Al-'Imran*: 144). Death means the exit of the soul from the body, while the physical body remains intact; on the other hand, killing means destroying the body so that the soul leaves it. Allah mentions in the Quran that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, '*falamma tawaffaytanti*' (when you took my soul) (*al-Ma'ida*: 117). This means that he was taken as a whole, a matter which does not contradict the fact that he was raised up. This matter will be discussed by `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) and Allah on the Day of Resurrection; and the Quran states it in this verse to affirm the sincerity of faith. `Isa (Jesus) says about himself that he was only a witness over his people during the time in which he lived among them, but after Allah raised him up to Himself, Allah is the only watcher over them, as He can constantly witness, watch, change and prevent matters, while `Isa (Jesus), as a human being, can only witness. Allah informs us what `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary), will say next:



**and if You punish them, they are Your servants; if
You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the
Wise' [118] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 118)**

Someone may say that some of the followers of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* claimed that he had told them to take him and his mother as deities beside Allah, so how could `Isa (Jesus) ask Allah to forgive them in this verse? The answer is that `Isa (Jesus) does not say, 'O Lord, forgive them', but he says, 'If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them, indeed it is You who is *the Exalted in Might, the Wise.*' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) This means that `Isa (Jesus) leaves the matter up to the omnipotent Will of Allah; as a messenger of Allah, he knows that His Mercy has preceded His Wrath, and that He possesses Omnipotent Power which cannot be restrained because His Will is Omnipotent.

We know that all of Allah's creatures are His *`abid* (slaves) as they are compelled by His Omnipotence, but only those who obey and believe in Allah are His *`ibad* (servants). We also know that even the disbeliever does not disbelieve in Allah against Allah's Will, but he disbelieves by means of his freed will, that Allah gives him to choose whether to have faith or not. Allah can create living beings that never disobey His commands and do whatever He orders them to do; this is what He did when He created the angels.

But Allah's Omnipotence proves His attribute 'the All Compelling', but is not relevant to love, as love only comes when the creature is free to choose whether to believe or disbelieve, then chooses to believe. Accordingly, he believes out of love, not by compulsion; this is what Allah wants from His believing servants. Everything in the universe apart from man is compelled and cannot disobey Allah such as the sun, the moon, the rain, the wind, the clouds and everything else.

Therefore, if Allah wants creatures that are compelled to have faith in Him, none of His creatures will be able to disbelieve in him. However, Allah wants to prove His attribute of compulsion on all beings apart from man, while He has given man the freedom to choose between disbelief and faith so that some of His servants do what Allah loves and pleases Him by following

His religion. They know that Allah does not hold them responsible for anything which is beyond their capability such as death and sickness. He does not hold the one who has lost his mind accountable for his deeds, nor does He hold the person who has not yet reached adulthood accountable for his deeds. Religious obligations apply under three conditions: having a sound mind, having a mature mind which is attained after adulthood and the absence of any power that threatens his life and forces him to do a certain act. Thus, we know that there are three kinds of people who are not held legally accountable for their deeds: insane people, children who have not reached adulthood and those who are compelled to a certain action. Along with legal accountability, Allah has given rewards for obedience and punishment for disobedience; therefore, no one has the right to argue with Allah. Those who obey Allah and perform their religious obligations are *'ibad* (servants) of Allah and those who disobey Allah and do not perform their religious obligations are *'abid* (slaves) who are compelled to do all things except for the religious obligations for which they have been given choice.

The *'ibad* (servants) of Allah are those who give preponderance to faith over disbelief; i.e. they give preponderance to Allah's Commands. Therefore, why did 'Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) say, 'If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118), although He knows that they are disbelievers? The meanings of *'ibad* (servants) and *'abid* (slaves), which we have just explained, applies to man's situation in this worldly life and his obligations therein, but the dialogue we are now tackling will take place between 'Isa (Jesus) and Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* in the Hereafter in which all people will be servants obeying Allah.

The word *'ibad* (servants) refers to the elected elite who have preferred obedience to Allah's Commands to their own desire so that they have become completely submissive to Allah. For example, Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says, 'And the servants of the Beneficent Allah are they who walk on the earth in humbleness...' (*al-Furqan*: 63). In this verse, Allah states the praiseworthy characteristics of these elite servants that Satan himself announces his inability to tempt the sincere servants, as the Noble Quran states: 'Except, among them, Your devoted servants.' (*Sad*: 83) However, in the Hereafter all people will

be *`ibad* (servants). Allah will address those who led others astray saying, '...Did you mislead these, My servants...'? (*al-Furqan*: 17)

All people will be subject to Allah's will. No one will have any control even over his own body parts. The eye which was under the control of Allah's servant in the worldly life, obeying his will to look at what is lawful or unlawful, will not be subject to Allah's slave on the Day of Resurrection. The same is true of the hand, the tongue, the skin, the feet and the rest of the body. In this worldly life, man controls his body parts as they obey his commands whether good or evil and whether they involve obedience or disobedience. However, on the Day of Resurrection, these body parts will be set free to bear witness to all that their owner has done with them, and none will have any will except Allah: '...To whom belongs (all) sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the All-Compelling.' (*Ghafir*: 16)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah will persist; with this all men will become Allah's servants. Consequently, there is nothing strange about `Isa's (Jesus's) words: '...if You punish them, they are Your servants...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118). We also know that this 'slavery' signifies us all when associated with involuntary actions such as breathing, birth, and death. But the believers rise from this state of 'slavery' to a state of 'servant-hood' just by following Allah's path. On the other hand, the disbelievers and sinners disobey Allah using their 'free will', where they choose to willingly disobey Allah's path. Allah afflicts the disbelievers with illnesses, poverty and deep-seated psychological pains, and none of them have the least ability to contravene Allah's will in those things which afflict them; this proves that we are all nothing but 'helpless slaves' of Allah. That is why the believers thank the True Lord *Glorified is He* for their free choice since by means of this free choice, Allah safeguards our existence, our maturity and our freedom.

As we have said before, we need to be aware that on the Day of Resurrection, we shall all become servants of Allah, and none of us will have a will of his own, and Allah's will shall prevail. The True Lord *Glorified is He* conveys to us the words of `Isa (Jesus), son of Mary *peace be upon them* '...and if You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) not as an apology from `Isa (Jesus), or

as an attempt to ask mercy for those who disbelieved in Allah and ascribed partners to Him. Allah the Almighty and All-Wise is the One Who cannot be overcome, and whom no power can dominate, hence no power can protect these people from the All-Powerful and Almighty Allah. Likewise, if He wills to forgive them, nothing can forestall His will.

Some of the superficial people who look for mistakes in the Quran say, 'Would it not have been more appropriate for 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* to just say, 'If You forgive them, then You alone are forgiving and merciful?' To them we say; every word in the Quran has a specific meaning, and hence every meaning in the Quran recalls a specific word. Therefore, the closing part of the verse had to use words to highlight Allah's absolute power in choosing whether to punish them or forgive them; for if He chooses to punish them, then no other power could protect them from His punishment, and if He chooses to forgive them, then no power could question Him about forgiving them despite being disbelievers. Allah cannot be questioned about what He does because He is Almighty and Wise.

As for the claim that it would have been more appropriate to say, 'You alone are forgiving and merciful', we say that these attributes could well address '...and if You forgive them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118), but not 'and if You punish them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118). That is why the verse had to come with the attributes which address both, 'and if You punish them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118) and '...and if You forgive them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿١١٩﴾

God will say, 'This is a Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness. They will have Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever. God is pleased with them and they with Him: that is the supreme triumph' [119] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 119)

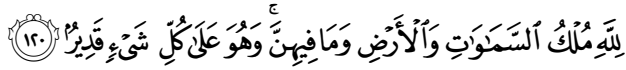
We know that there will be two types of truthfulness on Judgment Day; a type which brings benefit since it comes in continuation to the truthfulness of

this life; and a type which will bring no benefit like the type which *Iblis*, the accursed, describes as being 'a false promise' by contrast with the 'truthful' promise Allah made. This latter type of truthfulness will not benefit anyone because the Hereafter is not an abode of moral responsibility. As for the truthfulness of this life, it is embodied by the words of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* '...if I had said such a thing You would have known it...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says of this kind of truthfulness, '...This is a Day when the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 119) On Judgment Day, the truthfulness of those who have been true to their word during this mundane life, that is to say in the time of moral responsibility, will help them attain unto Allah's goodly acceptance where '...They will have gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain for ever. Allah is pleased with them and they with Him...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 119).

But someone might ask, 'How can the servant be well-pleased with his Lord'? We say that when the believing servants see the reward prepared for them in the Hereafter, they will be filled with joy and will send all due praise to Allah Who has made His promise to them come true, and Who has bestowed upon them all this bliss so that they may dwell in paradise as they please.

This verse describes the day in which the truthfulness shall benefit all who have been true to their word by saying, '...that is the supreme triumph.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 119) It is as though there is a superficial triumph, and a supreme triumph. The superficial triumph is the fleeting pleasure which a man gives to himself in the abode of moral responsibility. It makes him feel as though he has triumphed when in fact he has not. The supreme triumph is one that is not followed by regret because any pleasure followed by regret is not a triumph. All the delights of the world are measured per the scale of each person's potentials and imagination. Two things impend such joys: their loss – and we saw many people losing their joy that they used to enjoy – or the death of the one enjoying them, and we also see this the whole time. As for the joys associated with the supreme triumph, they persist perpetually without any interruption.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* by saying:



**Control of the heavens and earth and everything
in them belongs to God: He has power over all
things [120] (The Quran, *al-Ma'ida*: 120)**

The heavens and the earth are the two containers of existence for all beings; constellations, planets, the sun, moons, stars, air, clouds, water, animals and men. The earth which is the lower dominion we see before us comprises all nourishment, and the heavens and all that they comprise is in the higher dominion. Allah has ownership and dominion over both since He has dominion over all things, and He has dominion over all those who own the things. The True Lord's words, 'Control of the heavens and earth and everything in them belongs to Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120) compliment the words which 'Isa (Jesus) son of Mary *peace be upon them* spoke before, 'and if you punish them, they are your servants; if you forgive them, you are the Almighty, the Wise.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118). This means that none of Allah's creatures can escape His will. As for this life, Allah has placed its means in the hands of mankind so that the provision of one man can be in the hand of another; and He has placed the affairs of some of us in the possession of others; so some of us possess food and others possess clothes etc. But not every *maalik* (owner) is a sovereign *malik*, as the sovereign is the one who has dominion over those who own things, and such are the laws which Allah laid in the universe. In the Hereafter, there will be only one owner; the Owner of Judgement Day. So, it is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* ends this chapter by telling us about the end of life since He started it by telling us about His rulings: '...fulfil your obligations. Livestock animals are lawful as food for you...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1).

He tells us first about the laws of hunting on land and in the sea, about the beasts which are lawful to eat, about marriage and about all that is connected to the affairs of life; and He placed the affairs of some of us in the possession of others. But on Judgement Day, everything will be different. He begins the chapter with a commandment, '...fulfil your obligations...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 1), and when a commandment is issued by the Supreme Commander, the one who receives this commandment can either obey it or disobey it, for there are people who believe and others who disbelieve. This means that

those who receive the command have a free will, and had the commandment been intended to be obeyed without choice; the Commander would have created mankind with the natural disposition of obeying, thus compelling them. But the Supreme Commander left these commandments up to mankind's free will; they can obey and be true to their covenant, or they can disobey.

Allah *Glorified is He* starts the chapter in the context of the human race's free will, which Allah created giving way to moral responsibility. He then affirms that this free will has a limited life span and that it will come to an end, where Allah will gather all mankind on a Day when the truthfulness shall benefit all who have been true to their word; and hence all will belong to Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends the chapter by saying, 'Control of the heavens and earth and everything in them belongs to Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120). That is, He has dominion over the whole universe; and as we know, the universe is composed of several types of creations. The first type in the universe is the one which serves and is not served such as the elements or inanimate objects like water, mountains, iron, the sun, the moon, or the stars; these are all inanimate objects which have no senses. These inanimate objects mainly serve the plants, and the plants serve the animals and the animals serve man. Hence, all these beings which serve man have no free will and are all compelled to serve man. The sun has never refused to give mankind its heat despite their aggression, nor do the beasts which carry our burdens rebel against their masters.

Man, on the other hand, has two aspects. One aspect of him is compelled by the True Lord *Glorified is He*; so we can neither influence nor control this aspect such as our propensity to sickness or death which is something we have in common with plants and animals. Then there is the aspect in which man has a free will, namely whether to follow Allah's religion or not. If we consider the side wherein the True Lord *Glorified is He* compels man, we find that it is for man's own good. A person does not choose to breathe, nor drive the blood in his veins, and nor does he compel his kidneys to work. He is compelled when it comes to these things. It is an act of mercy from Allah to compel and control His creatures in these aspects, rather than grant them control over their own breathing or heartbeats. So, man is only free in matters

related to moral responsibility. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* were reminding man that free will is a covenant between the believer and his Lord because the free will of man will be taken from him on Judgement Day, and all of Allah's servants will be compelled, and the 'will' of mankind will be reduced to that of plants and animals. There then 'Control of the heavens and earth and everything in them belongs to Allah: He has power over all things.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120)

On Judgement Day, man will lose his free will. The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the Arabic word *ma* (everything) here which literally means 'whatever' and is used for non-sentient beings that do not have free will. (In the case of sentient beings, it would mean 'whoever'.) It is as though intelligence has a role to play in this worldly life, namely the ability to choose between alternatives, but in the Hereafter all will be equal before the Creator. We spoke before about the difference between the words *mulk* and *malakut*; we can also read the words of Allah when He said that He gave Ibrahim (Abraham) insight into His mighty *malakut* (dominion) over the heavens and the earth: 'And thus did we show Ibrahim (Abraham) the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain (in faith).' (*al-An'am*: 75) It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* were alerting us to the fact that the world contains things which fall under the cognisance of sensory perception, and those which do not. All that falls under the cognisance of sensory perception is the dominion of *mulk*, whilst all that which does not is the dominion of *malakut*. We know nothing of the dominion of *malakut* save that which Allah tells us, and there are also things in the dominion of *mulk* which Allah conceals from us; and He Alone has the power to do all things. The True Lord *Glorified is He* asks us to reflect on the singularity of the hidden dominion, and He tells us that He has complete knowledge of it, i.e. the hidden things beyond the occult. Both the *mulk* and *malakut* exist in this life and the Hereafter, but the *mulk* is visible, whilst the *malakut* is occult.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* provides the means of domination and possession (also *mulk*)) in this life to some of His creatures, but still He maintains domination over all that is in our hands and all that is hidden from us. The True Lord *Glorified is He* also terminates any justification for man's

status of vicegerent over man by saying, 'Control of the heavens and earth and everything in them belongs to Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120). So, Allah has the ultimate control, and the servants of Allah have been given some control which materializes in the ostensible attribution of things to their causes in this life. But on Judgement Day, everything will be in the Hands of Allah.

But why does the True Lord *Glorified is He* say, 'and everything in them' (using the word *ma* which literally means 'whatever' and not 'whoever') even though the True Lord *Glorified is He* made man His vicegerent on earth, and man is a sentient being who would usually therefore be given priority over non-sentient beings? Why did He not say '*wa man fihinna*' ('and whoever is in them')? The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to affirm to us by this that everyone will lose their free will and become compelled to His will, and thus, all will become equal even if they used to be sentient in this life. So, He says to us: '...and everything in them belongs to Allah, He has power over all things' (*al-Ma'ida*: 120).

With this verse, the chapter of *al-Ma'ida* comes to an end; this chapter was revealed in Medina, and was one of the final revelations of the Noble Quran. It contains legislations, moral responsibilities, and laws. As all the chapters revealed in Medina, it shows the deviation of the people of the Scripture.

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